Introduction

I am fully convinced that false doctrines must be confuted through the Holy Scriptures because all false doctrines are lies and lies are dangerous for the Church of the living God, for their purpose is to do harm to the saints. Obviously, not all the false doctrines have the same bad effect on those who accept them; for instance, if a believer accepts the doctrine that holds that Jesus is not God or the one which says that Jesus is not the Christ or the one which holds that man is justified by the works of the law, he will stray concerning the faith; while if he accepts the false doctrine which holds that the apostle John did not see death he will not stray concerning the faith, even though he accepts a false doctrine. That is something which must be said for the sake of truth. Notwithstanding this, since even those false doctrines which do not cause believers to stray from the faith are lies – and lies, in one way or another, harm those who accept them - the best thing to do is to reject all false doctrines. Therefore, no matter whether a false doctrine causes a believer to stray from the faith or not, it must be repudiated and refuted for it is a lie, that is, something which has been conceived of the devil. Remember that the Scripture states that the father of lies is the devil (therefore lies are works of the devil), and that sin entered into the world because Eve, the first woman, believed a lie of that Ancient Serpent and you know how many harmful effects sin had on Adam and Eve and on all their descendants. So keep in mind that every false doctrine has harmful effects on those who accept it. Moreover, keep in mind this also: one error leads to another, for error is like leaven of which the Scripture says: “A little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Corinthians 5:6 – NKJV)

Following is a series of false doctrines I have confuted. There are three things I want to tell you about this series: 1) It is not complete, for there are many more false doctrines which are held and taught across the world, God willing I will add other false doctrines to this list; 2) The fact that sometimes you read that a certain false doctrine is held by a certain Church or a sect or a preacher and no other Church or sect or preacher is cited does not mean that there are no other people who hold that false doctrine; my purpose is not to let you know who are all those who hold a particular false doctrine but to let you know what that false doctrine holds and to show you from the Scripture that it is untrue, so when you meet someone who holds that doctrine you may know that it is a false doctrine and you may know how to refute it; 3) If you know a particular false doctrine held by an Evangelical Church or a sect or a religion or a preacher or a theologian or someone else which is not included in the following list and you would like me to confute it, let me know it (my e-mail is butindaro@lanuovavia.org).

I have this confidence in the Lord, that these confutations will be useful to you. Stand firm in the faith and fight the good fight of the faith till the end.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints

Giacinto Butindaro

Rome, 2008

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible. Scripture quotations marked (NKJV) are taken from the New King James Version; those marked (NIV) are taken from the New International Version; those marked (NASB) are taken from the New American Standard Bible; those marked (ASV) are taken from the American Standard Version; those marked (YLT) from Young’s Literal Translation; those marked (NAB) from the New American Bible; those marked (IBRV) are taken from the Italian Bible, Riveduta Version; and those marked (IBDV) are taken from the Italian Bible, Diodati Version.
I exhort and encourage you to reproduce and transmit my writings in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording. But keep in mind these things: 1) my name must remain attached to them; 2) the text cannot be altered; 3) they cannot be offered for sale or included in items offered for sale.
GOD

There is no God (Atheism)

Atheism is the belief that there is no God. The word Atheism comes from the Greek word atheos which means ‘without God’ (a ‘without’ + theos ‘god’).

Confutation

Creation itself bears witness that there is a God, that is, a living, omnipotent and intelligent Being who created it. The apostle Paul wrote to the saints in Rome that since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities — His eternal power and Godhead — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made (Romans 1:20); and David said that the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament shows His handiwork (Psalm 19:1). Therefore, since the existence of God is so clearly witnessed by His works, those who deny His existence are fools. “The fool has said in his heart, ‘there is no God” (Psalm 53:1 – NKJV).

Atheists are without excuse, because they are surrounded by the works of God which attest very clearly that God exists. Undoubtedly the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, clearly prove the existence of God because they did not come into existence by chance or by their own power but by the will of the only true God. For according to the Scripture there was a time when all these things did not exist, then at a certain point of past time (about six thousand years ago) they came into existence by the will of God. God created them in six days (Genesis 1:1-31; 2:1-3; Exodus 20:11), and in wisdom God made them all (Psalm 104:24). Oh, what a wonderful wisdom can be seen in all the works of God! It can be seen even in the simplest forms of life. God is indeed a wise Designer and Creator! Among the things made by God, one, that is, man, was made in God's image, for the Scripture says: “So God created man in His own image” (Genesis 1:27 – NKJV). That's why Paul says that man "is the image and glory of God" (1 Corinthians 11:7 – NKJV). Man himself, therefore, bears witness that God exists. When one considers that man is an intelligent being, with a will, reasoning ability, emotions and a conscience, how can he deny the existence of God?

To sum up, just as one’s computer or one’s watch exists because someone designed it and built it, and we can’t affirm that no one has made it (for it suddenly appeared one day accidentally!), so the universe (that is, the heavens, the earth, the sea and all that is in them) exists because someone designed it and made it, and this ‘someone’ is God, whose name is Yahweh. In other words, the perfection, the beauty, the design and the orderliness of the universe require the existence of a Supreme Being whose intelligence and power have no limit, and this Supreme Being is God. It is absurd to think that the universe was not created by God.

Let me tell you something else about the existence of God. I am absolutely sure that God exists because I know Him; He has saved me from my sins, He has given me a new heart and a new mind, and He has come to me and made His home with me. I am absolutely sure that God exists because He has delivered me from many dangers, from many distresses, and He has supplied my needs in answer to my prayers. I bear witness that He is a living God, a faithful God, a God who is a very present help in trouble (Psalm 46:1). To Him be the glory now and forevermore. Amen.

Therefore, if you are an atheist, I exhort you to believe that God exists, and also that He so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son into the world to die for our sins and rise for our justification; know this, that if you believe these things you will surely taste the goodness of God for He will manifest Himself to you by forgiving your sins and giving you eternal life. On the contrary, if you are a believer I exhort you to keep believing in the existence of God and in the
atoning sacrifice of His Son, and to refute atheism, which is one of the lies conceived by the devil

God cannot be known (Agnosticism)

Agnosticism (from Greek *a* ‘without’ + *gnosis* ‘knowledge’) is the belief that nothing is known or can be known of the existence or nature of God. Therefore, agnostics are people who feel that God’s existence cannot be proved.

Confutation

I have already showed from the Scripture (in the previous confutation) that the existence of God can be proved in various ways. However, I would like to say something else. Man can not only know that God exists, but also know Him personally. In other words, He can have a personal relationship with God. For Jesus Christ said: “All things are delivered to me of my Father: and no man knoweth who the Son is, but the Father; and who the Father is, but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him” (Luke 10:22). Therefore, God the Father can be known through His Son, there is no other way to know God. Thus, in order to know God a man needs to know His Son. How can one know the Son of God then? By repenting of his sins and believing in His atoning sacrifice and His resurrection.

I am by the grace of God among those who know God. However, I would like to make it clear that God cannot be perfectly known by our imperfect mind. I mean, we can’t know all His purposes, all His ways, all His judgements, all His thoughts, for the Scripture says: “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and His ways past finding out! For who has known the mind of the Lord?” (Romans 11:33-34 - NKJV) and also: “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven – what can you do? Deeper than Sheol – what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea” (Job 11:7-9 – NKJV).

In conclusion, one can know God but not through his understanding or reason or through philosophy or some so called science, but only through repentance and faith in the Son of God. We are among those who know God, and even though we know that our knowledge of God is partial, as it is written: “We know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9 – NKJV), we have the firm confidence that one day we will know God just as we also are known by Him. We have an altar on which we offer our spiritual sacrifices, but not an altar with the inscription ‘to the unknown or unknowable God’ but with this inscription ‘to the God we have known and whom can be known through Christ Jesus, His Son’. To Him be the glory now and forevermore. Amen.

Beware of agnosticism and refute it, for it is a wrong belief, which is used by that ancient serpent to keep millions of people far from the true and living God.

God is all, and all is God (Pantheism)

Pantheism (from Greek *pan* ‘all’ + *theos* ‘god’) is a belief which identifies God with the universe (and all that comprises it: laws, motion, matter, energy, consciousness, life, etc.) or regards the universe as a manifestation of God. This belief is accepted by the adherents of the New Age Movement, who view God as an impersonal life force, consciousness or energy, rather than a Person. Here is what some New Agers have stated.
Marilyn Ferguson wrote in her book *The Aquarian Conspiracy*: “In the emergent spiritual tradition God is not the personage of our Sunday-school mentality but more nearly the dimension described by William James: The further limits of our being plunge, it seems to me, into an altogether other dimension of existence from the sensible and merely ‘understandable’ world .... We belong to it in a more intimate sense than that in which we belong to the visible world, for we belong in the most intimate sense wherever our ideals belong .... I will call the higher part of the universe by the name of God. God is experienced as flow, wholeness, the infinite kaleidoscope of life and death, Ultimate Cause, the ground of being, what Alan Watts called ‘the silence out of which all sound comes’. God is the consciousness that manifests as lila, the play of the universe. God is the organizing matrix we can experience but not tell, that which enlightens matter. In J. D. Salinger’s short story, *Teddy*, a spiritually precocious youngster recalls his experience of immanent God while watching his little sister drink her milk. ‘... All of a sudden I saw that she was God and the milk was God. I mean, all she was doing was pouring God into God....’ (Marilyn Ferguson, *The Aquarian Conspiracy*, Paladin Grafton Books, London 1986, page 420).


Neale Donald Walsch says: ‘For God is the All, and the Goddess is everything, and there is nothing else that is’ (Walsch, Neale Donald, *Conversations With God: An Uncommon Dialogue*, Book 2, Charlottesville, Va.: Hampton Roads Publishing Company, 1997, page 92)

Helen Schucman says: ‘God is in everything I see’ (Helen Schucman, *A Course in Miracles*; Vol. 2, Workbook for Students, Tiburon, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975. page 45) and also: ‘God is still everywhere and in everything forever. And we are a part of Him’ (Ibid., page 92), again: ‘There is no separation of God and His creation’ (Vol. 1, Text, Tiburon, CA: Foundation for Inner Peace, 1975, page 136)

Confutation

According to the Scripture, which is the Word of God, there is one God, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:6), as it is written in Isaiah: “I am the First and I am the Last; Besides me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6 – NKJV) and in the first epistle to the Corinthians: “For us there is one God, the Father ...” (1 Corinthians 8:6 – NKJV); He is also called “the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob” (Exodus 3:16 – NKJV).

He is a spiritual being, as it is written: “God is Spirit” (John 4:24 – NKJV); He is mighty in power and His understanding has no limit, as it is written: “Great is our Lord, and mighty in power; His understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5 – NKJV); He knows everything, as it is written: “The Lord is the God of knowledge” (1 Samuel 2:3 – NKJV – The Italian Bible Riveduta Version, reads “L'Eterno è un Dio che sa tutto”, that is, “the Eternal is a God who knows everything”); He is everywhere, as it is written: “If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell [Sheol], behold, you are there” (Psalm 139:8 – NKJV). He sees, as it is written: “The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good” (Proverbs 15:3 - NKJV); He hears, as it is written: “He hears the prayer of the righteous” (Proverbs 15:29 - NKJV); He speaks, as it is written: “When He utters His voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens” (Jeremiah 10:13 – NKJV). He remembers, as it is written: “He remembers His covenant forever” (Psalm 105:8 – NKJV); He is full of mercy and gracious, as it is written: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy” (Psalm 103:8 – NKJV); He is righteous and thus He rewards those who do what is right in His sight, as it is written: “He will fulfill the desire of those who fear Him” (Psalm 145:19 – NKJV), and He punishes those who deserve to be punished for their evil deeds as it is written: “He repays those who hate him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face” (Deuteronomy 7:10 – NKJV). He protects those who fear Him, as it is written: “The Lord preserves the simple” (Psalm 116:6 – NKJV), and guides them, as it is written: “He leads me in
the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3 – NKJV). I have mentioned just some of His attributes and just some of the things He does.

This God, by the Word, created out of nothing all the things that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, as it is written: “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3 – NKJV), and they continue this day according to His ordinances, as it is written: “Your laws endure to this day, for all things serve you” (Psalm 119:91 – NIV).

Therefore, the universe is not God but the work of His hands; He fills it, for God says through Jeremiah: “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” (Jeremiah 23:24 – NKJV), but He still remains separate from it because He is the Creator of the universe.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God who came down from heaven to reveal God to us, never hinted at pantheism in all His teachings. Before He came into this world He was with God in heaven from all eternity, and He knew God, but He never identified God with the universe or the earth. When He commanded His disciples not to swear, He said: “Do not swear at all; neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool” (Matthew 5:34-35 – NKJV). As you can see, Jesus called heaven the throne of God and the earth His footstool, and we know that there is a very big difference between a person who is seated on a throne and the throne on which he is seated; between a person and his footstool.

Therefore, to sum up, the universe is not God but the work of God, and through it the invisible attributes of God, that is, His eternal power and Godhead, are clearly seen, being understood from what He made, as Paul says: “Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead” (Romans 1:20 - NKJV). And in addition to this, God is not an energy nor an impersonal force but a Person who sees, hears, speaks, remembers, etc.

Beware of pantheism, for it is a lie through which the devil causes many people all over the world to worship the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, and also some animals and trees, and even some human beings, who are considered God. We can say that pantheism leads people to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. In other words, pantheism leads people to idolatry, and as you know the Scripture says that idolaters will not inherit the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

**God does not intervene in the universe (Deism)**

Deism (from Latin *deus* ‘god’) is the belief in the existence of a supreme being, specifically of a creator who does not intervene in the universe. Deism is based on nature and reason.

Deists are ready to acknowledge a Creator. In order to account for the existence of the material world, it is necessary to assume the existence of a First Cause, at whose command creation took effect and the cosmos entered on its life. But the Deist’s conception of creation is essentially restricted. The fabric of the universe is supposed to stand to God in the relation which the instrument bears to its maker. The heavens are the work of His hands, just as the watch is the work of the watchmaker. As the craftsman determines the characteristic properties of his machine, the correlation of its parts, their positions and their functions, so is God conceived to have dealt with the world. He brought it into being and ordained its laws. He imparted to it once of all the energy which serves as the driving power of the stupendous mechanism. In other words, according to Deists, God left Nature to work itself out in obedience to laws originally given. Deists, therefore, deny the possibility of occasional interferences on the part of God. In other words, they believe neither that God takes care for the universe nor that He can do miracles.

As for the Deistic conception of the relation of God to the moral world, they affirm that God is the author of the moral law and that the moral law is sufficiently well known by all for the practical purposes of life. Pain and pleasures, present and future, are attached respectively to its
infringement and its observance. Men are automatically punished and rewarded, in strict accordance with their deserts. In the moral as in the physical world there is neither need nor room for the special interposition of the supreme Governor. Deists don't need a special divine revelation, so they don't need the Bible.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that God did not leave the universe to work itself out in obedience to laws originally given without intervening in it, because God takes care of all the things He created and rules them personally. Let us consider the following passages of the Scripture: “He says to the snow, ‘Fall on the earth” (Job 37:6 – NKJV); “By the breath of God ice is given, and the broad waters are frozen. Also with moisture He saturates the thick clouds; He scatters His bright clouds. And they swirl about, being turned by His guidance, that they may do whatever He commands them on the face of the whole earth” (Job 37:10-12 – NKJV); “He scatters the frost like ashes” (Psalm 147:16 – NKJV). Do they not confirm that God is not away from the world but He is present and causes the natural phenomena to happen by His power and wisdom? And I could quote many more passages like the ones just quoted, but the time would fail me to do it. It suffices to read the answer God gave to Job to realize, in case you need to realize it, that God is the author of every natural phenomenon which takes place on the earth.

And on certain occasions God intervenes in the universe abolishing for a certain period of time the natural laws He Himself has ordained. For instance, after God brought the Israelites out of Egypt, God divided the Red Sea (cf. Exodus chapter 14); in the days of Joshua God caused the sun to stand still, as it is written: “Then Joshua spoke to the Lord in the day when the Lord delivered up the Amorites before the children of Israel, and he said in the sight of Israel: ‘Sun, stand still over Gibeon; and Moon, in the Valley of Aijalon’. So the sun stood still, and the moon stopped, till the people had revenge upon their enemies. Is this not written in the Book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and did not hasten to go down for about a whole day. And there has been no day like that, before it or after it, that the Lord heeded the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel” (Joshua 10:12-14 - NKJV); in the days of king Hezekiah God caused the shadow to go backward ten degrees, as it is written: “So Isaiah the prophet cried out to the Lord, and He brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down on the sundial of Ahaz” (2 Kings 20:11 – NKJV); and in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, God caused a virgin to conceive and bring forth a son, who was His only Begotten Son, namely Jesus Christ (Matthew 1:18-25).

Let us now talk about men; who directs their steps? God, as it is written: “A man’s steps are directed by the Lord” (Proverbs 20:24 – NIV). Who gives life to men? God, for it is written that He is the One “who gives breath to the people on it [the earth], and spirit to those who walk on it” (Isaiah 42:5 – NKJV), and also that “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28 – NKJV). No, God is not away from the world He created, He is not far from men for Paul says that “He is not far from each one of us” (Acts 17:27 – NKJV). According to the Scripture, when we pray to Him He hears us because His ears are open to our prayers; He knows when we are afflicted and troubled (because His eyes are in every place keeping watch on the evil and the good) and He comforts us; the very hairs of our head are all numbered by Him, He numbers our steps and He puts our tears into His bottle. God is not a God who lives somewhere in the Universe and does not take care of His creatures and when they pray to Him He does not hear their prayers, but He is a God who fills the heavens and the earth, and He is near us, He loves us, He cares for us giving us food, clothing us, keeping us, guiding us, delivering us from all sorts of distresses, comforting us when we need to be comforted, punishing us when we need to be disciplined, and doing many more things. We see His hand working on our behalf continually. How great is the love that God shows toward us! Blessed be His Holy name forever. Amen.

Now, let me say something about the moral laws: deists claim that they don't need any divine revelation to know the moral laws of God because they can be discovered by human reason. Well, that's not true, for God at a certain point of the human history gave or revealed the law to
the Israelites on Mount Sinai. Why did He give the law? That through it man might know sin, that is to say, that man might know what is sin in the eyes of God. For Paul said: “I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said: You shall not covet” (Romans 7:7 – NKJV). Therefore, man is unable to know God’s moral laws without the law of Moses. However, after God made known sin to men, it was necessary for Him to reveal to men the way of salvation. And that’s what He did through His Son, for Jesus Christ was sent by God the Father into this world to tell men what they must do in order to be saved. Jesus spoke the words of His Father, as He said: “For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak” (John 12:49-50 – NKJV). That’s how God revealed to men the Gospel of salvation, that is, the way of salvation!

In the light of all these things, therefore, we conclude that Deism is a wrong belief, and thus the God of the Deists is not “the only true God” (John 17:3 – NIV) who created the heavens and the earth. Deism is a work of the devil, for it is one of the lies the devil has conceived to keep people far from God. Expose and refute it.

**God is made of flesh and bones**

Mormons teach that God is made of flesh and bones. Here is what they say: “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s ….’ (Doctrine and Covenants, 130:22); ‘We affirm that to deny the materiality of God’s person is to deny God; for a thing without parts has no whole, and an immaterial body cannot exist” (James E. Talmage, A Study of the Articles of Faith, Salt Lake City, Utah (U.S.A.), 42nd edition, 1968, page 48).

**Confutation**

The Scripture very clearly teaches that God is a Person but He is not made of flesh and bones like us, for Jesus said: “God is Spirit” (John 4:24 – NKJV) or “a Spirit” (John 4:24 - KJV) and “a spirit does not have flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39 – NKJV).

Mormons, therefore, are greatly mistaken. Beware of them, their God is not the God of the Bible. Expose and refute this heresy, which they spread all over the world.

**God was once a mortal man**

Mormons teach that God was once a mortal man. Here is what Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, said: ‘God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. If the veil were rent today, and the great God who holds this world its in orbit, and who upholds all worlds and all things by his power, was to make himself visible – I say, if you were to see him today you would see him like a man in form – like yourselves in all the person, image and very form as a man; for Adam was created in the very fashion, image and likeness of God, and received instruction from, and walked, talked and conversed with him, as one man talks and communes with another. In order to understand the subject of the dead, for consolation of those who mourn for the loss of their friends, it is necessary we should understand the character and being of God and how he came to be so; for I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. These are incomprehensible ideas to some, but they are simple. It is the first principle of the Gospel to
know for a certainty the Character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man converses with another, and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did…….’ (Robert L. Millet, Joseph Smith: Selected sermons and writings, N.J. (U.S.A.) 1989, pages 131-132. These words were spoken by Joseph Smith in 1844 at the funeral of Elder King Follett).

How did he become a holy and exalted man, a glorified and resurrected Personage, and attain his present status of Godhead? In the first place, he took advantage of every opportunity to learn the laws of truth, from day to day he exerted His will vigorously, he gained more knowledge, thus he grew in experience and continued to grow until he attained the status of Godhood!!!

Confutation

The Scripture clearly teaches that God has been always the same and He will be always the same. For God said through the prophet Malachi: “I the Lord do not change” (Malachi 3:6 – NIV), Moses said to God: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever You had formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God” (Psalm 90:2 - NKJV), and the Psalmist says to God: “You remain the same ….” (Psalm 102:27 - NIV). And since Jesus stated that God is spirit (John 4:24), we infer that God has been always a spirit. And since a spirit does not have flesh and bones as we have (Luke 24:39), it is evident that God has never been a man like us.

To sum up, there was never a time when God was not God, for He is God from all eternity. There was never a time when God was a mortal man, for He has never been a man like us. Therefore, God cannot be an exalted man (that is, a man who one day rose from the dead and became an exalted man); He is the King “immortal” (1 Timothy 1:17 - NKJV) because He “alone has immortality” (1 Timothy 6:16 - NKJV), so He has never tasted death.

Mormons are greatly mistaken, for they deny the immutability of our great God. So, brethren, beware of them.

God the Father had a Father, and God’s Father also had a Father and so on

Mormons teach that God the Father had a Father, and God’s Father also had a Father and so on. President Brigham Young said: ‘He [God] is our Father – the Father of our spirits, and was once a man in mortal flesh as we are, and is now an exalted being. How many Gods there are, I do not know. But there never was a time when there were not Gods ….’ (Journal of Discourses, vol. 7, page 333); Heber C. Kimball, who was a member of the first Presidency, said: ‘…. Then we shall go back to our Father and God, who is connected with one who is still farther back; and this Father is connected with one still further back, and so on …’ (Journal of Discourses, vol. 5, page 19), and Orson Pratt said: “We were begotten by our Father in Heaven; the person of our Father in Heaven was begotten on a previous heavenly world by His Father; and again, He was begotten by a still more ancient Father; and so on, from generation to generation … we wonder in our minds, how far back the genealogy extends, and how the first world was formed, and the first father was begotten’ (The Seer, page 132).

Confutation

The Holy Scripture states that “there is one God” (1 Timothy 2:5 – NKJV), who is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:6). He is “the only true God” (John 17:3 – NKJV), besides Him there is no God because God Himself said: “Before Me there was no God formed,
Mormons, therefore, are greatly mistaken. Their God is not the God we have known, but another god. I exhort you to expose their false teaching.

**God is the greatest failure in the Universe**

Kenneth Copeland has said: “I was shocked when I found out who the biggest failure in the Bible actually is. ... The biggest one is God. ... I mean, He lost His top-ranking, most anointed angel; the first man He ever created; the first woman He ever created; the whole earth and all the Fullness therein; a third of the angels, at least — that’s a big loss, man ... Now, the reason you don’t think of God as a failure is He never said He’s a failure. And you’re not a failure till you say you’re one.” (Praise-a-Thon program on TBN [April 1988])

Confutation

First of all I want to say that when we say that a man is a failure we mean that he is an unsuccessful person, therefore anyone who affirms that God is a failure means that God is an unsuccessful God, that is to say, a God who has failed to accomplish His aim or purpose. Secondly, I want to say this, if God never said that He is a failure, why should we say that He is a failure? If God never said that He is a failure, that means that He is not a failure, doesn’t it? So why should we say or think that God is a failure? Should we say that God is a failure because Satan rebelled against Him, or because many angels followed Satan in his rebellion, or because Adam and Eve sinned? Certainly not, for all those things happened by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God. As a matter of fact, what may seem a failure of God was something which God in His infinite wisdom caused to happen so that one day He might send His only begotten Son into the world to die for our sins. How could we affirm then that God is a failure? Furthermore, the Scripture says that “the deceived and the deceiver are His” (Job 12:16 – NKJV), so both those who deceive and those who are deceived are under His control. They can do nothing apart from the will of God. In addition to this, the Scripture says that “the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it” (Psalm 24:1 – NIV). Is it not clear that God is still the Possessor of heaven and earth?

The Son of God, who knew God the Father from all eternity, and who knew all the events recorded in the Holy Scripture, one day said about God: “My Father, who has given them [my sheep] to me, is greater than all” (John 10:29 – NIV). Let me ask you this then: ‘Can someone who is greater than all be called a failure?’ Certainly not. So, God is not the biggest failure, rather He is the most successful Person in all the universe. Books without number could be written about the successes accomplished by God, because success belongs to Him. To Him be the glory now and forevermore. Amen.

In the light of these things which are taught by the Scripture, therefore, it is absolutely wrong to affirm that God is a failure. Last but not least, brothers in the Lord, know this, that all those who dare to affirm that God is the biggest failure in the Bible do not know the Scriptures nor fear God. Beware of all those who say such a thing about our great God. They are idle talkers and deceivers who, by smooth and flattering speech, deceive the hearts of the simple. I say it again, beware of them, and refute their false teachings.
God lives on a mother planet

Kenneth Copeland has affirmed: “Heaven has a north and a south and an east and a west. Consequently, it must be a planet.” (Spirit, Soul and Body I, 1985 audiotape #01-0601, side 1); “You don’t think earth was first, do you? Huh? Well, you don’t think that God made man in His image, and then made earth in some other image? There is not anything under this whole sun that’s new. Are you hearing what I’m saying? This is all a copy. It’s a copy of home. It’s a copy of the Mother Planet. Where God lives, He made a little one just like His and put us on it.” (Following the Faith of Abraham I, 1989 audiotape, #01-3001, side 1)

Confutation

According to the Scripture, Paradise is not a planet like the earth or another planet but a place located in the highest. Paradise is called the third heaven, for Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4 – NKJV). Therefore Paradise is above the first and the second heaven. The throne of God is in the third heaven (Psalms 11:4), for the apostle John saw it there when he had that heavenly vision on the island called Patmos, as it is written: “After this, I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this. At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it’” (Revelation 4:1-2 – NIV).

According to the Scripture, the earth on which we live is not a copy of a so called mother planet where God lives. The Scripture does not contain any reference to a mother planet, while it contains many references to the planet where we live, that is, the earth. Therefore I firmly believe that this mother planet does not exist. Beware of all those who want you to believe in the existence of such a planet. They understand neither what they say nor the things which they affirm.

God can be maneuvered

The late Jack Hyles, in a 12/26/82 sermon, ‘I Am Only Human,’ argued that ‘God can be maneuvered,’ saying, ‘The Old Testament saints knew God so well they maneuvered with God. They all started off, ‘Thou, the great God of Jacob, Thou the God of the creation, Thou the God that made the stars.’ [Hyles has also preached on the subject, ‘How to Make God Your Slave’]}

Confutation

The Psalmist said: “Whatever the Lord pleases He does, in heaven and in earth, in the seas and in all deep places” (Psalm 135:6 – NKJV), and king Nebuchadnezzar, after his understanding returned to him, said about God the following things: “He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, What have you done?” (Daniel 4:35 – NKJV), and Paul said to the Ephesians that God “works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11 – NKJV). As you can see, therefore, God does whatever He wills, and in order to accomplish His will He uses also the inhabitants of the earth. Nowhere in the Bible do we find a story that teaches us that God can be maneuvered.
or that we can maneuver with God. God is God, and man is man; God uses men to accomplish His purpose, but men cannot use God.

God is the One who controls the whole universe, while man is under God’s control and he can do nothing apart from the will of God. Therefore anyone who claims that God can be maneuvered or that we can make God our slave does not recognize the sovereignty of God and thus he shows that he does not know the Scripture.

Perhaps someone will say that actually God can be maneuvered through prayer because when we pray we move God to act in a certain way, just as the saints of old moved God to do certain things when they prayed to God and God heard their prayer.

To those who think such a thing, I say the following things. What you believe is wrong because through our prayer we can’t maneuver God in any way because our prayer is answered by God only if it is according to His will, for the apostle John said: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15 –NKJV). And what John said was confirmed by James who rebuked some believers who asked and did not receive because they asked amiss, that they might spend it on their pleasures (James 4:3).

Therefore, when we hear someone say that we can ‘move the hand of God’, we need to keep in mind that God will move His hand only if what we have asked of Him is according to His will, thus His sovereignty is by no means affected because God continues to work according to His will. Is it not clear that if our will is contrary to the will of God, He will accomplish His will and He will not give us what we asked of Him in faith? Therefore, we can’t maneuver God through our prayer, rather it is God who maneuvers us even when we don’t realize it. If we thought that God, by granting us our request, allowed us to maneuver Him, we would be wrong because we would not understand the fact that it was God who moved us so that we might ask Him to do a certain thing because that thing was according to His will. Let no one deceive you. God is the Ruler of the universe; it is true that sometimes in the Scripture it seems that He was maneuvered by some holy men, and maybe even in our life it seems that God acts in accordance with our wish or will, but the fact still remains that God does whatever He wants and consequently He accomplishes His purpose in our life. He is the one who directs our steps, and His counsel and not ours will stand. Remember this always.

God is a family

Herbert W. Armstrong taught that God is a family. Here is what he wrote: ‘This former Lucifer, who became Satan, has so cleverly DECEIVED all humanity that almost no one today knows that God is, actually, a Divine FAMILY. One Family. God IS a Family. That Family is ONE GOD. Satan has deceived people into almost every other belief. Perhaps the largest number have been deceived into believing God is a “trinity” -- God in THREE persons -- LIMITING God to three persons and misrepresenting the HOLY SPIRIT, which flows from God and from Christ, to be a single person’ (Herbert W. Armstrong, The Incredible Human Potential, Pasadena, California, 1978, pages 61-62). This family presently consists of two separate individuals, the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, excluding the Holy Spirit (for the Holy Spirit is not a Divine Person but a force, according to Armstrong). However, the day is coming when this God-family will comprise all the ‘resurrected’ or ‘born again’ children of God, for those who are Christ’s at the ‘resurrection’ will be born again into membership in the God-family: ‘When the Church, by a resurrection or instantaneous change from mortal to immortal (from physical to spirit composition) becomes the Spirit-composed children of God, Christ will marry the Church which shall become His wife. So we have Father, Son, wife, and children of the Father -- all a FAMILY relationship -- the Divine God Family!’ (Ibid., page 17)
Confutation

First of all, it must be said that the Holy Spirit is not a force but a Person, for He speaks (Acts 8:29), teaches (John 14:26), guides (John 16:13), prays (Romans 8:26-27); furthermore, He can be grieved (Ephesians 4:30), can be lied to (Acts 5:3), can be resisted (Acts 7:51), and can be tempted (Acts 5:9).

Secondly, the Holy Spirit is God, for He is eternal like the Father (Hebrews 9:14; Psalm 90:2), almighty like the Father (Job 33:4; Psalm 139:13), omnipresent like the Father (Psalm 139:7; Jeremiah 23:24) and omniscient like the Father (1 Corinthians 2:10; 1 Samuel 2:3).

Thirdly, the Godhead consists of three Divine Persons, who are the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; that is to say, the Godhead is a Trinity (Matthew 3:13-17; John 14:15-17; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14;).

Will those who are Christ's become members of the Godhead when they are raised from the dead? No, they won't, for those who are Christ's will never become God. What will happen at the resurrection then? At the resurrection all Christians will receive an immortal, incorruptible, and glorious body like the body of Jesus Christ, thus they will possess a form like Christ's own form (Philippians 3:20-21; 1 John 3:2). This form will be composed of flesh and bones in the structural composition of Christ's resurrected body (Luke 24:39), for the Scripture does not say that the resurrected bodies of the saints will be composed of spirit; nor does it say that at the resurrection of the body Christians will be born again for the new birth is an instantaneous experience of spiritual cleansing and re-creation which takes place when a person repents and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore every Christian is already born again (1 Peter 1:3-4, 23; James 1:18; 1 John 5:1). Nevertheless, Christians will continue to be human beings even after their resurrection.

Let no one of the followers of Herbert Armstrong deceive you with empty words.

**God is not a vengeful God**

Billy Graham in his book, *Facing Death And The Life After* (1987), writes: ‘Many people are deceived by Satan into thinking that God is a vengeful taskmaster, ready to send to hell all those who offend Him. They can see no hope. True, God does hate sin, but He loves the sinner.” (page 217)

A very similar opinion is held also by pastor Francesco Toppi, former president of the Italian Assemblies of God, for in his book *A Domanda Risponde* [a book with many questions and answers] he says: ‘The idea that God is an avenging God, ready to judge and to condemn, is a purely human idea and it is the heritage of a superstitious and pagan conception [of God]. It reveals the absolute ignorance of those who don’t know their Creator and Saviour’ (Francesco Toppi, *A Domanda Risponde*, vol. 2, ADI-Media, Roma 2004, Seconda edizione, page 183).

Confutation

Our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is also a God who avenges. In other words, He is also an avenging God. This is what both the Old and the New Testament state very clearly: *In the Old Testament*, God says in the law: “Vengeance is Mine” (Deuteronomy 32:35 – NKJV) and also: “As surely as I live forever, when I sharpen my flashing sword and my hand grasps it in judgement, I will take vengeance on my adversaries and repay those who hate me” (Deuteronomy 32:40-41 – NIV). Therefore, Moses says: “Rejoice, O nations, with his people, for he will avenge the blood of his servants; he will take vengeance on his enemies . . . .” (Deuteronomy 32:43 – NIV). There are many other passages of the Old Testament which in one way or another state that God takes vengeance: among them I want to mention this one which is
written in the book of the prophet Nahum: “The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath” (Nahum 1:2 – NIV), and also this one which is written in the Psalms: “O Lord, the God who avenges, O God who avenges, shine forth” (Psalm 94:1 – NIV).

In the New Testament. There are particularly two places where God is presented as an avenging God. The former is in the Gospel according to Luke, where Jesus stated: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24). The latter is in the first epistle of Paul to the Thessalonians, where the apostle states: “For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-6).

Therefore, as you can see, the Scripture attests in an eloquent and powerful way that our God is an avenging God who takes vengeance on His adversaries. If it were not so, how could the Scripture state that God is righteous? Therefore, vengeance is necessary to God in order to show His righteousness, which is very high. We are glad to have a God who not only is a merciful God but also an avenging God; we are glad because we know that He will execute judgement upon those who wrong us, both believers and unbelievers, by returning their wickedness upon their own heads. Of course, God sometimes gives them (those who wrong other people) time to repent of their sins, but if they don’t repent God will definitely punish them. Let no one deceive you, God avenges both believers and unbelievers. He is the Righteous One, to Him be the glory now and forever. Amen.

I want to say something else. Today many preachers love to speak only about some of the virtues of God, that is to say, about His love, His goodness, His faithfulness, His mercy and His compassion, and they never speak about His righteousness which God manifests through His vengeances, which are often immediate. For instance, Ananias and Sapphira were put to death by God immediately, the reason was because they had lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:1-11). King Herod was struck down by an angel of God (and he was eaten by worms and died) when the people of Tyre and Sidon shouted ‘This is the voice of a god, not of a man!’; the reason was because Herod did not give praise to God (Acts 12:20-23). Obviously, the reason why these preachers do not speak about the vengeances of God is that they do not want to frighten the listeners: believers must not fear God, they must not tremble at the thought that God can punish them immediately, even by putting them to death (if that is God’s will), because of some sins they have committed, because of their rebellion, because of the stubbornness of their hearts!! No, believers must think only of the love of God, of His compassion, of His mercy!!! So these believers who heed these preachers form a very personal idea of God, which is the idea of their pastor they love to listen to. Consequently, when these believers, who are used to hearing only about the love and mercy of God, meet a believer who speaks also about God’s vengeances, they think that he is a believer who is superstitious and paganized by strange ideas!!

Brothers, let no man deceive you with vain words, search the Scriptures diligently and you will see that God is an avenging God.

Beware of those who teach that God is not an avenging God for they lie against the truth.
**God is always loving and merciful - the anger is just an appearance**

In his book *What the Bible Actually Teaches*, John Odhner, who is a follower of spiritist Emanuel Swedenborg, states: ‘If the Lord is always merciful to everyone, then He can never be angry and vengeful. In God Himself there is "no variation nor shadow of turning." (James 1:17) .... What has seemed to mankind to be evidence of God's anger, then, has usually been not from God at all, but from the cruel influence of hell ..... Therefore, hell is the source of the trouble which God unwillingly tolerates for the sake of our freedom. Yet because we suppose God is the source, the Bible speaks as if God were the one who is angry.’ References from Swedenborg: Brief Exposition 60-63, The Secrets of Heaven 588, 1093, 2447.

**Confutation**

The God of whom the Bible speaks is not only a merciful and loving God, but also a God who is angry with those who break His commandments, as it is written: “God is angry with the wicked every day” (Psalm 7:11 – NKJV). His anger is a real anger and not a seeming one. Hear what the Psalmist says: “Yet they [the Israelites] tested and provoked the Most High God, and did not keep His testimonies. But turned back and acted unfaithfully like their fathers; they were turned aside like a deceitful bow. For they provoked Him to anger with their high places, and moved Him to jealousy with their carved images. When God heard this, He was furious, and greatly abhorred Israel, so that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent He had placed among men, and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand. He also gave His people over to the sword, and was furious with His inheritance. The fire consumed their young men, and their maidens were not given in marriage. Their priests fell by the sword, and their widows made no lamentation” (Psalm 78:56-64 – NKJV). As you can see, when God saw that the Israelites, after they had entered the promised land, acted unfaithfully like their fathers He was really angry with them and punished them severely.

The God of whom the Bible speaks is also an avenging God, as it is written: “The Lord is a jealous and avenging God; the Lord takes vengeance and is filled with wrath” (Nahum 1:2 – NIV). Hear now what God said against Babylon (whose army burned the house of God and the houses of the inhabitants of Jerusalem with fire, broke down the walls of Jerusalem, and killed many Jews and carried away captive to Babylon the remnant of the people who remained in the city and those who had gone over to the captain of the Babylonian guard) through the prophet Jeremiah: “Behold, I will plead thy cause [God is speaking to Jerusalem], and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant. They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lion's whelps. In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he goats. How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations! The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby. And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD. And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler. Therefore, behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her. Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD. As Babylon hath caused the
slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth. Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind. We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces: for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house. Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images: and through all her land the wounded shall groan. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD. A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans: Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered: Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men; and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary." (Jeremiah 51:36-58). What God said through the prophet Jeremiah against Babylon was fulfilled in 536 before Christ. Know this, brothers, therefore, that God takes vengeance on his adversaries for He is just. Let no one deceive you.

God has never used sickness to discipline His children

Kenneth Copeland in his Believer's Voice of Victory magazine has written: “God has never used sickness to discipline His children” (9/89).

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that God in ancient times used sickness to punish some of His children for their disobediences. Here is what Paul wrote to the saints of Corinth: “Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgement. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:27-32 – NIV). As you can see, some of the saints of Corinth were struck by God with sickness for they ate the bread and drank the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner. In other words, God disciplined them through sickness because they had sinned against the body and the blood of Jesus, lest they should be condemned with the world.

And since the Scripture states that God does not change, we proclaim that He still disciplines His children through sickness for their disobediences, lest they be condemned with the world. Let no one deceive you with empty words, brothers, for the Scripture says that “whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives” (Hebrews 12:6 – NKJV).
God makes mistakes

Some people believe and teach that God makes mistakes.

Confutation

God is infallible when He speaks as well as when He does or permits something for He “is perfect” (Matthew 5:48 – NKJV). The Scripture clearly states that whatever God says or does is free from errors, as it is written: “The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times” (Psalm 12:6 – NKJV), and again: “His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice” (Deuteronomy 32:4 – NKJV).

God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent, how can we think that He can make mistakes? Know this, to say that God does make mistakes or can make mistakes is to deny the absolute perfection of God. So beware of anyone who claims that God makes mistakes.

God delights in those who do evil

There are some people who affirm that God delights in those who do evil.

Confutation

It is not true that God takes delight in those who do evil, for God is righteous and He loves righteousness. David said to God: “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness, nor shall evil dwell with You” (Psalm 5:4 – NKJV), and Solomon said: “For the perverse person is an abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 3:32 – NKJV). Therefore it is wrong to think that God takes delight in the wicked, and it is wrong also to envy them, for Wisdom says: “Do not let your heart envy sinners” (Proverbs 23:17 – NKJV), and David says: “Do not fret because of evildoers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass. And wither as the green herb” (Psalm 37:1-2 - NKJV).

There was a prophet in ancient times whose name was Asaph who made this mistake but afterward he came to his senses and acknowledged that he had made an error; he wrote some words which warns us not to envy sinners. Here is what the prophet Asaph wrote: “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart. But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my reins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee. Nevertheless I am continually
with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.” (Psalm 73:1-28).

Brothers, when you see the wicked increase their possessions by usury and extortion, when you see them enjoy good health, when you see them rejoice together with their families, when you see their children healthy and beautiful, when you see they are famous and respected, and their advices are taken for they are rich, when you see that they have got many friends who visit them continually, when you hear them mock the governing authorities, and when you hear them say, 'Who is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit do we have if we pray to Him?' or 'It is useless to serve God and to keep His commandments!', I say, when you see and hear these things, do not lose heart, do not fret nor be envious of the wicked, but stand firm in the faith, hold to the Word of God and continue to be zealous for the fear of the Lord, for God tests you by the perverse people to know whether you will obey the commandments of God or not. That's the way God acts, but do not marvel at this for many others were tested in this way before us.

I want to remember you that the seven nations who dwelt in the land of Canaan were wicked in the sight of God, for they committed all kinds of sins. They were idolatrous, they practiced witchcraft, they gave themselves over to sexual immorality and to many other abominations, yet they lived in a good land, as God said to the Israelites (while those nations lived in that land): “For the Lord Your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, that flow out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey .... a land whose stones are iron ... a land flowing with milk and honey” (Deuteronomy 8:7-9; 11:9 – NKJV). However, God did not leave them unpunished, for when their iniquity was complete, God began to destroy those nations before Israel as He had promised He would do. But the point on which I want you to reflect is this: it was by those wicked nations that God (after Israel took possession of the land and the land was divided among the tribes of Israel) tested the people of Israel, for it is written: “Now these are the nations which the Lord left, that He might test Israel by them .... Five lords of the Philistines, all the Canaanites, the Sidonians, and the Hivites who dwelt in Mount Lebanon, from Mount Baal Hermon to the entrance of Hamath. And they were left, that He might test Israel by them, to know whether they would obey the commandments of the Lord, which He had commanded their fathers by the hand of Moses” (Judges 3:1, 3-4 – NKJV).

Today we can say that we are in the same situation as the Israelites were in. For we, who are the people of God redeemed from the hand of the enemy, live in the midst of a crooked and sinful generation before which there is no fear of God. The sad facts are before our own eyes, for sinners declare their sin as Sodom; people do openly what God detests. The people of this generation are – as Paul said many centuries ago - “lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:2-5 – NKJV). Many times we are tempted to think that the wicked are useless (or that it would be better for God to destroy all of them at once); however God uses them to test us, to know whether we will obey the commandments of God or not, so we must say that in a certain sense the wicked are useful to God. Is it not true that when we see the wicked prosper in their ways and bring their wicked schemes to pass we are tempted to give up? Is it not true that our heart is tested when we see people do evil things for it seems that someone is whispering in our ears, 'It is useless to do good in this world so wicked'? You see, brothers, God tests our hearts and minds even by people who do not fear Him; but we must not be envious of the wicked thinking that it is better to serve sin rather than God. For God hates all the workers of iniquity. Hear what Asaph, after he realized that it is not worth envying the wicked, said: “If I say, I will speak thus;
behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image.” (Psalm 73:15-20). As you can see, when the prophet entered the sanctuary of God and began to consider the end awaiting the wicked, he realized that he did not have to think that he had washed his hands in innocence in vain. We also must consider the end awaiting the wicked, lest we speak things which God does not like. What is the end awaiting all the wicked? I could answer this question by saying only these words: ‘What is awaiting the sinner who follows his impenitent heart is an eternal destruction and shame’, but I want to speak in detail about the end awaiting the impenitent sinners after death. When the wicked die they immediately go down to Hades, that is, hell, where there is an unfanned fire, which burns day and night, whose flames envelop the souls of the sinners who are there and cause them to gnash their teeth and weep day and night. Jesus said that “there will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:42 – NKJV). Therefore in Hades there is no rest nor comfort for sinners, but only torment and anguish. Besides burning fire, there is also darkness in Hades, but a darkness which cannot be compared to any darkness which exist on the earth. Job spoke of this horrible place, calling it “the land of darkness and the shadow of death, a land as dark as darkness itself, as the shadow of death, without any order, where even the light is like darkness” (Job 10:21-22 – NKJV). As you can see, Hades is a dreadful place, and the biblical words which describe it are able to make those who live far from God shiver and to lead believers to fear God. Those brothers who have seen Hades in a vision as well as those brothers who have seen Hades for before their conversion they died in their sins and after a while they came back to life, have fully confirmed both the existence of Hades and the biblical description of it. They find it difficult to describe in their own words the horrors of hell they have seen in the lower parts of the earth. The best way for them to describe what they have seen is to quote the verses of the Scripture which speak of this place. This is another proof of the trustworthiness of the Word of God. We believe in the existence of hell for the Scriptures speak of this place, and in knowing that the wicked are turned into hell we are comforted for we recognize that God does not leave the wicked unpunished. On the other hand, if this place of torment, where the wicked go after death, did not exist, why should the wicked repent? We take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn from their evil ways to the Lord, but we also are bound to praise God for His righteousness, which is very high; to us the fact that God brings the wicked down to hell is another proof of His justice and proves that God abhors the perverse people and does not leave them unpunished. The point is that on the earth we see that there are just men who are treated as if they were wicked, and there are wicked men who are treated as if they were just (Ecclesiastes 8:14), and this grieves us, and it makes us weep and angry. We do not yet see the righteousness of God manifested fully on earth (that’s why we are tempted to think that God takes pleasure in the wicked). However, notwithstanding this, we know there is a God who judges in the earth, who cannot be mocked for He will make everyone reap what he has sown. I am fully convinced that if we walked by sight and thus we saw continually Hades with the souls of the wicked tormented by the fire of Hades, while they weep and gnash their teeth, we would never think of envying the wicked who prosper in their ways. However, if it were so, we would cease to walk by faith, which is not possible for we must go on by faith, not by sight. Of course, the visions of Hades, which God still gives today, are useful for they refresh our memory and they shake us; but even though we have not seen Hades or we do not see it continually, we must believe that it exists and that those who are there have ceased to laugh and to have fun once for all. Know this, that all those who have died mocking the Gospel or blaspheming or after refusing to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ are in the heart of the earth weeping and screaming because of the anguish of their heart, and they have no hope. If only they could come out of that horrible place and come back to the earth, they would turn to the Lord immediately and proclaim in the hearing of men: “Save yourselves from this untoward
[perverse] generation.” (Acts 2:40). Those who had worshiped Mary would destroy the statues of Mary and would no longer worship her; those who had prayed for the dead would begin to pray only for the living so that God may save them; those who had believed that they were members of the only true church which exist on earth (I refer to the Roman Catholic Church) would immediately come out of it trying to bring as many souls as possible out of this organization which is a prison; those also who had claimed to be Christians for they belonged to a Protestant denomination but they actually had never been born again would turn to the Lord. But all these people can’t turn to the Lord any longer, for they died in their sins and thus are lost forever! On the day of judgement they will rise again in order to be judged according to their works and condemned. Brothers I realize that it is sad to know that the impenitent sinners who derided us and the Gospel are now in the fire of hell where they scream with pain, but they are in hell not because we did send them there, but because they refused to repent of their sins and believe in the Gospel and thus they condemned themselves. I have talked to you in this way so that you may understand that to us hell is real, and we do not envy sinners for this reason, because their way, even if they are healthy and rich and famous, leads to perdition.

Job was a blameless and upright man among the people of his time, but during his afflictions in the bitterness of his soul he spoke some words against God, for he dared to say to God: “Does it seem good to You that You should oppress, that You should despise the work of Your hands, and smile on the counsel of the wicked?” (Job 10:3 – NKJV). Job, struck by Satan with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head and deprived of his children and of his possessions, during his affliction accused God of smiling on the schemes of the wicked and of leaving them unpunished, as he said: “Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them” (Job 21:9 – NKJV), and also of striking him wrongly and counting him as one of His enemies, who had practiced righteousness; and the bitterness of his soul drove him to say also: “It profits a man nothing that he should delight in God” (Job 34:9 – NKJV). God did not like those words spoken by Job and rebuked him saying: “Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge?” (Job 38:2 – NKJV). Therefore, in the midst of our afflictions which we endure for the Gospel’s sake let us not say, ‘It profits a man nothing that he should delight in God,’ or, ‘God delights in those who do evil,’ or, ‘It is useless to serve God and to keep His commandments!’ for these words weary God and make Him angry. Instead let us say what Asaph, after he understood the end of the wicked, said: “Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.” (Psalm 73:23-28).

Brothers, the Lord, to whom we have turned to serve Him all the days of our life, is good and will always do good to those who fear Him and keep His commandments; there is no doubt about it. That’s why we are encouraged to keep walking this road, without turning aside to the right hand or to the left, because we know that the blessing of the Lord is upon us and at the end of our race the Lord will receive us to glory. Yes, beloved brothers, for we were called by God to His eternal glory and we will appear before Him holy and blameless with exceeding joy, if we continue in the faith and good works until the end.

Brothers beloved by the Lord, I want you to know the following things. What you do for the poor among the saints is not in vain, for God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name; it is not true that your prayers are useless for the effective and fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much – as for those prayers which have not yet been answered, they are in the presence of God and will be answered at God’s appointed time; nor is it true that God ignores your cause, for it is before Him and in His time He will avenge you. Do not grow weary while doing good, for your good works will be rewarded; the harvest is near and you also will enter the heavenly Zion singing for joy to God and bringing your sheaves with you. Be of good courage, continue to hope in the Lord; of course, God tests you to know
whether you love Him with all your heart and with all your soul, but His eyes are still on you and His ears are still open to your prayers. Be of good comfort; I know, sometimes we go through difficult times and we are perplexed for the affliction is great, but do not be afraid, you also will be delivered by God from your distresses and you will praise the Lord for His great goodness and for His great faithfulness for you will see with your own eyes that the Lord will turn the harm that your enemies have done to you into good, and you will proclaim again that “all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28 – NKJV). Brothers, stand firm in the faith, fighting the good fight as good soldiers of Jesus Christ, for victory belongs to the Lord. Yes, in the midst of our distresses victory belongs to us in Christ Jesus. To Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

God is not omnipresent

The Philippine-based religious organization Members Church of God International teaches that God is not omnipresent. Here is what we read on the official website of this organization: “Therefore, we must not believe those who claim that God is everywhere, or God is omnipresent. That is a blatant lie!” (http://www.angdatingdaan.org/)

Confutation

God is omnipresent, for He says: “Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him? …. Do I not fill heaven and earth?” (Jeremiah 23:24 – NKJV). David acknowledged that God is omnipresent when he said to God: “If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there” (Psalm 139:8). Therefore, beware of all those who deny the omnipresence of God, for they lie against the truth.
JESUS CHRIST

Before the Incarnation, the Son of God did not exist

Oneness Pentecostals teach the following things about Jesus Christ: “Jesus pre-existed the Incarnation, not as the eternal Son but as the eternal Spirit of God. The Son was sent from the Father, but this terminology simply indicates that the Father enacted His pre-existing plan at a certain point in time and that the Son was divinely appointed to accomplish a certain task. In the same way, John the Baptist was a man sent from God, but he did not pre-exist his arrival into this world” (David K. Bernard, Essentials of Oneness Theology, Word Aflame Press, Hazelwood, MO, USA, 1995, pages 21-22). In other words, according to Oneness theology, Jesus, prior to His conception, was not a separate Person from God the Father. He could not exist as Son because for them ‘the Son had a beginning, namely, at the Incarnation’ (J. L. Hall and David K. Bernard, editors, Doctrines of the Bible, Word Aflame Press, Hazelwood, MO, U.S.A., 1998, page 21), thus ‘the term Son always has reference to the Incarnation, to the humanity in which God dwelt and revealed Himself’ (Ibid., page 143).

The Way International also teaches that Jesus Christ did not exist before the Incarnation: Victor Paul Wierwille said: ‘God is eternal whereas Jesus was born... Jesus Christ's existence began when he was conceived by God's creating the soul-life of Jesus in Mary. God created, brought into existence, this life in an ovum in Mary's womb’ (Victor Paul Wierwille, The Word's Way, Vol. 3, pages 26, 37); ‘Jesus Christ was not literally with God in the beginning’ (Jesus Christ is not God, New Knoxville, OH: American Christian Press, 1975, page 5), 'Where was Jesus Christ before he was born to Mary? Jesus Christ was with God in His foreknowledge’ (Ibid., page 28). Christadelphians also hold that Christ did not pre-exist His conception: ‘Jesus had no existence prior to his birth in Bethlehem 1900 years ago’ (Herald of the Coming Age, vol. 21, no 1, 'Why We Proclaim Jesus Did Not Pre-Exist!' page 2), 'We reject the doctrine – that the Son of God was co-eternal with the Father’ (The Constitution of the Glendale Christadelphian Ecclesia, page 18).

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that the Son of God, before the incarnation, existed as a Person separate from God the Father.

- John said: “We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father [or the Only Begotten from the Father], full of grace and truth” (John 1:14 – NIV).
- Jesus said: “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was I AM” (John 8:58 – NKJV); “What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?” (John 6:62 – NKJV); “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38 – NKJV); “And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5 – NKJV); “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24 – NKJV).
- Paul says: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men” (Philippians 2:5-7 - NKJV).

As you can see, Jesus Christ, as Son existed even before His arrival into this world; He was with the Father, He was in the form of God, that is to say, He was equal with God. Therefore, He pre-existed as a Person, for the Scripture says that He was sent by the Father, He was given by the Father, and Jesus Himself clearly said that He came down from heaven.
To confirm what I have just said, I want to comment briefly upon the following words of John: “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 ....The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1.1-3, 14 - NIV). First of all, note that John says that the Word was with God, and then that the Word was God; however, pay attention to this, when John says that the Word was God he does not mean that the Word was God the Father (for the Greek has ‘kai Theos en ho Logos’, that is, ‘and God was the Word’, and not ‘kai ho Theos en ho Logos’, that is, ‘and the God was the Word’) because if the apostle had said such a thing he would have denied the pre-existence of the Son as a Person separate from God the Father. Notice also the following thing: John says that all things were made through the Word, that is to say, through the Son; and this is confirmed by the apostle Paul who wrote to the Colossians: “All things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16 – NKJV), and by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews who wrote that God “made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2 – NKJV) through His Son. So we infer that since God created the heavens and the earth through His Son, this means that the Son of God was in heaven with the Father before the world was made. And to conclude my comment upon the above mentioned words of John, I say this: if the Word was God (but not God the Father) and at a certain point in time the Word was made flesh, that means that when the Word took the form of a bondservant and came in the likeness of men, God who was in heaven remained for a certain period of time without the Word who had been with Him from all eternity. In other words, God did not have His Son with Him in heaven for a certain period of time. That’s why Jesus, before His death, said to His disciples: “I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father” (John 16:28 – NKJV). He left heaven to come into this world, and when He finished the work the Father had given Him to do, He left the earth and returned to heaven.

In the light of the above mentioned Scriptures, therefore, you must beware of all those who deny the pre-existent state of Jesus, for they lie against the truth.

**Jesus is the Son of God by adoption ( adoptionism)**

Jesus Christ, as a man, is the adopted Son of God the Father. In other words, as “the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29), Christ is adopted with the adopted sons. Only thus can we be certain of our adoption. Therefore, ‘the Man Christ’ had two births: a natural birth of the Virgin, a spiritual birth by adoption and grace, begun in baptism (the baptism was the beginning of His Divine Sonship), completed in the resurrection. This doctrine, which is called adoptionism, arose in Spain in the 8th century, and it is still held by some.

**Confutation**

The Holy Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ, as far as His manhood is concerned, was the Son of God by nature and not by adoption. In other words, Jesus Christ was the Son of God not only before He was conceived in the womb of his mother by the Holy Spirit but also after He was conceived. There was never a time during both His prehuman state and His earthly life when He was not the Son of God.

Let me say something about the sonship of Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh. Jesus Christ was the Son of God even before His baptism (which took place when He was about thirty years old), for when He was about twelve years old He called God ‘His Father.’ That happened when His mother said to Him: “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously,” for Jesus said to Mary and Joseph: “Why did you seek Me? Did you not
know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49 – NKJV). As you can see, the Boy Jesus knew that He was the Son of God. He did not need to be adopted as son by God the Father because He was already the Son of God.

The adoption of Jesus as Son is a concept foreign to the teaching of the Holy Scripture because He did not need any spiritual birth to become the Son of God since He was the Son of God from all eternity. On the contrary, we as human creatures needed to experience a new birth (a spiritual birth) in order to become sons of God; without the new birth we could not become sons of God. Therefore we are sons of God by adoption and not by nature, for Paul says to the Ephesians that God “predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will” (Ephesians 1:5 – NIV), but Jesus, as far as His manhood is concerned, was never predestined to be adopted as the Son of God because He was the Son of God since His conception. Therefore when Paul says to the Romans that Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers (Romans 8:29), he does not mean that Jesus also was adopted as son of God, but he means a different thing, that is, Jesus has supremacy over all the sons of God.

The body of Jesus Christ was the product of the physical union of God the Father and the virgin Mary

Here is what Mormons teach about the conception of Jesus Christ: ‘He was the literal, biological son of an immortal, tangible Father and Mary, a mortal woman …’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 2, page 729); ‘Christ was begotten of God. He was not born without the aid of Man, and that Man was God’ (Doctrines of Salvation, I, page 18); ‘Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers’ (Mormon Doctrine, 1966, page 547). In other words, Mormons teach that Christ was conceived through a sexual act between Mary and God the Father: ‘The fleshly body of Jesus required a Mother as well as a Father. Therefore, the Father and Mother of Jesus, according to the flesh, must have been associated together in the capacity of Husband and Wife; hence the Virgin Mary must have been, for the time being, the lawful wife of God the Father … He had a lawful right to overshadow the Virgin Mary in the capacity of a husband, and beget a Son, although she was espoused to another ….’ (The Seer, page 158)

Confutation

Jesus Christ is not the literal, biological son of God the Father and Mary, because the Scripture teaches very clearly that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin called Mary. Here is what Matthew wrote: ‘Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel’, which is translated, ‘God with us’. Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS” (Matthew 1:18-25 – NKJV). And here is what Luke says about the birth of Jesus Christ: “And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, To a virgin
espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. … And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed [registered]. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed [registered] with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-7).

Beware of Mormons, they are heretics.

**Jesus Christ was not born of a virgin**

The Way International teaches that Jesus was not born of a virgin, for Mary lost her virginity before she gave birth to Jesus. Here are the words of Paul Wierwille that deny the virgin birth, "If it is said a virgin shall bring forth a son your Bible would fall to pieces. It says plainly that Mary was a virgin only at the time of conception, not at Jesus' birth; the theory of virgin birth has been a theological assumption and erroneous teaching. The Bible said in verse 20 that God told Joseph, "Take unto thee thy wife' when Joseph took her unto himself he lived with her as a husband lives with a wife. She was a virgin when she conceived by God, but when Joseph took her unto himself she was no longer a virgin. The divine conception made Mary no longer a virgin’ (The Way Magazine, Dec. 1970, page 6).

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was virgin not only when she conceived Jesus in her womb by the Holy Spirit but also when she gave birth to Jesus Christ, for it is written: “Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name JESUS” (Matthew 1:24-25 – NKJV). As you can see, Joseph had no union with his wife Mary till she gave birth to Jesus, thus Mary was virgin when she gave birth to Jesus. This happened so that it might be fulfilled what the prophet Isaiah had said, “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14 - NKJV).
**In Jesus Christ the Divinity took the place of the human mind or spirit (Apolinarianism)**

Apolinarius, bishop of Laodicea, who lived in the 4th century after Christ, taught the following things about Jesus Christ.

God Himself became man in Christ, however the whole Divine nature cannot be joined to the whole nature of a man. Two perfect natures always remain two separate persons; ‘two perfect beings cannot become one’, he stated. A perfect man is necessarily sinful, ‘where there is a perfect man, there is sin’, but Christ could not become sinful. Therefore, the divine nature and the human nature of Christ could not coexist within one person. Apolinaris argued that Jesus would certainly not be a man, for all men consist essentially of three parts, body, soul, and spirit (which is confirmed by the Scripture) whereas He would have four parts, adding to these His Divinity. So he found the solution of the difficulty in the application of a general principle of philosophy. The Neoplatonic school taught that human nature is the composition of these three elements – a body, a soul that actuates and informs the body, thus making us living beings, and the mind, or spirit, that makes us reasonable beings, which spirit is the special characteristic of man. Of these three elements the body and the soul make up the ‘natural’ being which is ruled and guided by the mind. But since the guiding principle in man is changeable, fallible and sinful, it could not be so in Christ. Therefore in Christ the Divinity, the Logos, took the place of a human mind. He was a natural man (i.e. body and soul) guided and ruled by the Logos. He, too, like us, consisted of three parts only, and He was therefore really a man and not an impossible being of four parts. Only one part, the most important, is not human but Divine. This doctrine, therefore, denies the true and complete humanity in the person of Jesus Christ.

**Confutation**

The Scripture teaches that the Word (the Logos) - that is, the Son of God in His prehuman existence - was made flesh (John 1:14). This means that the Word became a true man, complete like us, thus a person composed of a body, a soul and a spirit. Therefore, it is absolutely wrong to affirm that the Logos took the place of the human spirit in the person of Christ, because Christ was the Logos, that is, the Word. Furthermore, if the Logos had taken the place of the human spirit in the person of Christ, that is to say, if the Logos had become one of the elements of Christ’s human nature, then we should affirm that Christ was not the Word made flesh rather just a man who contained the Logos, and this is unacceptable because His name is called “the Word of God” (Revelation 19:13 - NKJV).

The Logos did not take the place of the spirit in Christ, for Jesus Christ had also a spirit; He was indeed a true man like each of us. The Scripture says that on one occasion Jesus “groaned in the spirit” (John 11:33), and on another occasion “he was troubled in spirit” (John 13:21), and it says also that Jesus, before breathing His last, said to God: “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:46 – NKJV). And, having said this, “He gave up His spirit” (John 19:30 – NKJV)

Therefore, brothers, beware of all those who teach the same heresy taught by Apolinaris.

**The two natures of Christ became by their union only one Nature (Monophysitism)**

Monophysitism (from the Greek monos meaning ‘one’ and physis meaning ‘nature’) is the doctrine which affirms that the two natures of Christ were so united, that although the ‘One Christ’ was partly Human and partly Divine, His two Natures became by their union only one
Nature. Therefore, Jesus was only Divine. This doctrine arose in the 5th century after Christ. Monophysitism developed out of the heresy of Eutyches (378-452) who asserted that the union of Christ’s Divine and Human Nature in the Incarnation resulted in the ultimate extinction of the latter: therefore Christ had only one nature, that is, the nature of the incarnate Word, and consequently His human body was essentially different from other human bodies, so Jesus was wholly and only Divine. There are still some people who teach both doctrines.

**Confutation**

The Scripture teaches that Jesus was truly God and truly man, thus He had two natures, a divine nature and a human nature. Therefore the Lord Jesus Christ must be acknowledged in two natures, inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably; the distinction of natures was by no means taken away by the union but rather the property of each nature was preserved.

As God, Jesus was worshipped and He forgave sins, while as a man He ate, drank, slept, got tired etc. There was never a time during His earthly life when He ceased to be God or man. If the two natures of Jesus had become by their union only one nature, Jesus could not have saved us from our sins, that is to say, if Jesus had been only God He would not have been able to make atonement for our sins, for the Messiah had to be a true man (that is, He had to have a human body like ours) in order to put away sin and to destroy death by the sacrifice of Himself. Therefore, brothers, beware of all those who deny the perfect humanity of Christ; they are deceivers.

**Jesus’ body was not a material or real one**

The Lord’s physical body was an illusion. His body was not a material or real one and hence He could not physically die. This teaching arose in the first century and is called docetism (from Greek *dokeo* which means ‘to seem’), and it is still held by some. Helen Shuchman in her *A Course in Miracles* (which was dictated to her by an ‘inner voice’ who claimed to be none other than Jesus Christ) holds this doctrine: ‘The Bible says, ‘The word (or thought) was made flesh.’ Strictly speaking, this is impossible, since it seems to involve the translation of one order of reality into another’ (*A Course in Miracles*, vol. 1, page 141), ‘The man [Jesus] was an illusion, for he seemed to be a separate being, walking by himself, within a body that appeared to hold his self from Self, as all illusions do’ (ibid., vol. 3, page 83).

**Confutation**

The Scripture says that the Word, who was God and with God from all eternity, “was made flesh” (John 1:14), and that “as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same” (Hebrews 2:14 – NKJV). Therefore, the Son of God had a true human body, a material body, made of flesh and bones. That’s why the period of time during which He lived on earth is called “the days of His flesh” (Hebrews 5:7 - NKJV). Paul says to the Colossians: "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death ...." (Colossians 1:21-22 - NKJV). Therefore the body of the Lord, which was nailed to the cross, was made of flesh and bones. This is confirmed by the fact that when one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, immediately blood and water came out (John 19:34). But not only the body of the Lord in which He died on the cross was made of flesh and bones, but also the body in which He was resurrected was a real body, for when He appeared to His disciples He said to them: "Handle Me
and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:39 – NKJV). Of course, His resurrected body was an immortal and glorious body.

In the light of the above mentioned passages of the Scriptures, therefore, we affirm that if the Son of God had not had a real body, made of flesh and bones, He could not have died for our sins nor could He have been raised from the dead for our justification.

I conclude by remembering you that the apostle John (who was one of those who saw the Word of life with their own eyes and touched the Word of life) wrote in his first epistle: “Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:2-3 – NKJV). This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which we have heard is coming, and is now already in the world. Therefore, beware of all those who teach that Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh, for they lie against the truth and want to deceive you into accepting a damnable heresy.

The man Jesus is not the Christ, for the Christ is the spiritual idea of God or a ray from the cosmic Christ which entered the body of Jesus

Christian Science teaches that Jesus is not the Christ. Here is what Mrs Eddy said: “The spiritual Christ was infallible; Jesus, as material manhood, was not Christ’ (Miscellaneous Writings, page 84). Who or rather what, then, is Christ for Christian Science? Christ is ‘the spiritual or true idea of God’ (Science and Health, page 347), ‘Christ, as the true spiritual idea, is the ideal of God now and forever ….’ (Ibid. page 361). Therefore, Christ is not a person, but merely an idea.

Unity School of Christianity also teaches that Jesus is not the Christ: ‘Christ is the only begotten Son of God with one complete idea of perfect man and divine Mind. This Christ, or perfect-man idea, existing eternally in divine Mind is the true spirit and higher-self of every individual’ (Metaphysical Bible Dictionary, page 150, Unity School of Christianity); ‘By Christ is not meant the man Jesus’ (Unity Magazine, Vol. 72, No 2, page 146).

Rosicrucianism (an eclectic theological system which mixes pagan mythology with Judaism and Christianity with traces of Hinduism and Buddhism throughout) teaches that Jesus is not the Christ, for according to the philosophy of Rosicrucianism ‘the Christ spirit which entered the body of Jesus when Jesus Himself vacated it was a ray from the cosmic Christ. We may follow Jesus back in His previous incarnations and can trace His growth to the present day’ (Max Hendel, The Rosicrucian Philosophy in Questions and Answers, page 181); ‘Jesus and Jesus Christ .... Are thus two entirely distinct and separate entities or Egos’ (KHEI, Rosicrucian Fundamentals, page 154); ‘The Christos .... Occupied the Vehicles of the Man Jesus, until the Crucifixion of the latter on Golgotha’ (Ibid., page 152).

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, that is to say, the Anointed One (for the name Christ is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew word mashiah, meaning ‘the Anointed One’). God predicted through the prophets of old many things concerning the Anointed One. He foretold that He would be born of a virgin, He would be born in Bethlehem, He would preach the Good News and heal the sick, He would be anointed with the Holy Spirit, He would die for our sins and the third day He would be raised from the dead, and even that after His resurrection He would be received up into heaven at the right hand of the Father. All these predictions (and many others which I have not mentioned here) were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, therefore Jesus is the Christ. Jesus and the Christ are the same person.

Jesus Himself declared that He was the Christ, for when the Samaritan woman said to Him: “I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things” (John 4:25 – NKJV), Jesus said to her: “I who speak to you am He” (John 4:26 – NKJV).
The apostles believed and preached that Jesus was the Christ. Here are some Scriptures which confirm this: Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to Peter: “We have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ)” (John 1:41 – NKJV). Peter said to Jesus: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16 – NkJV) and to the Jews in Jerusalem He said: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus” (Acts 3:19 – NIV); Paul reasoned with the Jews at Thessalonica from the Scriptures “explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, ‘This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ” (Acts 17:3 – NKJV).

Therefore, the Christ is not an idea or a ray from the cosmic Christ or a consciousness, but a Person whose name is Jesus of Nazareth.

Beloved, beware of all those who deny that Jesus is the Christ, for it is written: “Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22 – NKJV). No matter who they are, no matter what their arguments are, they are liars and deceivers.

**Jesus is not God**

Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that Jesus, the Son of God, is not God. Here is what they say: “... in his prehuman existence, Jesus was a created spirit being, just as angels were spirit beings created by God .... The fact is that Jesus is not God and never claimed to be’ (Should You Believe in the Trinity?, [1989], 14,20). During His prehuman state, which lasted from the time of the Son’s creation to the time when He was born on earth as a man, Jesus was the spokesman for God the Father to other creatures that were called into being after him. Thus, the Son was the Chief Executive Officer of God, and, as such, superior to all other creatures (The Truth Shall Make You Free, page 44). Prior to His coming to earth, the Son was an angel (in heaven He was known as Michael), therefore, between Christ in His prehuman state and the angels, there was a difference only of degree but not of kind. Yet, at that time the Son was some kind of god (a god, according to their translation of John 1:1). So, since the Son was not God during His prehuman state, He could not be God during His earthly life. Jehovah’s Witnesses are not the only ones who deny the Deity of Jesus; many other people deny it. Here are some other sects that deny it.

The Unification Church: “Jesus, on earth, was a man no different from us except for the fact that he was without original sin. Even in the spirit world after his resurrection, he lives as a spirit man with his disciples .... Jesus is not God Himself” (Sun Myung Moon, Divine Principle, 2d ed. Washington, D.C.; The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973, page 212).

Christian Science: ‘The Christian who believes in the First Commandment is monotheist. Thus he virtually unites with the Jews’s belief in one God, and recognizes that Jesus Christ is not God, as Jesus himself declared, but is the Son of God’ (Science and Health, page 361).

Iglesia ni Cristo (widespread especially in the Philippines): an Iglesia minister was once asked about the Iglesia’s belief concerning Christ. He answered: ‘Yes, we believe in Jesus Christ, but we do not believe that he is true God. We believe in only one true God, the God of creation. Jesus Christ is a great Saviour and was commissioned by God to be the Saviour’ (Far East Broadcasting Company, ‘Research Center Bulletin’, April 17, 1970 [mimeograph], p. 3).

The Way International: ‘Jesus Christ is not God [that is, God Himself], but [merely] the Son of God. They are not ‘co-eternal, without beginning or end, and co-equal. Jesus Christ was not literally with God in the beginning; neither does he have all the assets of God’ (Victor Paul Wierwille, Jesus Christ is Not God, page 5); ‘If Jesus Christ is God and not the Son of God, we have not yet been redeemed’ (Victor Paul Wierwille, op. cit., page 6); ‘Those who teach that Jesus Christ is God and God is Jesus Christ will never stand approved in rightly dividing God’s
word, for there is only one God, and 'Thou shalt have no other gods'...The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ was a man conceived by the Holy Spirit' (Ibid., 79).

The Christadelphian Church: 'John 1:18 plainly states that "No man hath seen God at any time". It does not say "No man hath seen God the Father" at any time, but that no man has seen GOD at any time. It is obvious from the Gospels that people saw Jesus: therefore Jesus cannot be God, or any part of God ....Jesus was human, not God' (http://www.christadelphian.org.uk)

Confutation

The Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus Christ in His prehuman existence was God, that is to say, He was equal to God the Father. He was God from all eternity. Here is what the apostle John says about the prehuman state of the Son of God: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God" (John 1:1-2 - NKJV). Therefore, since the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14) we affirm that He was God even during His earthly life. That Jesus Christ was God during the days of His flesh, is confirmed in various ways by the Scripture. He was worshiped (and we know that God alone is worthy to be worshiped) by the wise men who came from the East, as it is written: “And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him” (Matthew 2:11 – NKJV); He forgave men their sins (and we know that God alone has the power to forgive sins), as it is written: “Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven you’ And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ (Mark 2:3-7 – NKJV).

Jesus Christ Himself claimed to be God, for He said to the Jews: “Before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58 – NKJV) and also: “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30 – NIV).

The apostles believed and taught that Jesus Christ was God. Here are some of the words of the apostles attesting the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Paul calls Jesus “God over all, forever praised!” (Romans 9:5 – NIV), “our great God and Saviour” (Titus 2:13 – NIV), and he affirms that “in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9 – NKJV). Peter calls Jesus “our God and Saviour” (2 Peter 1:1 – NKJV).

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews calls Jesus “God,” as he says: “But to the Son, He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions” (Hebrews 1:8-9 – NKJV). From all these Scriptures it is evident, therefore, first of all, that before the Incarnation the Son existed from all eternity (in other words, there was never a time when He did not exist) because He was God, and secondly that during the days of His flesh the Son was still God (even though He was also a true man). We firmly believe that Jesus Christ is God, therefore we worship Him, as His disciples did and as all the angels of God are doing in heaven. Yes, the angels of God are worshiping Jesus because God commanded them to worship His Son, as it is written: “Let all the angels of God worship Him” (Hebrews 1:6 – NKJV). To our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ, be the glory now and forevermore. Amen

Beloved, beware of all those who deny the Deity of Christ, for they are deceivers. Let no one of them deceive you with empty words.
Jesus is the absolute fullness of the Godhead; He is at once Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Oneness Pentecostals teach that Jesus Christ is at once Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Here is what David K. Bernard says in his booklet titled Essentials of Oneness Theology: “Oneness theologians identify Jesus Christ as the incarnation of the one God, based on a literal interpretation of Colossians 2:9-10, which states: ‘For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power’. All names and titles of the Deity – such as ‘Yahweh, Father and Holy Spirit’ – properly apply to Jesus. Jesus is not just the incarnation of one person of a trinity, but the incarnation of all the character, quality and personality of the one indivisible God” (David K. Bernard, Essentials of Oneness Theology, Word Aflame Press, Hazelwood, MO, USA, 1995, pages 11-12); ‘The title of Father refers to God’s roles as father of all creation, father of the only begotten Son, and father of the born-again believer. The title of Son refers to God’s incarnation, for the man Christ was literally conceived by the Spirit of God (Matthew 1:18-20; Luke 1:35). The title of Holy Spirit describes the fundamental character of God’s nature. Holiness forms the basis of His moral attributes, while spirituality forms the basis of His nonmoral attributes. The title specifically refers to God in activity, particularly His work in anointing, regenerating, and indwelling man. Oneness, therefore, affirms the multiple roles and works described by the terms Father, Son and Spirit. In contrast to trinitarianism, however, it denies that these titles reflect an essential threeness in God’s nature and it affirms that all exist simultaneously in Christ. The terms can also be understood in God’s revelation to man: Father refers to God in family relationship to man; Son refers to God incarnate; and Spirit refers to God in activity. For example, one man can have three significant relationships or functions – such as administrator, teacher, and counsellor – and yet be one person in every sense of the word. God is not defined by or limited to an essential threeness’ (Ibid., pages 15-16); ‘Jesus is the Father …. The Holy Spirit is ‘Christ in Spirit rather than in flesh’ (Ibid., pages 14, 17).

Confutation

Jesus is not the Father

The Scripture teaches that Jesus is not the Father, for Jesus and the Father are two separate Divine Persons. Now, I will show you from the Scriptures that Jesus is not God the Father.

● After Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan river, it happened that a voice came from heaven, saying: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17 – NKJV). Who spoke those words? Certainly it was not Jesus who spoke those words for it is written that “a voice came from heaven” (Matthew 3:17 - NKJV), while Jesus was on earth. Therefore that voice was the voice of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; for that voice called Jesus ‘My beloved Son’. That’s why we can’t affirm that Jesus is the Father.

● After Jesus was baptized, He was anointed with the Holy Spirit, as Matthew says: “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him” (Matthew 3:16 – NKJV). Now, my question is this, ‘Who anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit?’ The Scripture teaches that it was God the Father who anointed His Son with the Holy Spirit, as it is written: “You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore, God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of gladness more than Your companions” (Psalm 45:7 – NKJV). I would like you to notice that the Psalmist says that God was anointed by His God. How is it that God was anointed by His God? How many Gods exist then? Well, the answer is that when the Scripture says that God was anointed by His God, it means that God the Son was anointed by God the Father. However, they are not two Gods, but one God, because Jesus said: “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30 – NKJV). Therefore, Jesus was not the Father.
When Jesus was transfigured on the holy mountain the disciples who were with Him heard a voice, which came out of the cloud which overshadowed them, and that voice said: “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” (Matthew 17:5 – NKJV). My question is still the same: Who spoke those words, Jesus or someone else? Surely it was not Jesus but God His Father who spoke. This is confirmed by the following words of Peter, who was one of the disciples who were with Jesus on that occasion: “For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain” (2 Peter 1:17-18 – NKJV). Therefore, once again we infer that Jesus Christ, even though in the days of His flesh was God, was not the Father because His Father was in heaven. Of course, in Jesus Christ dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, that’s why He was worshiped on earth, both before His death and after His resurrection, yet He was the Son of the living God who was in heaven. Jesus said that the Father was in Him and He was in the Father, He said that He and His Father were one. He said that He existed before Abraham was born, yet all this does not lead us to affirm that He was the Father because such a statement is inconsistent with the Word of God. How could Jesus say that His Father was in heaven if the term Father was just a title applied to Jesus? Listen to these words of Jesus: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother” (Matthew 12:50 – NKJV). Furthermore, if the term Father was just a title applied to Jesus how is it that Jesus thanked the Father? Listen to these words Jesus said to the Father: “I thank You Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight” (Matthew 11:25-26 – NKJV), “Father, I thank You that You have heard me” (John 11:41 – NKJV).

Jesus said to His disciples: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:23 - NKJV). Note that Jesus, referring to Himself and to His Father, said ‘We will come to him and make Our home with him’. It is evident, therefore, that Jesus was not the Father.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians that Jesus, “being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:6-11 – NKJV). Now, as you can see, Jesus humbled Himself and was highly exalted by God the Father; so Jesus is not the Father.

After Jesus was raised from the dead, He was seen by His disciples for forty days, and then He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father. As it is written: “He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19 – NKJV), and also: “When He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:3 – NKJV). This happened so that it might be fulfilled what David had said: “The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool” (Psalm 110:1 – NKJV). Stephen in a vision saw Jesus at the right hand of God, as he said: “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:56 – NKJV). Therefore, Jesus is not God the Father because in heaven He is at the right hand of God the Father. And do you know what Jesus is doing there? He “makes intercession for us” (Romans 8:34 – NKJV). Reflect upon this function He is accomplishing at the right hand of God because it confirms that Jesus can’t be God the Father, for if Jesus is making intercession for us, that means that He is a mediator between God the Father and us, and since “a mediator does not mediate for one only” (Galatians 3:20 – NKJV), there must be someone to whom He prays on our behalf, and this someone is God the Father. This is why we pray to God the Father.
in the name of Jesus Christ, because Jesus Christ is the Mediator between God the Father and us.
I could quote many more passages from the Bible to show you that Jesus is not the Father, however, I think that those I have cited so far are enough.

Jesus is not the Holy Spirit

Now, I want to show you from the Scriptures that Jesus is not the Holy Spirit either.

● Jesus, on the night He was betrayed and arrested, said to His disciples: “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. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him” (John 14:15-17 – NIV). Now, while Jesus was on earth He was the Counselor that God had promised through His prophets He would send to His people. However, since Jesus had to go back to the Father who had sent Him and He knew that His disciples would need another Counselor to be with them forever and in every place He said that He would pray to the Father and the Father would send another Counselor or Comforter to them. Therefore, since Jesus called the Holy Spirit “another Counselor”, we must conclude that the Holy Spirit is not the same Counselor (Jesus) who was received up into heaven. Therefore Jesus is not the Holy Spirit. That the Holy Spirit is not Jesus Christ in Spirit rather than in flesh is confirmed by the fact that when Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit from the Father He said the following things: “Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you” (John 16:7-15). I would like you to notice the following expression “He shall glorify me,” for it confirms that the Holy Spirit cannot be Jesus in that He glorifies Jesus.

● One day Jesus said: “And whosoever speakekth a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Matthew 12:32). As you can see, those who speak against the Son of man can be forgiven, while those who speak against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven. Therefore, Jesus, the Son of man, can't be the Holy Spirit.

● The author of the epistle to the Hebrews says: “Anyone who has rejected Moses’ law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has tramped the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:28-29 – NKJV). These words also confirm that the Son of God is not the Holy Spirit, for They are cited separately.

I could quote many more passages from the Scriptures to show you that Jesus is not the Holy Spirit, but I think that the ones I have cited are enough.

Conclusion

Beloved, beware of Oneness Pentecostals, for they teach a false doctrine about the Godhead, and as we will see in another place their false doctrine about the Godhead has affected the teaching about salvation, for, since according to them the Holy Spirit is Christ in Spirit rather than in flesh, ‘to receive Christ is to receive the Holy Spirit, and vice versa’, thus they see the baptism with the Holy Spirit as an integral part of receiving Christ. In other words, for them if a believer is
not baptized with the Holy Spirit he is not saved yet. I exhort you to reject and refute their heresies.

Note: Since Oneness Pentecostals teach that the title of Son refers to God’s incarnation, they deny the existence of the Son of God prior to the incarnation.

**Jesus Christ married Mary, Martha and the other Mary at Cana of Galilee**

Mormons believe and teach that Jesus Christ got married at Cana of Galilee. Here is what Orson Hyde, one of the members of the first Council of Twelve Apostles, said: "If at the marriage of Cana of Galilee, Jesus was the bridegroom and took unto him Mary, Martha and the other Mary, it shocks not our nerves. If there was not attachment and familiarity between our Saviour and these women, highly proper only in the relation of husband and wife, then we have no sense of propriety" (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, pages 81-82), and also: 'I discover that some of the Eastern papers represent me as a great blasphemer, because I said, in my lecture on Marriage, at our last Conference, that Jesus Christ was married at Cana of Galilee, that Mary, Martha, and others were his wives, and that he begat children. All that I have to say in reply to that charge is this – they worship a Saviour that is too pure and holy to fulfill the commands of his Father. I worship one that is just pure and holy enough 'to fulfill all righteousness', not only the righteous law of baptism, but the still more righteous and important law 'to multiply and replenish the earth' (*Journal of Discourses*, vol. 2, page 210). The reason why Mormon teach that Jesus Christ got married, is that according to the Mormon doctrine of salvation there can be no exaltation to the fullness of the blessings of the celestial kingdom outside of the marriage relation. Couples whose marriages have not been sealed for eternity become angels and not gods in the life to come; only those sealed to each other for eternity become gods (*Doctrine and Covenants* 132:19,20). So if Jesus Christ was not married during His earthly life, He could not rise higher than an angel in the next life.

**Confutation**

The apostle John says about the wedding which took place in Cana of Galilee: “On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding” (John 2:1-2 – NKJV). It is evident, therefore, that the bridegroom at that wedding was not Jesus Christ because He was invited with His disciples to that wedding. If Jesus had been the bridegroom John would have written that Jesus invited His disciples to His wedding because we know that a bridegroom is not invited to his own wedding rather he invites people to His wedding. It is absolutely wrong, therefore, to affirm that Jesus was married at Cana of Galilee.

However, it is true that one day Jesus Christ will get married: His marriage will take place in heaven when He returns in glory. His bride is the Church, whom He loved and for whom He gave Himself “that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:26-27 – NKJV). When the apostle John was in the Spirit (while on the island that is called Patmos), he heard the voice of a great multitude saying: ‘Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (Revelation 19:6-8 - NKJV). Brothers, beware of Mormons, for they preach another Jesus.
Jesus was sexually abused by Roman soldiers

Kenneth Copeland has affirmed that Jesus Christ was sexually abused by Roman soldiers. Here are his words: ‘Let me tell you something folks. Anybody in here that’s ever been sexually abused, listen to me right now. Listen to me very carefully. The Bible’s very careful about the way it says these things. But down there in that dungeon, Romans, ungodly men, ungodly men, put Him (Jesus) to every kind of abuse that you can think of. There is no sin that Jesus didn’t bare. There is no thing, there is no such thing as a sexual abuse on somebody that Jesus doesn’t know firsthand what it’s all about. He’s been where you are. I don’t care what you’ve been through, Jesus has been through it. And every-thing’s done to him that we couldn’t even speak of.” (The Resurrection Truth)

Confutation

Jesus was not abused sexually by Romans soldiers, because among the things He suffered from the Roman soldiers before being crucified, which are recorded in the Gospel according to Matthew, there is no sexual abuse. Here is what Matthew says: “Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him” (Matthew 27:27-31).

Furthermore, it must be said that to state that Jesus was sexually abused is tantamount to insulting Christ, for that means that Jesus sinned and thus did not remain sinless till His death. In addition to this, I want to say that such a statement reveals a lack of knowledge of the Word of God because the Scripture predicted that the Messiah would bear all our sins, as it is written: “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6), but it did not predict that the Messiah would suffer all kinds of abuses human beings can suffer. For instance, Jesus could not suffer an abuse which entailed an arm fracture because the Scripture predicted that not one of his bones would be broken (Psalm 34:20; John 19:36); so we must be very careful when we speak about the abuses suffered by Jesus because we must bear in mind this specific prediction which was fulfilled in Jesus. Therefore, the Scripture predicted that Jesus would be oppressed and afflicted (Isaiah 53:7) but it did not predict that He would suffer all kinds of abuses. On the contrary, as for sins, it must be said that God laid on Jesus all kinds of iniquities. Therefore we must make a distinction between the abuses suffered by Jesus (from the hands of both the Jews and the Gentiles) and the sins which He bore in His own body. Because if we mistake the abuses for the sins that He bore we will finish by telling lies like the above mentioned ones; yes, because besides saying that Jesus was abused sexually we could say also that the Roman soldiers put out His eyes or that they cut off His fingers or that they cut off His tongue to prevent Him from speaking and other similar things, which are all lies. Do you understand what such a statement (that is to say, the Roman soldiers put Jesus to every kind of abuse that you can think of) can lead people to say about Jesus? However, it was not a part of God’s plan that Jesus should suffer certain abuses. Brothers, learn to speak the way the Scripture speaks, and to speak when the Scripture speaks, but learn also to be silent when the Scripture is silent on certain things; by so doing you will avoid saying false things and being confused. Take heed to yourselves.
Jesus took on the nature of Satan

One of the popular word-faith teachings is that Jesus took on the nature of Satan and had to be born again. This doctrine is intrinsically linked to the “Jesus died spiritually” heresy which postulates that Jesus’ shed blood was insufficient for the redemption of man; He had to suffer at Satan’s hands in Hell and be born again as the first man to conquer death.

Benny Hinn teaches this heresy: listen to what he said: ‘He [Jesus] who is righteous by choice said, “The only way I can stop sin is by Me becoming it. I can’t just stop it by letting it touch Me; I and it must become one.” Hear this! He who is the nature of God became the nature of Satan where He became sin! (TBN 12/1/90).

Kenneth Copeland also teaches that Jesus took on Satan’s nature. Here are his words: “The righteousness of God was made to be sin. He accepted the sin nature of Satan in His own spirit. And at the moment that He did so, He cried, ‘My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?’ You don’t know what happened at the cross. Why do you think Moses, upon instruction of God, raised the serpent upon that pole instead of a lamb? That used to bug me. I said, ‘Why in the world would you want to put a snake up there—the sign of Satan? Why didn’t you put a lamb on that pole?’ And the Lord said, ‘Because it was a sign of Satan that was hanging on the cross.’ He said, ‘I accepted, in My own spirit, spiritual death; and the light was turned off.’” (What Happened from the Cross to the Throne, 1990, audiotape #02-0017, side 2)

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that the Son of God took on the nature of man, as it is written: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bond servant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:6-8 – NKJV) and also: “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same...” (Hebrews 2:14 – NKJV). Why did He take on the nature of man? We find the answer to this question in the epistle to the Hebrews: “That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation [propitiation] for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:14-18). Therefore, the Son of God had to take on him the nature of man in order to redeem man. Obviously, in order to redeem us the Son of God had also to bear our sins so that He might put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself and deliver us from the bondage of sin. Therefore, the Son of God, taking on the nature of man, was able to do two fundamental things for our salvation: He destroyed death and put away sin.

However, the Scripture never teaches that the Son took on the nature of Satan, because such a thing is absurd and contrary to the sound doctrine. For the nature of Satan and the nature of man are not the same, since Satan is a fallen angelic being, thus he has an angelic nature, therefore to affirm that the Son of God took on the nature of Satan is tantamount to affirming that the Son of God was both a man and an angelic being, that is to say, He had three natures, the nature of God, the nature of angels, and the nature of man. This is unacceptable because the Word was made flesh, thus while He was on earth the Son of God was both God and man. Furthermore, to affirm that the Son of God took on the nature of Satan means to affirm that somehow Jesus came to save also Satan and perhaps also the angels who followed him in his rebellion, however we know that the salvation of Satan and his angels is not part of God’s plan of redemption. In addition to this, to say such a thing means to insult the Lord Jesus Christ.
because it means that He became a wicked being, while we know that He committed no sin nor was any deceit found in His mouth; the Bible says that He knew no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), that He was in all points tempted as we are yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). Of course, He bore our sins in His own body, He was made sin on the cross of Calvary, yet He continued to be the Righteous One and the Holy One even while He was hanging on the cross. The fact that God made Jesus to be sin (2 Corinthians 5:21) does not mean that Jesus became a sinner. Therefore, brothers, take heed to yourselves and reject this heresy taught by Hinn, Copeland and other preachers.

**Jesus was born again in hell**

Benny Hinn has said: 'My, you know, whoosh! The Holy Ghost is just showing me some stuff. I'm getting dizzy! I'm telling you the truth - it's, it's just heavy right now on me... He's [referring to Jesus] in the underworld now. God isn't there, the Holy Ghost isn't there, and the Bible says He was begotten. Do you know what the word begotten means? It means reborn. Do you want another shocker? Have you been begotten? So was He. Don't let anyone deceive you. Jesus was reborn. You say, 'What are you talking about?'... He was reborn. He had to be reborn... If He was not reborn, I could not be reborn, I would never be reborn. How can I face Jesus and say, "Jesus, You went through everything I've gone through, except the new birth?" (Benny Hinn, Our Position 'In Christ,' Part 1 - Orlando, FL: Orlando Christian Center, 1991 - videotape #TV-254).

Kenneth Copeland has affirmed: "He allowed the devil to drag Him into the depths of hell as if He were the most wicked sinner who ever lived ... Every demon in hell came down on Him to annihilate Him ... [They] tortured Him beyond anything that anybody has ever conceived ... In a thunder of spiritual force, the voice of God spoke to the death-whipped, broken, punished spirit of Jesus ... [in] the pit of destruction, and charged the spirit of Jesus with resurrection power! Suddenly His twisted, death-wracked spirit began to fill out and come back to life ... He was literally being reborn before the devil's very eyes. He began to flex His spiritual muscles ... Jesus Christ dragged Satan up and down the halls of hell ... Jesus ... was raised up a born-again man ... The day I realized that a born-again man had defeated Satan, hell, and death, I got so excited ... !" (“The Price of it All,” Believer's Voice of Victory, September 1991, p. 4); '[i]n hell He [Jesus] suffered for you and for me. The Bible says hell was made for Satan and his angels. It was not made for men. Satan was holding the Son of God there illegally ... The trap was set for Satan and Jesus was the bait.” (Walking in the Realm of the Miraculous, 1979, p. 77).

The late Kenneth Hagin said: "Why did He need to be begotten or born? Because He became like we were - separated from God. Because He tasted spiritual death for every man. And His spirit and inner men went to hell in my place. Can't you see that? Physical death wouldn't remove your sins. He's tasted death for every man. He's talking about tasting spiritual death. Jesus is the first person that was ever born again. Why did His spirit need to be born again? Because it was estranged from God." (Kenneth Hagin, "How Jesus obtained His Name" Tape #44-H01)

**Confutation**

The Scripture does not speak of these sufferings endured by Jesus in hell nor does it speak of this so called rebirth Jesus experienced in hell between His death and resurrection. The Scripture teaches that when Jesus was put to death in the flesh He went by the Spirit and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared (1 Peter 3:18-20),
and in addition to this the Scripture says that He descended into the lower parts of the earth and when He ascended on high, He led captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8-10). Therefore, Jesus, between His death and His resurrection, went to preach the Gospel to the spirits of those who formerly were disobedient in the days of Noah (thus, not to all the dead and not to give them a second chance to be saved because after death there has never been and there will never be the chance of being saved for sinners), and He went to take the saints of the Old Testament who were in the bosom of Abraham (which was in the heart of the earth at a certain distance from the place of torment where the sinners were) to carry them to Paradise because that's the meaning of those words Paul wrote to the Ephesians (4:8-10). However, the Scripture never speaks of these so called sufferings that Jesus endured for our salvation in hell from the hands of demons. Rather the Scripture speaks of the sufferings Jesus endured while He was in the garden of Gethsemane, while He was in the Sanhedrin, and while He was into the Praetorium, and while He was hanging on the cross. These are the sufferings endured by Christ of which we must speak, we must not speak of the sufferings endured by Christ in hell because they never took place, having been invented by some who don't know the Scriptures. The sufferings that Christ had to endure for our salvation were the sufferings He endured on the cross in His own body, because it was on the cross that Jesus had to die to make atonement for our sins, it was on the cross of Golgotha that Jesus bore our sins. That's why the apostles spoke of these sufferings. Therefore, the Scripture speaks of the sufferings Christ endured till His death, but it doesn't speak of these so called sufferings endured by Christ after His death.

Now, let us talk about the resurrection of Christ which took place on the third day. On that day the soul of the Lord returned to His resurrected body, which was a glorious and immortal body, since His former body had been transformed by the power of God. That body, therefore, was the same body which Jesus had when He died on the cross, but it had some qualities which the former body did not have, in that the latter was immortal, glorious and powerful. That's what happened when Jesus rose, and not when He was born again because His resurrection was not a new birth. Someone may ask: 'Is it not written in relation to the resurrection of Christ that on that day God begot His Son? Yes, it is written as follows: “And we declare to you glad tidings – that promise which was made to the fathers. God has fulfilled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm: You are My Son, today I have begotten You” (Acts 13:33 – NKJV). However, I would like to point out that it is written 'begotten' and not 'regenerated'. If the resurrection of Jesus Christ had to be a rebirth, the Psalmist would have said 'Today, I have regenerated you' because the resurrection would have been a new birth, but he wrote 'Today, I have begotten you' because in that day – according to the apostle Paul – Jesus Christ was “declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4 – NKJV).

Someone else may ask at this point: ‘Why then is Jesus called “the firstborn from the dead” (Colossians 1:18)?’ Because He is the first man who has been raised from the dead with an immortal and glorious body. The term ‘firstborn’ indicates His supremacy He has in the resurrection from the dead. Another term used by the Scripture to indicate this supremacy of Jesus is ‘firstfruits’ for Paul, in relation to the resurrection from the dead, calls Jesus “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20 – NIV). Let me say something else about the expression ‘firstborn from the dead’; that this expression of Paul indicates the supremacy Jesus has in the resurrection or over all those who will be raised from the dead when He comes, is confirmed by the fact that Paul calls Jesus also “the firstborn of every creature” (Colossians 1:15) which doesn't mean that Jesus is the first creature of God or that He is the first born again creature but it means that Jesus has supremacy over all creation. Therefore, we must be careful about what we say about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, because if we say that Jesus was born again in hell we say an untrue thing and we create confusion, for if we called the resurrection of Christ ‘new birth’ we would be compelled to call ‘new birth’ even the resurrection of those who will be raised from the dead when He comes. Consequently we could conclude that in that day we also will be born again, which is not true because the new birth is something which we have experienced when we repented and believed
in Jesus Christ and not something which we still need to experience. In other words, we would begin to say what the followers of Herbert Armstrong say, that is, believers will be born again when they are raised from dead (however, be careful because they deny the physical resurrection of the dead - according to them the resurrection will be a 'spiritual resurrection' - and they say that when believers are raised they will be divine beings).

**Jesus Christ did not come to die**

The Unification Church teaches that Jesus Christ did not come into the world to die. Here are the words of Sun Myung Moon: 'From the time of Jesus through the present, all Christians have thought that Jesus came to the world to die. This is because they did not know the fundamental purpose of Jesus' coming as the Messiah, and entertained the wrong idea that spiritual salvation was the only mission for which Jesus came to the world .... Jesus did not come to die' (Sun Myung Moon, *Divine Principle*, 2d ed. Washington, D.C.; The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973, page 152) and again: 'Jesus was then resolved to take the cross as the condition of indemnity to pay for the accomplishment of even the spiritual salvation of man when he found that he was unable to accomplish the providence of both spiritual and physical salvation' (*Ibid.*, page 151).

Let me expound briefly the teaching of Moon about salvation. According to Moon, after man fell God tried to restore mankind through Noah, Abraham and Moses, but all His attempts failed because of lack of responsibility on the part of men, thus the complete restoration of mankind was not accomplished. Then one day, the Messiah came to restore mankind. The Messiah had to come to accomplish the providence of restoration, that is to say, the Messiah had to come to save the fallen man, but not by dying on the cross, but by marrying and producing perfect children, so since the Jews did not believe in Him and crucified Him Jesus could not accomplish that restoration. Christ's death on the cross, therefore, was not an original or essential part of God's plan of redemption. John the Baptist was responsible for the death of Jesus (by failing to convert his audience into a power bloc for Jesus) (*Divine Principle*, pages 156-162). So Jesus could not fulfil His mission. What did Jesus accomplish through His death on the cross, then, according to Moon? He accomplished the restoration in part, he accomplished the spiritual salvation but not the physical salvation, for Moon claims that Jesus could not deliver us from the original sin because His body was invaded by Satan and that the salvation through the cross cannot remove completely the original sin, so the original nature of man was not fully restored. The complete restoration will be accomplished by the Lord of the Second Advent (who is Moon: 'Rev. Moon is the Messiah, the Lord of the Second Advent' Ken Sudo, 'Family problems' from *The 120 – Day Training Manual*, 160), he is the one who will accomplish the complete salvation by removing man's original sin. To sum up, if Jesus had not been crucified He would have accomplished the providence of both spiritual and physical salvation and the kingdom of heaven (that is, the purpose of God's creation) would have been fulfilled on the earth. However, since He was crucified His mission failed, or rather, it was accomplished partially, that is, just from the spiritual point of view. However, one day the Lord of the Second Advent will complete the work of Jesus because he will be able to remove the original sin from man, he will restore the whole of mankind to be children of God's direct lineage. Therefore, whoever wants to be saved must accept Moon and his wife as spiritual parents, in this way he will be born again.

**Confutation**

First of all, let me say to you that the Holy Scripture teaches very clearly that God determined to send only Jesus Christ to save man from sin (and He took that decision before the foundation of the world), for the apostle Peter calls Jesus a lamb without blemish and without spot who was
foreordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:19-20). Therefore it is not true that
God tried to restore man through Noah, Abraham and even Moses. Nor is it true that the death
of Jesus was not foreordained by God or that it was not a part of God’s plan of salvation, for the
Scripture tells us that the sufferings of Christ and His death were foretold by God through the
prophets of old, thus the death of Jesus was a fundamental part of God’s plan of redemption.
The apostle Peter says that the Spirit of Christ who was in the prophets “testified beforehand the
sufferings of Christ” (1 Peter 1:11 – NKJV). Let us look, for instance, at some of the words of the
prophet Isaiah concerning the sufferings and the death of the Messiah: “For he shall grow up
before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness;
and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and
rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces
from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and
carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was
wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace
was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have
turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was
oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the
slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was
taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off
out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his
great with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither
was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief:
when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his
days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his
soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he
shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide
the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered
with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the
transgressors” (Isaiah 53:1-12). These words were written by Isaiah hundreds of years before
the coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore, the fact that the Jews did not accept Jesus of Nazareth
as the Messiah, they hated Him and crucified, was part of God’s plan of salvation. In other
words, Jesus had to be rejected, hated and crucified by the Jews, so that the words of the
prophets might be fulfilled and thus we might be saved from our sins. This is what God had
determined before the foundation of the world, and this is what the early Christians believed, for
Peter said to the Jews: “This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and
foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the
cross.” (Acts 2:23 - NIV), and the disciples said to God: “For truly against Your holy Servant
Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of
Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before
to be done” (Acts 4:27-28 – NKJV).
As for the mission of Jesus Christ I want to say the following things. The work of Christ on the
cross of Calvary was a perfect and complete work, for by His death Jesus put away sin, as it is
written: “He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself” (Hebrews 9:26 – NKJV);
Jesus, by His death, delivered us from the bondage of sin, as it is written: “Therefore, my
brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be
married to another – to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God”
(Romans 7:4 – NKJV) and also: “Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might
be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin” (Romans 6:6 – NKJV). By His
death, Jesus reconciled us to God, as it is written: “And you, who once were alienated and
enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh
through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” (Colossians
1:21-22 – NKJV), and qualified us to become children of God by faith in His name. The blood of
Jesus has cleansed us from all sins, all our past sins have been blotted out from our conscience (Hebrews 9:14). Glory to the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

At this point, someone may ask: ‘How is it that sometimes we still sin? Does it mean that the salvation accomplished by Christ was not complete and thus it needs to be made perfect?’ Not at all, because the fact that we still sin sometimes simply means that sin dwells in us. On the other hand, Paul said: “If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me” (Romans 7:16-17 - NKJV) and John says that “if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8 – NKJV). However, we need to remember that we wait eagerly for the redemption of our bodies, for in this hope we were saved (Romans 8:23-24). That is to say, we are waiting for our bodies to be transformed by the power of God and made incorruptible. The redemption of our bodies will take place at the second coming of Jesus. For on that day the Lord “will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:21 – NIV) and in our new bodies sin will no longer dwell for we will be sinless. The redemption of our bodies, therefore, implies the bodily resurrection of those who have died in Christ. Therefore, the salvation provided by Jesus through His death and resurrection is both spiritual and physical. However, the physical redemption (which has nothing to do with the physical redemption Mr. Moon speaks of) has not yet taken place because as I have said it will take place when Jesus Christ comes back from heaven, for in that day the dead in Christ will rise first and then we who are still alive and are left will be changed. That’s why the Scripture says that Jesus “is able to save completely those who come to God through him” (Hebrews 7:25 – NIV), because the believers in Christ have obtained a full redemption, in that when they believed they were redeemed from sin and when Jesus comes back they will be redeemed bodily (for they will obtain the redemption of their bodies).

In the light of the Scriptures, therefore, I exhort you to beware of the followers of Moon; they teach heresies, lies which have nothing to do with the truth which is in Christ Jesus. They preach another Gospel and another Jesus. Reject and refute their lies.

**Jesus Christ was not killed nor crucified**

The Muslim religion teaches that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross. For it is written in the Qur’an: ‘(They have incurred divine displeasure): in that they broke their Covenant: that they rejected the Signs of Allah; that they slew the Messengers in defiance of right; that they said “Our hearts are the wrappings (which preserve Allah’s Word; we need no more)”; nay Allah hath set the seal on their hearts for their blasphemy and little is it they believe. That they rejected faith: that they uttered against Mary a grave false charge. That they said (in boast) “We killed Christ (Maseeh) Jesus the son of Mary the Apostle of Allah”; but they killed him not nor crucified him but so it was made to appear to them and those who differ therein are full of doubts with no (certain) knowledge but only conjecture to follow for of a surety they killed him not. Nay Allah raised him up unto Himself; and Allah is Exalted in Power Wise. And there is none of the People of the Book but must believe in him before his death; and on the Day of Judgment He will be a witness against them’ (Qur’an 4:155-159 Surah An-Nisaa - The Women). In The Fundamental Articles of Faith in Islam it is written: ‘A Muslim does not believe in the crucifixion of Jesus by his enemies because the basis of this doctrine of crucifixion is contrary to Divine mercy and justice as much as it is to human logic and dignity’ (Encyclopedia of American Religions: Religious Creeds, page 780)

**Confutation**

The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, was put to death by the Jews.
The prophet Isaiah, several centuries prior to the coming of the Messiah into this world, predicted that He would be put to death for our iniquities. For he said: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:7-12).

And his words were fulfilled, for Jesus Christ was killed by the Jews. The writers of the four Gospels, that is, Matthew and Mark and Luke and John, attest very clearly that the Jews, with the help of wicked men, put Jesus to death by nailing Him to the cross.

The apostles of the Lord, both those who had been with Jesus during the days of His flesh and those who were called by God to be apostles after the ascension of Jesus to heaven, preached and taught that Jesus of Nazareth was crucified.

The apostle Peter said to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (that is, a few days after the ascension of Jesus to heaven): "Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. This man was handed over to you by God's set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross. But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:22-24 -NIV).

Paul said in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia: "Men and brethren, sons of the family of Abraham, and those among you who fear God, to you the word of this salvation has been sent. For those who dwell in Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they did not know Him [Jesus Christ], nor even the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbath, have fulfilled them in condemning Him. And though they found no cause for death in Him, they asked Pilate that He should be put to death. Now when they had fulfilled all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the tree and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead" (Acts 13:26-30 – NKJV), and he wrote to the Thessalonians: “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans, who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us” (1 Thessalonians 2:14-15 – NKJV).

In the light of what the Holy Scriptures say, therefore, we proclaim that Jesus of Nazareth, whose mother was Mary the wife of Joseph, was nailed to the cross for our sins, and rose again for our justification. So, if you are a Muslim, we urge you to repent of your sins, and to believe in the death as well as in the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, so that you may obtain the remission of your sins and eternal life.

**Jesus Christ did not raise from the dead**

Baha’is deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for they spiritualize the fact of the resurrection. Abdu’l-Baha explains the meaning of the resurrection as: ‘The disciples were troubled and agitated after the martyrdom of Christ. The Reality of Christ, which signifies His teachings, His bounties, His perfection's and His spiritual power, was hidden and concealed for two or three
days after His martyrdom, and was not resplendent and manifest. NO, rather it was lost; for the believers were few in number and were troubled and agitated. The Cause of Christ was like a lifeless body, and, when after three days the disciples became assured and steadfast, and began to serve the Cause of Christ, and resolved to spread the divine teachings, putting His counsels into practice, and arising to serve Him, the Reality of Christ became resplendent, and His bounty appeared; His religion found life, His teachings and admonitions became evident and visible. In other words, the Cause of Christ was like a lifeless body, until the life and the bounty of the Holy Spirit surrounded’ (Ferraby, page 178). He interprets the teachings of Christ spread as the resurrection. Not any different than their immediate cousins Islam they can't deal with a resurrection from the dead. ‘The resurrections of divine manifestations are not of the body…his resurrection from the interior of the earth is also symbolic… like wise his ascension to heaven is a spiritual not material ascension' (Abdul Baha Questions, pages 199-120).

Confutation

The Bible clearly states that Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins, but on the third day God raised Him from the dead – His resurrection was a physical resurrection - for it was not possible that He should be held by death.

After His resurrection Jesus appeared to witnesses chosen by God, that is, to His disciples, who ate and drank with Him, and forty days after His resurrection He was taken up into heaven. Here is, for instance, what Luke wrote concerning one of the apparitions of Jesus to His disciples: “And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them. And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high. And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:36-51)

There is no spiritual meaning to give to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a literal event which occurred in the life of Jesus Christ so that we might be justified. Therefore if anyone wants to be justified he must believe that Jesus Christ rose from the dead on the third day. Brethren, beware of all those who deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ, for they are ravenous wolves clothed in sheep’s clothing who want to lead you astray and cheat you of your reward.

The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to many! Continue to believe in His physical resurrection. Amen.
Jesus Christ was raised not with the same body which He had prior to His death but as a spirit

Jehovah’s Witnesses teach the following things about the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God raised Jesus Christ from the dead ‘not as a human Son, but as a mighty immortal spirit Son ....’ (Let God Be True, page 40). In other words, Jesus was resurrected not with the same body which he had before, but as ‘a spirit Son, no longer flesh” (Religion For Mankind, page 259). The reason why they teach such a thing is this: In order to atone for the sin of Adam, Christ had to sacrifice his human body, which means that He had to renounce it permanently and could not take it back again in the resurrection: ‘Having given up his flesh for the life of the world, Christ could never take it again and become a man once more. For that basic reason his return could never be in the human body that he sacrificed once for all time’ (You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth, page 143). What happened to the body of Christ, then? ‘.... Jehovah God disposed of that body in his own way, just as he disposed of the body of Moses, who was a type of Christ Jesus; but no one knows how’ (The Truth Shall Make You Free, page 264). How, then, did Christ reveal Himself to His disciples after His resurrection? By materializing fleshly bodies on the occasions of his appearances, each such body being different from the others. These were temporary materializations, comparable to those in which angels had occasionally appeared to men.

The physical resurrection of Jesus Christ is denied by many other sects, such as the Unification Church which affirms: ‘As we know through the Bible, Jesus after the resurrection was not the same Jesus who had lived with his disciples before his crucifixion. He was no longer a man seen through physical eyes, because he was a being transcendent of time and space’ (Sun Myung Moon, Divine Principle, 2d ed. Washington, D.C.; The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973, page 360), and the followers of Herbert Armstrong: ‘Now notice carefully God the Father did not cause Jesus Christ to get back into the body which had died. Nowhere does the Scripture say He was alive and active or that God had Him get back into the human body that had died and was now resurrected... and the resurrected body was no longer human... He was again changed and converted into immortality...’ (The Plain Truth, April 1963, pages 10 e 40).

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ was raised with the same body He had before His crucifixion, so His resurrection was a physical resurrection. Here is what Luke says: “And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them” (Luke 24:36-43). As you can see, Jesus, in order to demonstrate to His disciples that He had been raised with a body made of flesh and bones, and that He was not a spirit (as they had thought at first), commanded His disciples to handle Him and to see His body. Jesus showed them the prints of nails in His hands and He showed them His side, as it is written: “He showed them His hands and His side” (John 20:20 – NKJV). Therefore, the body with which Jesus was raised from the dead was the same body He had before; of course, His former body had been changed into a powerful, glorious and incorruptible body, but, notwithstanding this, the indelible signs of His crucifixion were on that body.

Let me say something else to prove the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. Now, David, foreseeing that God would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, spoke of the resurrection of
the Christ saying: “I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:25-27 – NKJV). Why was it written ‘my flesh also will rest in hope’? Because the body of Christ was not appointed to see corruption or to disappear, in that it would be raised. In other words, the Christ would take His body back again. His soul would return to His body, that’s why it was written ‘my flesh also will rest in hope’. Reflect upon what I am going to say to you. Let us suppose that the soul of the Christ was left in Hades forever or that His soul was received up into heaven forever; could David had said concerning the resurrection of the Christ, ‘my flesh also will rest in hope’? Of course not. Why? Because His body (or flesh) did not rest in hope. Now let us suppose that the Christ did not take His body back again for it disappeared, could we say that His flesh did rest in hope? Of course not. Therefore, so that the words of David concerning the flesh of the Christ might be fulfilled it was necessary for Jesus Christ to take His body back again. And that’s what happened the third day, in that on that day God caused the soul of Jesus to return from Hades to the immortal and glorious body of Christ. So God did not allow the body of Christ to experience corruption. And with that body Jesus appeared to His disciples, He ate and talked with them, and with that body He was received up into heaven and one day He will return from heaven. Jesus offered His own body to redeem us from all iniquities, therefore He gave Himself as a ransom for all of us; but so that He might deliver us from our sins it was necessary for Jesus to take His body back again. How could Jesus have put away sin if He had not destroyed the death He tasted? This is why He had to be raised with the same body He had before, that He might destroy death and deliver us from sin, of which we were slaves. Let me ask you the following questions: ‘How could we affirm that Jesus destroyed death, which He tasted for everyone, if He had not returned to live in the same body He had before His death?’ Don’t you think that, if Jesus Christ had not taken His body again, it would make no sense to affirm that He destroyed death?’ I am fully persuaded that if Jesus had not taken His body back again, He could not have destroyed death. But now Christ took His body back again, for this is what God had commanded Him, and changed it into a glorious and immortal body. That’s why we can preach that He destroyed death. Glory to His Name now and forevermore. Amen.

Brethren, beware of all those who deny the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ, for they lie against the truth.

The prints of nails in the hands and feet of the resurrected body of Jesus are only temporary

Mormons teach that one day the prints of nails in the hands and feet of the body with which Jesus was raised from the dead are only temporary. Here is what we read in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism (New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 2, page 734): ‘In his resurrected state, Jesus retained the prints of nails in his hands and feet as a special manifestation to the world. Such marks, however, are only temporary. After all have confessed that he is the Christ, his resurrected body, will, like those of all mankind, be restored to its ‘proper and perfect frame’ (Alma 40:23)

Confutation

The body with which Jesus was raised from the dead was (and still is) immortal, glorious and incorruptible, and thus it does not need to be restored to ‘its proper and perfect frame’ as the Mormons say. The fact that the prints of nails were in the hands and feet of His resurrected body
when He appeared to His disciples indicates that they will remain in this glorious body forever. Let no one deceive you.

**Jesus Christ is just one Messiah among many, and one of the Great Teachers of Morality, and Eminent Reformers**

Freemasonry denies the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. Masonic writer Rex Hutchens wrote: “The purpose of teaching the concept of a Messiah in Freemasonry is to point out its near universality in the well–developed religions of the ancient world. We see references to Dionysius of the Greeks, Sosiosch of the Persians, Krishna of the Hindus, Osiris of the Egyptians, Jesus of the Christians. The purpose of these varying cultures’ messiahs was to find in human form a source of intercession with Deity; in particular one who, as a human, had been tempted and suffered the daily pangs of life and so could be expected to possess a particular sympathy and understanding; in a word, the messiahs expressed hope’ (Rex R. Hutchens, *A Bridge to Light*, Washington D.C.: The Supreme Council, 1988, pages 112-113). Albert Pike, another Masonic writer, has affirmed that Masonry ‘reverences all the great reformers. It sees in Moses, the Lawgiver of the Jews, in Confucius and Zoroaster, in Jesus of Nazareth, and in the Arabian Iconoclast, Great Teachers of Morality, and Eminent Reformers, if no more…’ (*Morals and Dogma of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite of Freemasonry*, page 525), and that ‘Divine or human, inspired or only a reformed Essene, it must be agreed that His [Jesus’] teachings are far nobler, far purer, far less alloyed with error and imperfection, far less of the earth earthly, than those of Socrates, Plato, Seneca, or Mahomet, or any other of the great moralists and Reformers of the world.’ (Ibid., page 719)

**Confutation**

One day Jesus asked His disciples this question: ‘Who do you say that I am?’ and Simon Peter answered and said: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16 – NKJV). The term Christ derives from the Greek *Christos* which means ‘the Anointed One;’ the equivalent Hebrew word is *Mashiach*, from which the English term Messiah comes. Jesus commended Peter, saying: “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, by My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17 – NKJV). Therefore, Jesus is the Christ or Messiah. He is not a Messiah, but the Messiah in whom the prophetic Scriptures were fulfilled in the fullness of the time. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, who wrote down the story of Jesus of Nazareth, clearly confirm that Jesus is the Messiah. For in Jesus of Nazareth were fulfilled the predictions concerning the Messiah contained in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Let me tell you just some of these predictions concerning the Messiah which were fulfilled in Jesus. The Messiah would be born of a virgin, and Jesus was born of a virgin. The Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, and Jesus was born in that city. The Messiah would be anointed with the Holy Spirit, and Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit immediately after He was baptized in water. The Messiah would live a blameless life, and Jesus lived a blameless life for He knew no sin. The Messiah would be despised and hated by men, and Jesus was despised and hated by men without a cause. The Messiah would speak to the people in parables, and Jesus spoke in parables. The Messiah would heal the sick, and Jesus healed many sick people. The Messiah would be bruised for our iniquities, and Jesus was crucified for our sins. The Messiah would be raised from the dead, and Jesus rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples. In the light of what the Scripture teaches, therefore, anyone who denies that Jesus of Nazareth is the only Messiah sent by God in this world is an antichrist. Beware of him, he is a liar and deceiver of minds.
Neither is Jesus just one of the great teachers of morality, for He is the Teacher. His teachings cannot be compared with the teachings of Buddha, or Confucius or Zoroaster for they are truth while the teachings of these so called teachers of morality are full of lies. Jesus has no equal. No man ever spoke like Him. Not even Moses and Solomon and the prophets (who spoke from God) spoke like Him, for Jesus is the man sent by God in this world to teach things kept secret from the foundation of the world and to save men. Yes, to save men. How? Through His atoning sacrifice, for Jesus died on the cross for our sins, so that whoever believes in Him should obtain remission of sins and eternal life. Therefore, Jesus is not only the Teacher, but also the Saviour of the world. Can Buddha or Confucius or Zoroaster save men? Of course not, for they were sinners, men who walked in darkness. But Jesus can save men, for He was born sinless (in that He was conceived by the Holy Spirit) and He lived a sinless life, so He could bear our sins in His own body. He is the way, not a way, no one comes to the Father except through Him. In other words, man can be reconciled to God only through faith in Him, there is no other way. I could continue to speak of the uniqueness of Jesus of Nazareth, but I stop here. I conclude by saying this: beware of Freemasonry for it contradicts the truth and leads to perdition.

It was not till His work was finished that Jesus Christ was completely and fully God

In his book *What the Bible Actually Teaches*, John Odhner, who is a follower of spiritist Emmanuel Swedenborg, states: ‘Although these many passages show that Jesus and Jehovah are One Divine Person there are other passages which show a distinction between the Father and the Son. We cannot come to a complete understanding of the Bible or of God by looking at only one set of passages. Instead, we need some way of reconciling all the teachings. It may help us integrate the various teachings to keep in mind the fact that Jesus changed between the time of His birth and His resurrection. During His life on earth Jesus was tempted. (Luke 4:1-13) He was not yet glorified, (John 12:28) But had to enter into His glory (Luke 24:26) by degrees. (John 7:39) He “increased in wisdom and stature.” (Luke 24:26) Before the resurrection, the union of Jehovah and Jesus was not yet complete, so Jesus said, “I am going to My Father, for My Father is greater than I.” (John 14:28; 16:16) It was only after this work was finished (John 19:30) that He could say, “All power has been given to Me in heaven and earth.” (Matthew 28:18) It was not till then that He was completely and fully God. This explains why Jesus was so often called the "Son of God." Jesus had come forth from God, and God was gradually manifesting Himself in Jesus. So at first, Jesus was the Son of God, and later became One with Jehovah and fully Divine’.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that even before Jesus was raised from the dead He was fully God, for He was worshiped (Matthew 2:11); He forgave men their sins (Mark 2:5-11); and He said to the Jews: “Before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58 – NKJV), and also: “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30 – NKJV). Know this, brothers, that there was never a time during the days of His flesh when Jesus was not completely and fully God. Therefore, beware of the followers of Emanuel Swedenborg, for they lie against the truth.
Jesus Christ at His death did not go to preach to the spirits who were in prison

Here is how some of the most famous Protestant Bible commentators have commented on the following words of the apostle Peter concerning the preaching of Jesus to the spirits in prison:

“By whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water” (1 Peter 3:19-20 – NKJV).

John Wesley: ‘By which Spirit he preached - Through the ministry of Noah. To the spirits in prison - The unholy men before the flood, who were then reserved by the justice of God, as in a prison, till he executed the sentence upon them all; and are now also reserved to the judgment of the great day’ (John Wesley's Notes on the Bible).

Matthew Henry: ‘1. For the explication of this we may notice, (1.) The preacher—Christ Jesus, who has interested himself in the affairs of the church and of the world ever since he was first promised to Adam, Gen. 3:15. He went, not by a local motion, but by special operation, as God is frequently said to move, Gen. 11:5; Hos. 5:15; Mic. 1:3. He went and preached, by his Spirit striving with them, and inspiring and enabling Enoch and Noah to plead with them, and preach righteousness to them, as 2 Pt. 2:5. (2.) The hearers. Because they were dead and disembodied when the apostle speaks of them, therefore he properly calls them spirits now in prison; not that they were in prison when Christ preached to them, as the vulgar Latin translation and the papish expositors pretend. (3.) The sin of these people: They were disobedient, that is, rebellious, unpersuadable, and unbelieving, as the word signifies; this their sin is aggravated from the patience and long-suffering of God (which once waited upon them for 120 years together), while Noah was preparing the ark, and by that, as well as by his preaching, giving them fair warning of what was coming upon them. (4.) The event of all: Their bodies were drowned, and their spirits cast into hell, which is called a prison (Matthew 5:25; 2 Pt. 2:4, 5); but Noah and his family, who believed and were obedient, were saved in the ark’ (Matthew Henry's Commentary)

John Darby: ‘The passage that follows has occasioned difficulties to the readers of scripture; but it appears to me simple, if we perceive the object of the Spirit of God. The Jews expected a Messiah corporeally present, who should deliver the nation, and exalt the Jews to the summit of earthly glory. But He was not present, we know, in that manner, and the believing Jews had to endure the scorn and the hatred of the unbelieving, on account of their trust in a Messiah who was not present, and who had wrought no deliverance for the people. Believers possessed the salvation of their soul, and they knew Jesus in heaven; but unbelieving men did not care for that. The apostle therefore cites the case of Noah's testimony. The believing Jews were few in number, and Christ was theirs only according to the Spirit. By the power of that Spirit He had been raised up from the dead. It was by the power of the same Spirit that He had gone-without being corporeally present-to preach in Noah. The world was disobedient (like the Jews in the apostle's days), and eight souls only were saved; even as the believers were now but a little flock. But the spirits of the disobedient were now in prison, because they did not obey Christ present among them by His Spirit in Noah. The long-suffering of God waited then, as now, with the Jewish nation; the result would be the same. It has been so. This interpretation is confirmed (in preference to that which supposes that the Spirit of Christ preached in hades to souls which had been confined there ever since the flood) by the consideration that in Genesis it is said, " My Spirit shall not always strive. with men but their days shall be a hundred and twenty years." That is to say, His Spirit should strive, in the testimony of Noah, during a hundred and twenty years and no longer. Now it would be an extraordinary thing that with those persons only (for he speaks only of them) the Lord should strive in testimony after their death. Moreover, we may observe that, in considering this expression to mean the Spirit of Christ in Noah, we only use a well-known phrase of Peter's; for he it is, as we have seen, who said, " The Spirit of Christ which
was in the prophets." These spirits then are in prison, because they did not hearken to the Spirit of Christ in Noah' (John Darby's Synopsis of the Bible)

John Gill: 'The plain and easy sense of the words is, that Christ, by his Spirit, by which he was quickened, went in the ministry of Noah, the preacher of righteousness, and preached both by words and deeds, by the personal ministry of Noah, and by the building of the ark, to that generation who was then in being; and who being disobedient, and continuing so, a flood was brought upon them which destroyed them all; and whose spirits, or separate souls, were then in the prison of hell, so the Syriac version renders it, lwyvb, "in hell," see Revelation 20:7 when the Apostle Peter wrote this epistle; so that Christ neither went into this prison, nor preached in it, nor to spirits that were then in it when he preached, but to persons alive in the days of Noah, and who being disobedient, when they died, their separate souls were put into prison, and there they were when the apostle wrote: from whence we learn, that Christ was, that he existed in his divine nature before he was incarnate, he was before Abraham, he was in the days of Noah; and that Christ also, under the Old Testament, acted the part of a Mediator, in his divine nature, and by his Spirit discharged that branch of it, his prophetic office, before he appeared in human nature; and that the Gospel was preached in those early times, as unto Abraham, so before him' (John Gill's Exposition of the Entire Bible)

As you can see, all of these Bible Commentators somehow or other comment on the words of Peter saying that Jesus preached through the ministry of Noah to people who lived in the days of Noah, who were disobedient.

Confutution

The above mentioned words written by John Wesley, Matthew Henry, John Darby and John Gill, cannot be accepted for the following reasons.

First, because the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison is closely linked with the death of Christ, that is, the two events are closely linked together, for before saying: "By whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison", the apostle Peter says: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18 – NKJV). Therefore the preaching of Christ to the spirits in prison occurred after His death.

Second, because 'the spirits in prison' to whom Christ preached were dead people who had lived in the days of Noah, for the apostle Peter says a little further: "For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6 – NKJV). The fact that the Scripture says that the Gospel was preached also to those who are dead means that the Gospel was first preached to the living (the persons who were alive in the days of Jesus) and then to the dead (those who were formerly disobedient in the days of Noah).

Third, because what Christ preached to the spirits in prison was the Gospel, as it is written: "For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead" (1 Peter 4:6 - NKJV), and we know that the Gospel began to be preached by Christ when He came into this world. Noah did not know the Gospel of Christ, and consequently he could not preach the Gospel to his generation. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, not a preacher of the Gospel of Christ.

I conclude by saying that even though I believe and teach that Christ at His death went to preach the Gospel to those who were formerly disobedient in the days of Noah, I do not believe nor teach that He preached the Gospel to them that they might be saved, for those people remained lost after they heard the Gospel. After death men have no chance to be saved, for the Scripture says: "It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement" (Hebrews 9:27 – NKJV). You may ask me now then: 'Why then did Christ preach the Gospel to those people who were dead?' Well, the reason is that "they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6 – NKJV). In other words, that the living might know that those persons who lived in the days of Noah were dead according to men in the flesh, yet in the sight of God they continued to live spiritually, in that to Him the dead people continue
to live. I have come to this conclusion because just before the Scripture says: “Who [those who speak evil of us] shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead” (1 Peter 4:5) and also: “For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead” (1 Peter 4:6). In other words, the Scripture says ‘God is ready to judge also the dead (and not only the living), who, therefore, even though they are not on the earth any longer, will not escape the judgement of God because to God they all live, which is confirmed by the fact that Jesus Christ preached also to the dead’. The purpose of that preaching of Jesus Christ, therefore, was not to convert those dead people.

Jesus of Nazareth is not the Messiah of the Hebrew Bible for He did not do any of the things that the Jewish Scriptures said the Messiah would do

Most of the Jews affirm that Jesus of Nazareth is not the Messiah, for He did not fulfil the mission of the Messiah as it is described in the Jewish Scriptures. In other words, Jesus did not do any of the things that the Scriptures said the Messiah would do. Let us see then the things that the Messiah - according to the Jews - will do when he comes? The Messiah will bring about the political and spiritual redemption of the Jewish people by bringing the Jews back to Israel and restoring Jerusalem (Isaiah 11:11-12; Jeremiah 23:8; 30:3; Hosea 3:4-5); he will establish a government in Israel that will be the center of all world government, both for Jews and Gentiles (Isaiah 2:2-4; 11:10; 42:1); he will rebuild the Temple and re-establish its worship (Jeremiah 33:18); he will restore the religious court system of Israel and establish Jewish law as the law of the land (Jeremiah 33:15).

David Berger and Michael Wyschogrod in their booklet Jews and ‘Jewish Christianity’, whose purpose is to explain why Jews ought not to become Christians or Jewish Christians, say about the Messiahship of Jesus: ‘Let us begin with the fundamental belief that Jesus was – and is – the Messiah. Since the very word Christ means Messiah, this belief lies at the heart of the Christian faith. But how do we go about testing the claim that Jesus was the Messiah? The first thing to remember is that the term Messiah gets its basic meaning from Biblical prophecy; it is only because of such prophecy that people expected the Messiah in the first place. Any person claiming to be the Messiah must, therefore, be able to pass a very exacting test: Has he done what the Bible expects of the Messiah? We must begin, then, by taking a look at the Bible as a whole. How would the Messiah of the Hebrew Bible be described by someone who had just read the text for the first time without any knowledge of either Judaism or Christianity? If our hypothetical friend were a perceptive reader, his first observation would be that the word messiah simply refers to any king or high priest who was anointed with oil in accordance with the custom of ancient Israel. There is, however, a rather special king from the House of David who is described in several Biblical passages as the man who will preside over a redeemed and perfected world. Eventually, Jews came to use the word Messiah (this time the capital M is justifiable) to refer to that king, and it is in this context that any man claiming to be the Messiah must be judged. In other words, the only way to define ‘the Messiah’ is as the king who will rule during what we call the Messianic age. The central criterion for evaluating a Messiah must therefore be a single question: Has the Messianic age come? It is only in terms of this question that ‘the Messiah’ means anything. What, then, does the Bible say about the Messianic age? Here is a brief description by a famous Christian scholar: ‘The recovery of independence and power, an era of peace and prosperity, of fidelity to God and his law, of justice and fair-dealing and brotherly love among men, and of personal rectitude and piety’ (G. F. Moore, Judaism, II, page 324). If we think about this sentence just for a moment in light of the history of the last two thousand years, we will begin to see what enormous obstacles must be overcome if we are to believe in the messianic mission of Jesus. If Jesus was the Messiah, why have suffering and evil
continued and even increased in the many centuries since his death?" (David Berger/Michael Wyschogrod, *Jews and *Jewish Christianity*, KTAV Publishing House, New York 1978, pages 18-19). In the light of all the above mentioned arguments, therefore, Jesus of Nazareth is simply one of the false Jewish Messiahs who have risen up from among the Jewish people during their history.

**Confutation**

Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Messiah, for He fulfilled the mission of the Messiah which God foretold through the prophets of old. According to the prophetic Scriptures, the Messiah had to die for our sins and rise again from the dead for our justification, and Jesus of Nazareth died for our sins and rose again for our justification.

Here is what the prophet Isaiah said about the atoning death of the Messiah: “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he was taken as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearer is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:2-12). The above mentioned words of Isaiah were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. For those who dwelt in Jerusalem and their rulers condemned Him to death (even though He had gone about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him) and asked Pilate, governor of Judea, that He should be put to death. Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested, even though he had found no reason for death in Jesus. So Jesus was brought to the place called Golgotha, which was outside Jerusalem, and there He was crucified with two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. And after He breathed His last, He was laid in a tomb which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus who was a rich man (Matthew chapters 26-27).

Here is what David said about the resurrection of the Messiah: “My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave My soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:9-10 – NKJV). The words of David were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, for after three days God raised Him from the dead, and He was seen by His disciples. Here is what Luke wrote concerning the resurrection of Jesus: “Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was...
yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words, And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest” (Luke 24:1-9). The apostle John – one of the Twelve disciples of Jesus - confirms the resurrection of Jesus, saying: “Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe. And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:19-29).

Jesus Himself, during the days of His flesh, declared very clearly that He came into the world to die and rise again from the dead. One day He explained to His disciples that “he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life” (Matthew 16:21 – NIV), and on another day, going up to Jerusalem, He took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them: “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again” (Matthew 20:18-19 – NKJV).

In the light of the Scriptures, therefore, Jesus the Messiah did not have to bring about the political redemption of the Jewish people; nor did He have to establish a government in Israel that would be the center of all world government, both for Jews and Gentiles; nor did He have to rebuild the Temple and re-establish its worship; nor did He have to restore the religious court system of Israel and establish Jewish law as the law of the land; nor did He have to usher in an age of peace and righteousness. All these things had nothing to do with the mission of the Messiah. That is confirmed by the fact that Jesus, after His resurrection, rebuked the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, for they had believed that He had come to redeem Israel from the Romans rather than from their sins; hear what He said to them: “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:25-26 – NKJV).

Someone may ask at this point, ‘The prophetic Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah had to die and rise again, why then do the Jews fail to understand them?’ Well, the reason why the Jews fail to understand the passages of the Scriptures which speak of the atoning death and the resurrection of the Messiah is that “a veil lies on their heart” (2 Corinthians 3:15 – NKJV), that is to say, because God has blinded their minds, so that they are unable to understand the Scriptures. However, when Jesus returns from heaven all the Jews will turn to the Lord and the veil will be taken away.
THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is a force or an influence

Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the personhood of the Holy Spirit, in that they teach that the Holy Spirit is a force. Here is what they say: ‘The correct identification of the Holy Spirit must fit all the scriptures that refer to that spirit. With this viewpoint, it is logical to conclude that the holy spirit is the active force of God. It is not a person but is a powerful force that God causes to emanate from himself to accomplish his holy will’ (Reasoning from the Scriptures, 1985, page 381). Many other sects deny the personality of the Holy Spirit. Let us see some of them.

The followers of Herbert Armstrong: ‘God’s Holy Spirit is His life. It imparts His life to you!’ (What do you mean ... salvation?, page 19); ‘The truth is - and it would shock millions to know - that the Holy Spirit is not a person. Rather, it is the agency by which God the Father works. The Holy Spirit is an agency, a force, a power that is used by the Highest - God the Father - to achieve his purpose. The Holy Spirit, we repeat, is not a person’ (Good News, Nov./Dec. 1990, p. 9).

The followers of Emanuel Swedenborg: Emanuel Swedenborg wrote: ‘... they that sat on the seats unanimously agreed in this conclusion, that the Holy Spirit is not a distinct person of Himself, consequently not a distinct God of Himself; but that by the Holy Spirit is meant the divine sanctity, coming forth and proceeding from the one and only omnipresent God, who is the Lord ...’ (Miscellaneous Theological Works of Emanuel Swedenborg, page 250). In his book What the Bible Actually Teaches, John Odhner states: The Spirit Is Not Another Person ....This is vital to understanding the Holy Spirit. ... Throughout the Bible, the Spirit of God is pictured not as a separate person, but as the breath of God .... The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Jesus Christ. It is the regenerating and enlightening influence of Jesus Christ, not of some third person.’

The Iglesia ni Cristo: they believe in an impersonal Holy Spirit, a power sent by the Father in the name of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is not God but one of the spirits sent by God (http://thebereans.net/prof-inc.shtml).

The Christadelphian Church: ‘The Holy Spirit is simply the power of God.’ (http://www.christadelphian.org.uk/), ‘The Holy Spirit is the energy or power of God, by which all creation came originally into being, and by which it is sustained. ... This God-derived energy is the substratum of all creation .... (God is One Not Three, privately published, n.d. page 15).

Confutation

The Holy Spirit is a Person

The Holy Spirit speaks. Here are some Bible verses according to which the Spirit speaks: “Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness” (Hebrews 3:7-8); “Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot” (Acts 8:29); “While Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. Arise therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing: for I have sent them” (Acts 10:19-20); “As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2); “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13); “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils [demons]” (1 Timothy 4:1).
The Holy Spirit hears, for Jesus said about Him: “Whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak” (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit sees, for the seven eyes which the Lamb has (John saw these seven eyes in a vision while he was on the isle of Patmos) “are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth” (Revelation 5:6) or, as the prophet Zechariah said, “the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth” (Zechariah 4:10).

The Holy Spirit has a mind, for it is written: “And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:27). The word here translated ‘mind’ is a comprehensive word including the ideas of thought, feeling and purpose.

The Holy Spirit has a will, for it is written: “But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:11 – NKJV).

The Holy Spirit has an awareness of goodness, for the apostles and elders wrote to the believing Gentiles who were in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well” (Acts 15:28-29).

The Holy Spirit loves, for Paul wrote to the Romans: “Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me” (Romans 15:30).

The Holy Spirit searches and knows, as it is written: “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:10-11).

The Holy Spirit reveals, as it is written in the Gospel according to Luke: “And it was revealed unto him [Simeon] by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ” (Luke 2:26).

The Holy Spirit teaches, as it is written: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things…” (John 14:26), and also: “And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates, and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say: For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say” (Luke 12:11-12), and again: “You also gave Your good Spirit to instruct them, and did not withhold Your manna from their mouth” (Nehemiah 9:20 - NKJV), and again: “Which things [the things that have been freely given to us by God] also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual” (1 Corinthians 2:13).

The Holy Spirit guides, as it is written: ““Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13).

The Holy Spirit prays, as it is written: “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27 - NKJV).

The Holy Spirit convinces, for Jesus said about Him: “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: Of sin, because they believe not on me; Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged” (John 16:8-11).

The Holy Spirit regenerates, as it is written: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5-6).

The Holy Spirit brings the words of the Lord to our remembrance, as it is written: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you
all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).
The Holy Spirit makes men overseers, as Paul said to the elders of the church of Ephesus: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).
The Holy Spirit commands, as it is written: “‘Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away’” (Acts 13:1-3).
The Holy Spirit forbids believers to do certain things on certain occasions, as it is written: “Now when they [the apostles] had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia” (Acts 16:6 - NKJV).
The Holy Spirit does not permit believers to go to certain places on certain occasions, as it is written: “After they [the apostles] had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them” (Acts 16:7 - NKJV).
The Holy Spirit can be known, for Jesus said to His disciples: “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:16-17).
The Holy Spirit can be grieved, for it is written: “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30) and again: “But they [the Israelites] rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them” (Isaiah 63:10 – NKJV).
The Holy Spirit can be resisted, for Stephen said before the Sanhedrin: “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Acts 7:51).
The Holy Spirit can be tempted, for Peter said to Sapphira: “How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord?” (Acts 5:9).
The Holy Spirit can be lied to, for Peter said to Ananias: “Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3).
The Holy Spirit can be spoken against, as it is written: “And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come” (Matthew 12:32).
As you can see, the Holy Spirit has personal characteristics and does things which only a person can do. An impersonal force cannot speak or hear, nor can it be lied to, spoken against, grieved, tempted, etc.

The Holy Spirit is God

Now I am going to compare some verses of the Scripture referring to the Holy Spirit with other verses referring to God, in order to show you that the Holy Spirit is God.

- The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says to the saints: “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14), while Moses says to God: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalm 90:2). Therefore the Spirit is eternal like God.
- David said to God: “Where can I go from Your Spirit?” (Psalm 139:7 - NKJV), while God said to Jeremiah: “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:24). Therefore the Spirit is omnipresent like God.
Paul said: “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10), while Hannah said: “The LORD is a God of knowledge” (1 Samuel 2:3 – The IBRV reads: “L’Eterno è un Dio che sa tutto”, that is, “The Eternal is a God who knows everything”). Therefore the Spirit is omniscient like God.

Elihu said: “The Spirit of God hath made me” (Job 33:4), while David said to God: “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb” (Psalm 139:13 – The NIV reads: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb”). Therefore the Spirit creates as God does, thus He is omnipotent like God.

Jesus said: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5-6), while John says that those who believe in the name of the Son of God “were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). Therefore the Spirit regenerates as God does.

Peter said to Ananias: “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3) and also: “Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:4). Therefore to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God.

In the book of the Acts of the apostles it is written that Paul said these words to those Jews in Rome who refused to accept the Gospel: “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Acts 28:25-27). As you can see, it was the Holy Spirit who spoke those words through the prophet Isaiah. However, according to the book of the prophet Isaiah, it was God who spoke those words, as it is written: “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed” (Isaiah 6:1-10). Therefore it was both the Holy Spirit and God who sent Isaiah to prophesy against the people of Israel.

In the book of the Acts of the apostles it is written: “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister” (Acts 13:1-5). Therefore it was the Holy Spirit who sent Paul and Barnabas to preach. However, Jesus said: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few: Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew
9:37-38), making it clear that it is God who sends forth labourers into His harvest. Therefore the Holy Spirit is God because He sent forth Paul and Barnabas into God's harvest.

Jesus called the Holy Spirit "the Comforter" (John 15:26). Therefore He comforts those who are downcast. However, Paul says to the Corinthians: "Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus" (2 Corinthians 7:6), and also: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Therefore the Holy Spirit comforts believers as God does.

In the book of the prophet Isaiah it is written: "But they [the Israelites] rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them" (Isaiah 63:10 - NKJV), while in the book of Psalms it is written: "How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert!" (Psalm 78:40 - NKJV). Therefore to grieve the Holy Spirit is to grieve God.

Paul said to the Corinthians: "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?" (1 Corinthians 6:19) and also: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16). Therefore the Holy Spirit indwells believers as God does.

Jesus said: "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, shall teach you all things" (John 14:26), but He said also: "And they shall be all taught of God" (John 6:45), and David said: "The meek will he [God] guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way" (Psalm 25:9). Therefore the Holy Spirit teaches as God does.

Jesus said about the Holy Spirit: "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13), and David said in the book of Psalms to God: "Lead me in thy truth, and teach me" (Psalm 25:5). Therefore if the Spirit of truth guides into the truth as God does, that means that He is God.

As you can see, according to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit possesses attributes which belong only to Deity (for He is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent like God); He is equated with God and does work that only God does. Therefore, I exhort you to reject the false teaching that denies the personality of the Holy Spirit.

_The Holy Ghost is a Personage of Spirit, who is not the Spirit of truth and is not omnipresent_

Mormons teach that the Holy Ghost is a Personage of Spirit, thus He can’t be in every place at one time: 'The Holy Ghost is the third member of the Godhead. He is a Personage of Spirit, a Spirit Person, a Spirit Man, a Spirit Entity. He can be in only one place at one time, and he does not and cannot transform himself into any other form or image than that of the Man whom he is, though his power and influence can be manifest at one and the same time through all immensity’ (Bruce McConkie, _Mormon Doctrine_, 1993, page 359). The _Encyclopedia of Mormonism_ affirms that ‘the Holy Ghost is a spirit man, a spirit son of God the Father’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 2, page 649). Furthermore Mormons teach that the Holy Ghost is not the Spirit of truth; here is what president Joseph F. Smith said: The Holy Ghost as a personage of Spirit can no more be omnipresent in person than can the Father or the Son, but by his intelligence, his knowledge, his power and influence, over and through the laws of nature, he is and can be omnipresent throughout all the works of God. It is not the Holy Ghost who in person lighteth every man who is born into the world, but it is the light of Christ, the Spirit of truth which proceeds from the source of intelligence, which permeates all nature, which lighteth every man and fills the immensity of space. You may call it the Spirit of God, you may call it the influence of God’s intelligence ....’ (Bruce McConkie, _Mormon Doctrine_, page 752); as you can
see the Spirit of truth or the light of Christ is not the Holy Ghost. That is confirmed by these other Mormon statements: ‘The light of Christ is the agency or power used by the Holy Ghost in administering his affairs and in sending forth his gifts’ (Mormon Doctrine, page 753), ‘The light of Christ refers to the spiritual power that emanates from God to fill the immensity of space and enlightens every man, woman and child. Other terms sometimes used to denote this same phenomenon, are Holy Spirit, ‘Spirit of the Lord’ and ‘Spirit of truth’, but it is different from the Holy Ghost’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Vol. 2, page 835).

That’s why Mormons cannot conceive of the Holy Spirit as being universally resident in believers: ‘In a figurative sense, the Holy Ghost dwells in the hearts of the righteous Saints of all dispensations’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, vol. 2, 649), ‘How can a personal Holy Spirit be indwelling separate people at the same time?’ (Orson Pratt, Absurdities of Materialism, page 24)

Confutation

First of all, I will show you from the Scripture that the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is God.

- The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews says to the saints: “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:14), while Moses says to God: “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psalm 90:2). Therefore the Spirit is eternal like God.

- David said to God: “Where can I go from Your Spirit?” (Psalm 139:7 - NKJV), while God said to Jeremiah: “Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 23:24). Therefore the Spirit is omnipresent like God.

- Paul said: “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Corinthians 2:10), while Hannah said: “The LORD is a God of knowledge” (1 Samuel 2:3 – The IBRV reads: “L'Eterno è un Dio che sa tutto”, that is, “The Eternal is a God who knows everything”). Therefore the Spirit is omniscient like God.

- Elihu said: “The Spirit of God hath made me” (Job 33:4), while David said to God: “For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb” (Psalm 139:13 – The NIV reads: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb”). Therefore the Spirit creates as God does, thus He is omnipotent like God.

- Jesus said: “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:5-6), while John says that those who believe in the name of the Son of God “were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:13). Therefore the Spirit regenerates as God does.

- Peter said to Ananias: “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?” (Acts 5:3) and also: “Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:4). Therefore to lie to the Holy Spirit is to lie to God.

- In the book of the Acts of the apostles it is written that Paul said these words to those Jews in Rome who refused to accept the Gospel: “Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, Saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Acts 28:25-27). As you can see, it was the Holy Spirit who spoke those words through the prophet Isaiah. However, according to the book of the prophet Isaiah, it was God who spoke those words, as it is written: “In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I
am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed” (Isaiah 6:1-10). Therefore it was both the Holy Spirit and God who sent Isaiah to prophesy against the people of Israel.

● In the book of the Acts of the apostles it is written: “Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus. And when they were at Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews: and they had also John to their minister” (Acts 13:1-5). Therefore it was the Holy Spirit who sent Paul and Barnabas to preach. However, Jesus said: “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38), making it clear that it is God who sends forth labourers into His harvest. Therefore the Holy Spirit is God because He sent forth Paul and Barnabas into God’s harvest.

● Jesus called the Holy Spirit “the Comforter” (John 15:26). Therefore He comforts those who are downcast. However, Paul says to the Corinthians: “Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus” (2 Corinthians 7:6), and also: “Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). Therefore the Holy Spirit comforts believers as God does.

● In the book of the prophet Isaiah it is written: “But they [the Israelites] rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them” (Isaiah 63:10 - NKJV), while in the book of Psalms it is written: “How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, and grieved Him in the desert!” (Psalm 78:40 - NKJV). Therefore to grieve the Holy Spirit is to grieve God.

● Paul said to the Corinthians: “Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Corinthians 6:19) and also: “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16). Therefore the Holy Spirit indwells believers as God does.

● Jesus said: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things” (John 14:26), but He said also: “And they shall be all taught of God” (John 6:45), and David said: “The meek will he [God] guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way” (Psalm 25:9). Therefore the Holy Spirit teaches as God does.

● Jesus said about the Holy Spirit: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13), and David said in the book of Psalms to God: “Lead me in thy truth, and teach me” (Psalm 25:5). Therefore if the Spirit of truth guides into the truth as God does, that means that He is God.

As you can see, according to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit possesses attributes which belong only to Deity (for He is eternal, omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent like God); He is equated with God and does work that only God does.

However, He is not a spirit son of God the Father: such a teaching about the Holy Ghost is unbiblical. As for the difference between the Holy Ghost and the Spirit of truth (called also the
light of Christ), the Scripture does not support it, for according to the Scripture “there is ... one Spirit” (Ephesians 4:4 – NKJV), that is, the Spirit of God, who is called also Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit), Spirit of Christ and Spirit of truth and He is omnipresent because David says: “Where can I go from Your Spirit?” (Psalm 139:7 – NKJV), and consequently He can dwell in the hearts of all those who are born of God. Is it not written: “And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, “Abba,Father!” (Galatians 4:6 -NKJV)? The Spirit’s omnipresence was confirmed by Jesus when He said about the Comforter: “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8), for how could the Holy Ghost convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement, if He were not omnipresent? Someone may say that Jesus was not speaking of the Holy Ghost but of the Spirit of truth? That’s not right. Because a few moments later He said: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13), and a short time before He had said: “But the Comforter, which [who] is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26)

In the light of the Scripture, therefore, the doctrine about the Holy Spirit taught by Mormons is false.
TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity is false

Many people all over the world deny the doctrine of Trinity. Obviously not all of them explain their denial in the same way. What follows is a series of statements against the doctrine of Trinity made by some sects and religions.

- Jehovah’s Witnesses. In their book *Let God Be True* we read: “Satan is the originator of the Trinity doctrine” (*Let God Be True*, page 101). According to them, only God the Father is God. Jesus Christ, in His prehuman existence was a created spirit being and thus in the days of His flesh He was not God. The Holy Spirit is the active force of God.

- Oneness Pentecostals. David Bernard says: ‘God is absolutely and indivisibly one ….. Neither testament uses the word *trinity* or associates the word *three* or the word *persons* with God in any significant way. ….. The Bible speaks of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (or Holy Spirit), but it does not use these titles to indicate three persons ‘in’ the Godhead …. the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit describe God’s multiple roles and works, but they do not reflect an essential threeness in God’s nature. *Father* refers to God in family relationship to humanity; *Son* refers to God in flesh; and *Spirit* refers to God in activity. For example, one man can have three significant relationships or functions – such as administrator, teacher, and counselor – and yet be one person in every sense. God is not defined by or limited to an essential threeness ‘ (J. L. Hall and David K. Bernard, editors, *Doctrines of the Bible*, Word Aflame Press, Hazelwood, MO, USA, 1998, pages 15, 17-18,19-20). According to Oneness Pentecostals, therefore, Jesus Christ is the absolute fullness of the Godhead; He is at once Father, Son and Holy Spirit

- Mormons. Joseph Smith said: ‘I will preach on the plurality of Gods. I have selected this text [Rev. 1:6, in the King James Version] for that express purpose. I wish to declare I have always and in all congregations when I have preached on the subject of the Deity, it has been the plurality of Gods … I have always declared God to be a distinct personage, Jesus Christ a separate and distinct personage from God the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was a distinct personage and a Spirit: and these three constitute three distinct personages and three Gods …. Many men say there is one God; the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost are only one God. I say that is a strange God anyhow – three in one, and one in three! It is a curious organization …. All are to be crammed into one God, according to sectarianism. It would make the biggest God in all the world. He would be a wonderfully big God – he would be a giant or a monster’ (Sermon on ‘The Christian Godhead – Plurality of Gods’ delivered on June 16, 1844; quoted in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pages 370,372). James Talmage, in the Articles of Faith, after quoting the Nicene Creed, declares: ‘It would be difficult to conceive of a greater number of inconsistencies and contradictions expressed in words as few’ (James E. Talmage, *A Study of the Articles of Faith*, Salt Lake City, Utah (USA), 42nd edition, 1968, page 48). Mormons deny the spirituality of God for they say that God is made of flesh and bones, they deny the immutability of God for they say that God was once a man, then He became God, and furthermore they teach that God the Father had a Father, and God’s Father also had a Father and so on.

- The followers of William Marrion Branham: Branham said, ‘...not one place in the Bible is trinity ever mentioned...It’s Catholic error and you Protestants bow to it’ (William Branham, *Conduct, Order, Doctrine Q and A*, p. 182), ‘Father, Son, and Holy Ghost is offices of one God. He was the Father; He was the Son; He is the Holy Ghost. It's three offices or three dispensations,...’ (Ibid., p. 392).

- The Church of the New Jerusalem. Emanuel Swedenborg said: ‘They who, respecting the Divinity, have an idea of three persons, cannot have an idea of one God; if with the mouth they
say one, still they think three; but they who, respecting the Divinity, have an idea of three principles in one person, can have an idea of one God, and can say one God, and also think one God. An idea of three principles in one person is attained, when it is thought that the Father is in the Lord, and that the Holy Spirit proceeds from Him; there is then a trine in the Lord, the Divine itself which is called the Father, the Divine Human which is called the Son, and the Divine Proceeding which is called the Holy Spirit’ (Melton J. Gordon, Religious Creeds, Detroit 1988, page 717).

- The Christadelphian Church: ‘The idea of the Trinity is not one that is found in the Bible.’ (http://www.christadelphian.org.uk/), ‘... the doctrine of the Trinity is contradictory, incomprehensible, and unscriptural’ (God is One Not Three, page 3)
- Christian Science. Mary Eddy Baker wrote: ‘The theory of three persons in one God (that is, a personal trinity or Tri-unity) suggests polytheism, rather than the one ever-present I AM ..... Life, Truth, and Love constitute the triune Person called God, - that is, the triply divine Principle, Love. They represent a trinity in unity, three in one, - the same in essence, though multiform in office: God the Father-Mother; Christ the spiritual idea of sonship; divine Science or the Holy Comforter. These three express in divine Science the threefold, essential nature of the infinite’ (Science and Health, page 256, 331-332).
- Judaism: ‘... the Jews have always regarded the doctrine of the Trinity as one irreconcilable with the spirit of the Jewish religion and with monotheism’ (Jewish Encyclopedia, ‘Trinity’)
- Islam: the Qu’ran says: ‘O people of the Book! commit no excesses in your religion: nor say of Allah aught but truth. Christ (Maseeh) Jesus the son of Mary was (no more than) an Apostle of Allah and His Word which He bestowed on Mary and a Spirit proceeding from Him: so believe in Allah and His Apostles. Say not “Trinity”: desist: it will be better for you: for Allah is One Allah: glory be to him: (for Exalted is He) above having a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs. Christ (Maseeh) disdaineth not to serve and worship Allah nor do the angels those nearest (to Allah): those who disdain His worship and are arrogant He will gather them all together unto himself to (answer). But to those who believe and do deeds of righteousness He will give their (due) rewards and more out of His bounty: but those who are disdainful and arrogant He will punish with a grievous penalty; nor will they find besides Allah any to protect or help them’ (Qur’an 4:171-173 Surah An-Nisaa (The Women)
- The Bahá’ís: ‘We believe that God is one person in agreement with Judaism and Islam. We cannot accept the idea that God is both three and one and find this foreign to the Bible which Christianity claims as its source. Not a few Jewish scholars are in complete agreement with us on this point as is the Koran’ (quoted in Walter Martin, The kingdom of the Cults, page 254). To the Bahá’ís, Jesus was only one of nine manifestations of the divine being and appeared in His era of time to illumine those who lived at that time. Today Bahá’u’lláh, the last great manifestation of the Divine being, is the source of revelation.

The Family/Children of God: ‘I don’t even believe in the trinity. You can’t find that word in the Bible....’ (Disciples and Friends Only 631:130, ‘Islam’)

The Way International: ‘... historians of Church dogma and systematic theologians agree that the idea of a Christian trinity was not part of the first century Church .... It gradually evolved and gained momentum in late first, second and third centuries as pagans, who had converted to Christianity, brought to Christianity some of their pagan beliefs and practices. Trinitarianism then was confirmed at Nicaea in 325 by Church bishops out of political expediency’ (Jesus Christ is not God, pages 25-26).

The Unification Church: ‘According to the principle of creation, God's purpose of creation can be realized only through the four position foundation which is established by forming the three objective purposes through origin-division-union action. Accordingly, in order to fulfill the purpose of creation, Jesus and the Holy Spirit must establish the four position foundation centered on God, be becoming one body in unity through the action of give and take, each as the object of God, substantially divided from His dual essentialities. In this manner, Jesus and the Holy Spirit become one body centered on God; this is called "Trinity". Originally, God's
purpose of creating Adam and Eve was to form a trinity by uniting them into one body in love as the True Parents of mankind, thus establishing the four position foundation centered on God. If they had perfected themselves without the fall, forming a trinity as the True Parents centered on God, and had multiplied children of goodness, all their descendants would have grown to become married couples of goodness centered on God, each pair forming a trinity with God. naturally, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth would have been realized centering on the first human couple, in accordance with the realization of God's three great blessings to them. However, due to the fall, Adam and Eve established the four position foundation centered on Satan, thus resulting in a trinity centered on Satan. Therefore, their descendants have also formed trinities centered on Satan, and have brought about a human society of corruption. Therefore, God must work to have all fallen men born anew through the True Parents of mankind, Jesus and the Holy Spirit--one as the second Adam and the other as the second Eve--and then having all form respectively a trinity centered on God. But because of the undue death of Jesus, he and the Holy Spirit have fulfilled only the mission of spiritual True Parents, by forming the spiritual Trinity centered on God. Since Jesus and the Holy Spirit have undertaken the mission of spiritual rebirth only, the saints still remain in the position of their spiritual children, having been restored through the spiritual Trinity only. Christ must come again in flesh in order that he may become the True Parent both spiritually and physically, by forming the substantial Trinity centered on God. He will then, by giving them rebirth both spiritually and physically, have all fallen men form (by couples) substantial trinities centered on God, after having liquidated the original sin. When fallen men have established the four position foundation in the original form centered on God, then the Kingdom of Heaven on earth will be restored through the realization of God's three great blessings to man’ (Divine Principle, part 1, chapter 7). Young Oon Kim, professor of systematic theology at the Unification Theological Seminary, stated, “Unification theology starts with the fact of polarity as the main clue for understanding the essential nature of God. Hence it is not primarily interested in defending the Trinitarian doctrine of the fourth century creeds” (Unification Theology, p. 53).

Confutation

The Godhead consists of God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. This doctrine is commonly called the doctrine of Trinity. Therefore, we affirm that the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and the Three are one God. So the Godhead is not comprised of one Person alone, that is, the Father, but also of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. These Three Divine Persons are one God from all eternity.

Before I show you the Trinity from the Scriptures, I want to say something about the word ‘Trinity,’ which does not occur in the Holy Scriptures. The word ‘Trinity’ comes from the Latin word Trinitas, which means ‘triad’ or ‘state of being three-fold’, which was coined by Tertullian of Carthage (one of the so called Church Fathers), toward the end of the second century after Christ, to explain the scriptural concept that the Godhead consists of Three Divine Persons, that is, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore the fact that the word ‘Trinity’ does not occur in the Scriptures is relative because, as we have already seen and as we are going to see better in a few moments, the concept of a Triune God is abundantly present within the Scriptures. Just as the expression ‘the immortality of the soul’ does not occur in the Bible, yet in the Bible is present the concept of the immortality of the human soul, so even though the word ‘trinity’ does not occur in the Bible, in it is present the concept of the Trinity.

Verses of the Scripture supporting the concept of the Trinity

- Matthew wrote: “Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway
out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:13-17). In this event, which occurred at the Jordan river, we see the Father who spoke from heaven, the Son who was on earth who was baptized by John, and the Holy Spirit who descended like a dove and alighted upon Him. This was a clear manifestation of the Trinity, all of the Three Persons of the Godhead being referred to.

- Jesus said to His disciples: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:15-17). Jesus, while He was still on earth with His disciples, was the Comforter, whom God had sent to comfort those who mourned, but since He had to go back to the Father, who had sent Him, He prayed the Father that He might give them another Comforter, that is, the Holy Spirit, who would be with them forever. And at the appointed time His prayer was heard, for the Father, in answer to the prayer of His Son, sent the Spirit of truth to meet the needs which arose after the departure of His Son. The concept of the Trinity is present in the words of Jesus.

- Jesus, before He was taken up into heaven, said to His disciples: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost…” (Matthew 28:19). Water baptism, which I remind you does not purge a man from his sins because it is just ‘an appeal to God for a good conscience’, must be administered in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus would never have commanded to do such a thing if He and the Father and the Holy Spirit were not one, that is to say, a Trinity in Unity.

- Paul says to the Romans: “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Romans 8:11). In these words we find God the Father who raised up Jesus; the Son who was raised up by Him; and the Holy Spirit whom He sent forth into our hearts and by whom He will quicken our mortal bodies. Here also the concept of the Trinity is expressed very clearly.

- Paul, at the end of one of his epistles to the Corinthians, wrote: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen” (2 Corinthians 13:14). As you can see, here also the Three Persons are mentioned separately; however, notwithstanding this, they are one.

- Paul said to the Ephesians: “There is …. One Spirit …. One Lord, …. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4,5,6). Also from these words we learn that the Three Persons of whom the Godhead consists, are distinct from one another yet in perfect unity with one another.

- Paul said to the Corinthians: “Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all” (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). Please note that Paul first of all mentions the Spirit, secondly the Lord Jesus Christ and then God. Also these words make it clear that the Three Divine Persons, even though they are distinct from one another, are one God.

- The Scripture condemns the three blasphemies against the Three Persons of the Godhead. Those who blaspheme the name of God commit a sin (for it is written: “Do not blaspheme God”
Exodus 22:28 – NIV), as well as those who blaspheme against the Son of Man and the Holy Spirit. However, while those who blaspheme against God and the Son of Man can be forgiven, those who blaspheme against the Holy Spirit cannot obtain the remission of their sin for Jesus said: “Verily I say unto you, All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons of men, and blasphemies wherewithsoever they shall blaspheme: But he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness, but is in danger of eternal damnation” (Mark 3:28-29 – The NIV reads in verse 29: “But whoever blasphemers against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin”). These words of Jesus make it clear that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person distinct from the Son of God and from the Father. That’s why when we speak about the Son we don’t refer to the Holy Spirit and vice versa, and that’s why when we speak about the Father we don’t refer to the Son nor to the Holy Spirit, because the Three are distinct from one another. In order that you might understand this concept, I tell you this: we can’t affirm that the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins because this is not true, for the Scripture says that it was Christ, the Son of God, who died on the cross and not the Father. Neither can we affirm that the Holy Spirit died for our sins because this is not true either. Nor can we affirm that the Holy Spirit baptizes believers with the Holy Spirit, because the Scripture states that it is Christ who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and with fire. However, even though we must mention separately the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and their characteristics, we know that the Three are one. Brothers in the Lord, that’s a mystery, that’s why our words cannot explain it fully.

As for the Trinity, which is not fully understandable, some say, ‘God cannot be honoured through a concept that ‘nobody fully understands.’ Christians must know the God whom they worship. There is no room for mysteries concerning God!’ These are vain words spoken by people who wilfully forget or do not know that Zophar the Naamathite said: “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven – what can you do? Deeper than Sheol – what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea” (Job 11:7-9 - NKJV). Know this, it is not true that there is no room for mysteries, because there are many mysteries concerning God, His nature and His way of working things. However, although there are divine mysteries which have not been revealed to us or we cannot fully comprehend, we are fully persuaded that we have known God, for John says: “I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father” (1 John 2:13) and also: “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7). However, it is evident that this does not mean that to us all is clear and there are no more mysteries concerning God, because it is also written: “For we know in part” (1 Corinthians 13:9) and also: “For now we see through a glass, darkly” (1 Corinthians 13:12). But one day we will know just as we also are known. To God be the glory forever. Amen.

The perfect unity existing between the Son and the Father

In the days of His flesh Jesus spoke in various ways about the perfect unity which existed between Him and the Father. Let’s see what He said: “I and my Father are one” (John 10:30); “It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me” (John 8:17-18); “Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works’ sake” (John 14:11); “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel. For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will. For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him” (John 5:19-23); “For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in
himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man” (John 5:26-27); “He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me. And he that seeth me seeth him that sent me” (John 12:44-45); “If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him” (John 14:7); “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matthew 11:27); “All things that the Father hath are mine” (John 16:15); “And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:22-23).

Now in order to explain to you this perfect union and collaboration which existed and which still exists between the Son and the Father, I will compare some verses of the Scripture with some others.

- One day Jesus spoke to the Jews about His resurrection in this way: “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (John 2:19); so according to these words of Jesus, He Himself would raise His body up. Peter said to the Jews: “And [ye] killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses” (Acts 3:15); so according to Peter it was God who raised Jesus from the dead.

- Jesus, in speaking to His disciples of the coming of the Holy Spirit, said: “But the Comforter, which [who] is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsover I have said unto you” (John 14:26), and also: “But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which [who] proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me” (John 15:26). Therefore, according to Jesus, the Holy Spirit would be sent by the Father and also by the Son (however, the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, as Jesus Himself said).

- Jesus, in speaking about His sheep, said: “And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand” (John 10:28), and in the prayer He addressed to God on the night He was betrayed He said: “Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him” (John 17:1-2). Therefore, the One who gives eternal life is Jesus. However, Paul says to the Romans: “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23), and the apostle John says: “God hath given to us eternal life” (1 John 5:11). Therefore it is God who gives eternal life. So we can affirm that eternal life is given by the Father and also by the Son.

- Jesus said: “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). Please note that Jesus said that He himself will raise the believers from the dead. However, it is also written that God will raise us from the dead, for Paul said to the Corinthians: “And God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power” (1 Corinthians 6:14).

- Paul says to the Romans: “Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ” (Romans 1:6). Therefore the One who called us is Christ. However, Paul himself in the same epistle says that those whom God foreknew “he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified ....” (Romans 8:29-30). Therefore we have been called by God and by Jesus Christ.

- Paul says to Timothy: “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1:12). That means that Paul was
counted faithful by Jesus Christ who put him into the ministry of the Word. However, the same apostle says to the Thessalonians: “But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts” (1 Thessalonians 2:4). Therefore Paul was put into the ministry by God as well as by Jesus Christ.

- Paul said to the elders of Ephesus: “But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). Therefore it was Christ who gave the ministry to Paul. The apostle confirmed this to Timothy when he said: “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry” (1 Timothy 1:12). However, Paul says to the Colossians that it was God who gave him the ministry: “Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God” (Colossians 1:25 – The NIV reads: “I have become its [of the Church] servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the Word of God in its fullness”).

The Three work together in perfect accord

The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit work together in perfect accord.

- **Man was created by the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**

In the book of Genesis, in regard to the creation of man, we read: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness .....” (Genesis 1:26). As you can see, God, when He spoke, used the plural pronoun ‘us.’ Who did He speak to? Perhaps to angels? Not at all, for angels are creatures. He spoke to the Word and the Everlasting Spirit who were with Him.

- **We were made in the womb of our mother by God and the Word and the Holy Spirit**

David said to God: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13 - NIV). Elihu said to Job: “The Spirit of God hath made me” (Job 33:4). And John says about the Word of God: “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:3).

- **The apostle Paul was sent to preach by God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit**

The apostle Paul says to Titus: “Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God’s elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness: In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began; But hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God our Saviour” (Titus 1:1-3), so he makes it clear that he was sent to preach by God the Father. However, the same apostle says to the Corinthians: “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” (1 Corinthians 1:17), so according to these words Paul was sent to preach by the Son of God also. And according to these words of Luke: “So they [Barnabas and Saul], being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed unto Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus” (Acts 13:4), he was sent by the Holy Spirit. So the Three, that is, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, with one accord sent Paul to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles.

- **As for our salvation, we have to say that the Three, that is, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, worked together in perfect accord**
The Father sent the Holy Spirit, as it is written: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name ...” (John 14:26), who has convicted us of sin, of righteousness and of judgement, as it is written: “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8); then He drew us to the Son, for Jesus said: “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:44) and also: “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me” (John 6:37); and the Son set us free from our sins, as it is written: “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1)

- The process of transformation into the image of the Son of God, which one day began in us and which is still going on, is accomplished by all the Persons of the Godhead

Here are the Bible verses which confirm what I have just said. Paul says to the Philippians: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). He says to the Corinthians: “Since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you” (2 Corinthians 13:3) and also: “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

- The work of sanctification is accomplished by God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The following verses of the Scripture confirm this. Paul says to the Thessalonians: “And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23). The writer to the Hebrews says: “For both he [Christ] that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Hebrews 2:11). And Peter says in his first epistle that we are “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:2).

- As for the guidance, we have to say that we are guided by God and His Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The following verses of the Scripture confirm this. In the Psalms it is written: “For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death” (Psalm 48:14). In the Gospel according to Matthew, it is written that Jesus said: “And do not be called teachers; for One is your teacher, the Christ” (Matthew 23:10 – The IBRV reads ‘guide,’ that is, ‘guides’ instead of ‘teachers,’ and ‘Guida’ that is, ‘Guide’ instead of ‘Teacher’, anyway our Teacher is our Guide). In the Gospel according to John, it is written: “Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come” (John 16:13).

We believers acknowledge that we know in part, we acknowledge that the knowledge of this mystery is too lofty for us to attain; the Scripture declares to each of us: “Can you search out the deep things of God? Can you find out the limits of the Almighty? They are higher than heaven – what can you do? Deeper than Sheol – what can you know? Their measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea” (Job 11:7-9 - NKJV). At the moment, we can only examine the verses of the Scripture which refer to the Trinity, but we cannot offer a complete explanation as to how the Three are one. However, know this, we do not believe that there are three gods, because we are not polytheists as many people are, but we believe there is only one God, in Him we trust, Him we know, Him we love, Him we serve, He is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; there is also one Lord, who is the Son of God; and there is one Spirit, who is the
everlasting Spirit of our God, who dwells in our hearts, by whom we cry: Abba! Father! These Three Persons are one God from everlasting to everlasting. Amen.

The Three are One and dwell in us

Now let’s see some verses of the Scripture which show us that the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit dwell in us.

- **The Word teaches that God the Father dwells in us**

  Jesus said: “If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). John says: “Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God” (1 John 4:15). And Paul says: “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (2 Corinthians 6:16).

- **The Word teaches that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, dwells in us**

  Jesus said: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:4-5). Paul says to the Ephesians: “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Ephesians 3:14-17). The same apostle says to the Colossians: “To whom [the saints] God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). He says to the Galatians: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20), and to the Romans: “And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10), and to the Corinthians: “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

- **The Word teaches that the Holy Spirit dwells in us (bear in mind that He is called also the Spirit of God and Spirit of His Son)**

  Jesus said: “Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you” (John 14:17). Paul says to the Romans: “But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Romans 8:9). He says to the Corinthians: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Galatians 4:6), and to Timothy: “That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Timothy 1:14). James says: “Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, “The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously?” (James 4:5 - NKJV).

Brothers, as you can see, these verses of the Scriptures show clearly that God and Christ Jesus and the Holy Spirit dwell in us. How can we understand all this? We can’t, at the moment we can only accept this by faith. Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His works!
Conclusion

In conclusion, I urge you, brothers, to hold fast the doctrine of the Trinity, because all those who forsake it fall into serious doctrinal errors which are the consequence of the denial of the Trinitarian concept of God. Know this, departure from the doctrine of the Trinity has been and is one of the major sources of heresy in the Church. Therefore, I exhort you to beware of those who, even though they claim to be Christians, deny in one way or another the Trinity. Put inside your heart all the verses of the Scripture which support the concept of the Trinity, and all those which attest to the divinity of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit, so that you may have all of them ready on your lips when you are asked questions about the Trinity and you have to refute those who oppose the truth.
SALVATION

Salvation is obtained by faith plus good works

Many people who claim to be Christians believe that a man is saved not only by faith but by faith plus good works. In other words, they believe that salvation is obtained by good works or personal merits, for that's the true meaning of their statement 'not by faith alone.' Here is a series of statements against the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone, made by different people.

Jehovah's Witnesses: 'Some suggest that belief in Jesus is the end of the matter ..... However, to concentrate on only one essential requirement of salvation to the exclusion of the others is like reading one crucial clause in a contract and ignoring the rest ..... Yes, there are various things involved in getting saved. We must take in accurate knowledge of God’s purposes and his way of salvation. Then we must exercise faith in the Chief Agent of salvation, Jesus Christ, and do God’s will the rest of our lives ('What We Must Do to Be saved', The Watchtower, September 15, 1993, 5-7). Among the good works, Jehovah's Witnesses attach much importance to witnessing and distributing literature. That's the real core of the way of salvation for Jehovah’s Witnesses. By going from house to house, Jehovah's Witnesses hope to be saved at Armageddon! I would like to underline the verb 'hope' because as a matter of fact they are not sure at all that they will be saved at Armageddon in spite of all their efforts. Every time I have asked a Jehovah’s Witness whether he is saved or not, the answer has been always the same: 'I hope to be saved, I am not sure, I don’t dare to affirm that I am saved because I don’t want to be presumptuous!' As I have said, they hope to be saved at Armageddon because Armageddon will be God’s decisive (though not final) battle against His enemies, both demonic and human, and since they believe that only those who are members of their organization will survive Armageddon and no one who dies at Armageddon will be raised from the dead during the Millennium, they make all their efforts to hope to survive Armageddon and they preach to other people to join their organization in order not to be forever annihilated in the battle of Armageddon. However, I say it again, they themselves are not sure they will survive Armageddon. To know much better the doctrine of salvation taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses read 'the way of salvation according to Jehovah’s Witnesses’

Mormons: 'We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel’ (Articles 3 of the Articles of Faith). Now, that you may understand the meaning of this statement I cite some words written in one official Mormon publication titled What The Mormons Think of Christ by B. R. McConkie: ‘.... All men, by the grace of God, have the power to gain eternal life. This is called salvation by grace coupled with obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. Hence Nephi was led to write: ‘We labor diligently to write, to persuade our children, and also our brethren, to believe in Christ, and to be reconciled to God; for we know it is by grace that we are saved after all we can do’. Christian speaks often of the blood of Christ and its cleansing power. Much that is believed and taught on this subject, however, is such utter nonsense and so palpably false that to believe it is to lose one’s salvation. Many go so far, for instance, as to pretend and at least, to believe that if we confess Christ with our lips and avow that we accept Him as our personal Saviour, we are thereby saved. His blood, without other act then mere belief, they say, makes us clean .... Finally in our day, he has said plainly: ‘My blood shall not cleanse them if they hear me not’ .... Salvation in the kingdom of God is available because of the atoning blood of Christ. But it is received only on condition of faith, repentance, baptism, and enduring to the end in keeping the commandments of God' (pages 27-33). In other words, salvation from personal sins can only be obtained through the obedience to the requirements of the gospel and a life of good works. They
affirm that since the transgression of Adam is infinite in its consequences, those consequences cannot be averted, except through an infinite atonement (cf. James E. Talmage, A Study of the Articles of Faith, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, 42nd edition, 1968, page 479). The doctrine of justification by faith alone is rejected by them for they call it ‘pernicious doctrine’ (Ibid., page 480). To know better the Mormon doctrine about salvation read ‘the way of salvation according to Mormons.’

The followers of Herbert Armstrong affirm: ‘But how the god of this world would blind your eyes to that! He tries to deceive you into thinking all there is to it is just ‘accepting Christ’ with ‘no works’ – and presto-chango, you are pronounced ‘Saved’. But the Bible reveals that none is yet ‘saved’ (Why Were You Born?, page 11), ‘People have been taught, falsely, that ‘Christ completed the plan of salvation on the Cross’ – when actually it was only begun there. The popular denominations have taught, ‘Just believe – that’s all there is to it; believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you are that instant saved!’ That teaching is false! And because of deception – because the true Gospel of Jesus Christ has been blotted out, lo these 1900 years by the preaching of a false gospel about the person of Christ – and often a false Christ at that – millions today worship Christ – and all in vain! The blood of Christ does not finally save any man. The death of Christ merely paid the penalty of sin in our stead – it wipes the slate clean of past sins – it saves us merely from the death penalty – it removes that which separated us from God and reconciles us to God. But we are saved – that is, given immortal life – by Christ’s life, not by His death (Romans 5:10). It is only those who, during this Christian, Spirit-begotten life, have grown in knowledge and grace, have overcome, have developed spiritually, done the works of Christ, and endured unto the end, who shall finally be given immortality – finally changed from mortal to immortal at the time of the Second Coming of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:53,54). So, being, as we say, converted – receiving the Holy Spirit of God – is merely the beginning! Then begins a lifelong of living under the government of God – by God’s laws which express His will, instead of by self-will and desire. A Person is not even begotten of God unless he is Christ’s (1 John 5:12) and He is not Christ’s unless He has received the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9). One is not even converted – spiritually begotten – not even started on the way to final salvation, unless and until he receives the Holy Spirit from God!. No, water baptism is a required condition to receiving the Holy Spirit. But there is no promise that anyone will receive the Holy Spirit until baptized in water’ (All About Water Baptism, 1,2,3,8); ‘…. God only has eternal life. Life can come only from life – not from death. Christ’s death paid the penalty of your guilty past – it reconciled you to God – gave you access direct to God. But it did not give you eternal life – did not, yet, save you! Now what? Some religious teachers tell you Christ lived a righteous life for you 1930 years ago, and since you ‘can’t keep the Law’, as they claim, God ‘imputes’ Christ’s righteousness of 19 centuries ago to you – by sort of ‘kidding himself’ that you are righteous, while you are given license to still be a spiritual criminal breaking His law. God does not impute to you something you do not have’ (What Do You Mean .... Salvation?, pages 18,21). Read what Herbert Armstrong taught about the New Birth and read also my confutation.

Christadelphians: What else is necessary for salvation besides faith? ‘Works’ – that is obedience to God’s commands as taught by Jesus’ (The Christadelphian Instructor, page 39); ‘Belief, baptism, and obedience (in that order) are the essential steps to salvation, page 2). The Unification Church: ‘Many Christians believe that simply to have faith means they will be saved. Faith alone is not enough’ (Leaders’ Speech [Questions and Answers] at Rowlane Farmhouse in England, March 16, 1972, page 13)

Catholics also teach that salvation is by faith plus good works. However, their doctrine on salvation is quite complex and very different from the above mentioned ones, so I have decided to refute it separately.

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification (cf. Romans 4:25). Therefore, a man, in order to be saved from his sins and
reconciled to God, must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul and Silas said to the keeper of the prison at Philippi: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31 – NKJV) and Paul wrote to the saints in Rome: “If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame’. For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. For ‘whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved’ (Romans 10:9-13 - NKJV). Therefore, salvation, according to the Word of God, is by grace. One is saved by faith alone, and not by faith plus works. If salvation were by faith plus works, grace would be no longer grace, for it would be set aside.

Brothers, know this, that we, who have believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, have been saved from our sins, as it is written: “When the kindness and the love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:4-5 – NKJV); we have been justified and reconciled to God, as it is written: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1 – NKJV) and: “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” (Colossians 1:21-22 – NKJV); we have been forgiven, for it is written that “in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7 – NKJV); we have eternal life, as it is written: “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. These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life ….” (1 John 5:11-13 – NKJV).

Let me conclude by saying the following things: the Scripture clearly states that “the just shall live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38 – NKJV) and not by faith plus works, and that “by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Galatians 2:16 – NKJV), and also that all those who rely upon the works of the law are under the curse of the law, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10 – NKJV). Therefore, I exhort you to beware of all those who teach that in order to be saved you must keep the law (tithing, Sabbath, Jewish feasts, etc.), for they lie against the truth and want to deceive you. Christ accomplished a perfect work through His death and His resurrection, and consequently His work does not need to be completed by anyone nor by any human work, and you are already saved by your faith in what He has accomplished. So, beloved, continue to have full confidence in what He did for you. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

**The way of salvation according to the Roman Catholic Church**

This is what the Roman Catholic Church teaches about salvation.

By his sin Adam, as the first man, lost the original holiness and justice he had received from God, not only for himself but for all human beings. Adam and Eve transmitted to their descendants human nature wounded by their own first sin and hence deprived of original holiness and justice; this deprivation is called “original sin”. As a result of original sin, human nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called “concupiscence”). The world has fallen into slavery to sin. However, God in His love sent forth His Son who died and rose from the dead on the third
day so that men might be saved, that is, redeemed from sin. But how can a man be saved by Christ? Well, Catholic priests answer this question saying that salvation is obtained by baptism and penance. Therefore, the 'sacrament' of baptism and the 'sacrament' of penance are necessary for salvation, according to the Roman Catholic theology.

Baptism

'Through Baptism we are freed from sin and reborn as sons of God; we become members of Christ, are incorporated into the Church and made sharers in her mission: Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration through water in the word' (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1213 – From now on I will call it CCC). In other words, through baptism a man receives the forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, and becomes a son of God for he experiences the new birth: ‘The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ’ (CCC 1279). Baptism consists in pouring water on the candidate's head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (CCC 1278). Baptism is administered not only to adults but also to infants.

Penance

'Those who approach the sacrament of Penance obtain pardon from God's mercy for the offense committed against him, and are, at the same time, reconciled with the Church which they have wounded by their sins and which by charity, by example, and by prayer labors for their conversion .... It is called the sacrament of forgiveness, since by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent "pardon and peace." It is called the sacrament of Reconciliation, because it imparts to the sinner the life of God who reconciles: 'Be reconciled to God.' (CCC 1422, 1424). 'Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification' (CCC 1446). In other words, when a 'Christian' commits mortal sins (such as murder, blasphemy, adultery, fornication), he loses his baptismal grace, and thus he is on the way to hell. That's why he needs to be reconciled to God. How can he be reconciled to God? The answer is this: by the priest's sacramental absolution, in that the priest has been appointed by God to forgive men their sins and reconcile them to God. So he must go to confess his sins to the priest (at least once a year), who will grant him God's pardon and peace. So the penitent will escape hell. You may ask me, 'Why do you say 'when a Christian commits mortal sins'? Do you mean that there are sins which don't need to be confessed to the priest in order to be forgiven? Yes, that's exactly what the Roman Catholic theology teaches, for if a 'Christian' commits the so called venial sins (for instance, if he tells a lie in order to have fun, or if he tells a lie to excuse himself, or if he steals a small sum of money from a rich man) he does not need to confess his sins to the priest, for he can obtain the forgiveness of his venial sins by repentance and good works. Otherwise he will expiate his venial sins after death in purgatory, which is a place of torment. Now let's come back to the confession to the priest. Even though the Roman Catholic theology says that by the priest's sacramental absolution God grants the penitent 'pardon and peace', the penitent is not completely absolved. Why? Because 'Absolution takes away sin, but it does not remedy all the disorders sin has caused. Raised up from sin, the sinner must still recover his full spiritual health by doing something more to make amends for the sin: he must "make satisfaction for" or "expiate" his sins. This satisfaction is also called "penance." The penance the confessor imposes must take into account the penitent's personal situation and must seek his spiritual good. It must correspond as far as possible with the gravity and nature of the sins
committed. It can consist of prayer, an offering, works of mercy, service of neighbor, voluntary self-denial, sacrifices, and above all the patient acceptance of the cross we must bear. Such penances help configure us to Christ, who alone expiated our sins once for all. They allow us to become co-heirs with the risen Christ, "provided we suffer with him." (CCC 1459,1460). That's why the Roman Catholic theology affirms that a man is not justified by faith alone, but by faith plus good works; because he needs to expiate his sins (committed after baptism) by good works and sacrifices. You may ask now, ‘Can one who has made satisfaction for his sins say that he has been completely absolved and justified and thus when he dies he will go to heaven? Not at all. For in 1547 the council of Trent clearly stated: ‘If any one saith, that, after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise, that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him); let him be anathema’ (Council of Trent, Sixth session, Canon XXX). As you can see, even if a Roman Catholic does all the things commanded to him by the Roman Catechism, he will never be able to say, ‘I am saved, and so when I die I will go to heaven to be with the Lord,’ for not all the debt of eternal punishment has been blotted out, that is, he still has some debts of temporal punishment to be discharged both in this world and in purgatory.

**Confutation**

Water baptism is to be administered by immersion to those who have repented and believed, and it does not regenerate

In the light of the Holy Scripture, the baptism taught and administered by the Roman Catholic Church is not the water baptism instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ. Here are the reasons.

Water baptism is to be administered by immersion. Here is what the Scripture says about the baptism which was administered by Philip the evangelist to the eunuch: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:36-39). As you can see, Philip did not pour some water upon the head of the eunuch but he plunged the eunuch into water. On the other hand, to baptize (Greek *baptizein*) means to ‘plunge’ or ‘immerse.’

Water baptism is to be administered to those who have repented and believed on the Lord, and thus it can’t be administered to newborn babies for they are not able to repent and believe in the Lord. In the early Church water baptism was administered only to people who had believed. Here are some passages of the Scripture which show this. “Then they that gladly received his word [the word of Peter] were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41); “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12); “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). As you can see, in the light of these biblical passages, a person can’t be baptized unless he has repented and believed in the Gospel.

Water baptism does not regenerate. For according to the Scripture we have been born again not through water baptism but through the word of God, as it is written: “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23 – NIV), and again: “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created” (James 1:18 – NIV). In other words, it was not
through water baptism that we became sons of God, but through our faith in the Word of God. When we believed in the Word of God – which states that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification – we were made alive and became sons of God by the power of the Word of God. The Scripture clearly teaches that a man becomes a son of God by faith; John says: “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13 - NKJV). Furthermore, water baptism does not forgive sins nor justify, for according to the Scripture a man is forgiven and justified by faith in Christ, as Peter says: “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43 - NIV), and as Paul says: “Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39 – NIV). Therefore let no one deceive you with vain words.

Now you may ask, ‘Since water baptism does not regenerate nor forgive sins nor justify, why should a believer be baptized? What’s the meaning and the importance of water baptism?’ Here is the answer to your questions.

The apostle Peter says that water baptism is “an appeal to God for a good conscience” (1 Peter 3:21 – NASB). Therefore, since he who believes in God, by accepting to be baptized, wants to have a good conscience before God, water baptism is necessary (on the other hand how could Jesus have ordained an unnecessary thing for those who would believe on Him?). All of us, after we believed in the Lord, felt we needed to be baptized because we perceived in us by the Spirit that even though we were sons of God washed in the blood of Jesus Christ, we had to obey the Lord’s command concerning water baptism in order to have a good conscience before God. Of course, we were sure that we were both saved and forgiven, but, notwithstanding this, we felt we had to be baptized in water according to the order given by Christ, our Saviour. Therefore, according to the Scripture, by water baptism we obtained a good conscience before God.

At this point, someone may ask: ‘Does a believer have a good conscience before he is baptized? Or does the good conscience follow water baptism?’ Well, according to the Scripture, the conscience of a believer is cleansed from dead works by the blood of Jesus Christ and not by the water in which he is immersed after believing, as it is written: “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:13-14 – NKJV). Therefore, it is when a man believes in the blood that Jesus Christ shed on the cross for the remission of our sins that his conscience is purified. In other words, it is by faith in Christ that a man receives the remission of his sins, not ‘by faith and water baptism’, but by faith alone. The apostle Peter said to Cornelius and his household: “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43 – NIV), and Paul confirmed this concept by the following words he wrote to the Romans: “God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:25 – NIV). Therefore, every believer has a good conscience before he is baptized. Why then does Peter say that water baptism is an appeal to God for a good conscience? Because after one has believed in the Lord he must strive to have a clear conscience before God, that is to say, he must see that he keeps his conscience clear. How can he do this? Well, he can do it by keeping the commands of the Lord, and among His commands is the command concerning water baptism. The apostle Paul one day said before Felix: “I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men” (Acts 24:16 - NKJV). He was an apostle of the Lord, thus He was a born again Christian, washed in the blood of the Lamb, his conscience had been cleansed from dead works by the blood of Jesus, and he had been baptized as well, yet he stated that he was striving to have a good conscience (or a conscience void of offense) before God and men. Therefore, no wonder that any newborn babe in Christ feels he needs to be baptized in order to keep his conscience clear before God. His conscience bears him witness in
the Holy Spirit that he must be baptized. Let me tell you something that happened to me several months after my conversion. In 1984 I went to England and lived there for about six months. I worked for the C. L. C (Christian Literature Crusade). One day I was invited to a baptismal service which took place in a swimming pool; I was a born again Christian, I was sure that all my sins were forgiven, I was sure I was a son of God, however, I had not yet been baptized. During the baptismal service I perceived by the Holy Spirit that my conscience was telling me that I too needed to be baptized together with those people who were being baptized. I had not yet obeyed the Lord’s command concerning water baptism. I wanted to be baptized, but I wanted to be baptized before my parents and those believers who had known me for many years. So several months later, after I returned to Italy, I was baptized in the Lake Maggiore. The day on which I was baptized was a happy day. After I was baptized I perceived that my conscience did not rebuke me any longer.

In addition to this, by water baptism we were buried with Christ, as it is written: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). And since it is the dead who are buried and not the living, we can say that when we were buried through baptism into the death of Christ we had already died to sin, since we had repented of our sins and believed in the Gospel. In other words, we were already born again, thus, dead to sin, before we were immersed in water; and through baptism our old man was buried with Christ. Just as Christ was already dead to sin when He was buried (“for the death that He died, He died to sin once for all”, says Paul. Romans 6:10 - NKJV), so we also were already dead to sin through the body of Christ when we were buried with Him. We can express this concept also in this way: we were saved from our sins by faith, thus before we were baptized we were already saved (because faith preceded water baptism). Therefore we can call our water baptism ‘an act of obedience to God which sealed the justification we obtained by faith before water baptism’. We can compare it to the sign of circumcision Abraham received, as it is written: “He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith, while he was still uncircumcised” (Romans 4:11 – NIV), because Abraham also was justified by God through faith before he was circumcised. It was not circumcision which was accounted to Abraham for righteousness but his faith, as it is written: “We say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness” (Romans 4:9 – NKJV). Likewise, it was not water baptism which was accounted to us for righteousness but our faith, which we had before we were baptized.

Through water baptism we told the devil and his ministers (as well as the people who were present or heard about our baptism) that we have become disciples of Jesus Christ, and that we do not want to live for ourselves any longer, but we want to live for Him who died and rose again for us. So we proclaimed that we have decided to deny ourselves and the pleasures of sin, which the devil offers us through this evil world. For we should always remember that when we were born again we were delivered from this present evil age, which lies under the sway of the wicked one and we were conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of God; and also that before our new birth we used to serve sin but after the new birth we begin to serve righteousness. Water baptism, therefore, is an act through which we proclaimed that we died to sin and to the world. Just as through the Lord’s Supper we proclaim the death that the Lord died to sin once for all, so through water baptism, which one undergoes once during his life, we proclaimed that we died to sin and to the world. And keep in mind that just as the Lord’s Supper is not the repetition of the Lord’s death, so water baptism was not an act through which we died to sin because our death to sin took place before we were baptized. Consider that in some countries to be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ means to be condemned to death by one’s countrymen: this is why many of our brothers in these countries have been killed after water baptism, for thus they proclaimed publicly their decision to follow Christ. That shows that in these countries, according to the enemies of the Gospel, everyone who decides to be baptized has decided to proclaim that he has denied his former religion and embraced a new religion, and thus he deserves to be put to death for he is a traitor or apostate.
Water baptism is an act through which we declared that we are not ashamed of Christ, but we are willing to bear His reproach in this world of darkness. Therefore, the fact that many believers, before their water baptism, have met with strong opposition on the part of their unbelieving parents and relatives is due to the fact that the devil, through those who are under his power, tried to induce them to be ashamed of their Saviour. For the adversary knows that Jesus said: “Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38).

Christians must confess their sins to God so that He may forgive them their sins

As we saw before, the Roman Catholic theology says that ‘Christ instituted the sacrament of Penance for all sinful members of his Church: above all for those who, since Baptism, have fallen into grave sin, and have thus lost their baptismal grace and wounded ecclesial communion. It is to them that the sacrament of Penance offers a new possibility to convert and to recover the grace of justification’ (CCC 1446). When did Christ institute the sacrament of Penance? When He said to His apostles: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if your retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:23 – NKJV). Therefore, according to the Roman Catholic theology Christ gave the apostles the authority to forgive believers their sins committed after baptism; however, in order that their sins might be forgiven believers had to go to confess their ‘mortal sins’ to the apostles. What the Roman Catholic theology says is false, for Christ by those words of His did not institute the ‘sacrament of pence.’ For neither the book of the Acts of the apostles nor the epistles of the apostles hint at the ‘sacrament of pence.’ There is not one hint in these important writings of the New Testament that in the early Church the apostles commanded believers to confess their sins to them. The following incident recorded in the book of the Acts clearly proves that in the early Church the ‘sacrament of pence’ did not exist. Luke says: “Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with loud voice, came out of many that were possessed with them: and many taken with palsies, and that were lame, were healed. And there was great joy in that city. But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one: To whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is the great power of God. And to him they had regard, because that of long time he had bewitched them with sorceries. But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done. Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me” (Acts 8:5-24). As you can see, Simon believed and was baptized. However, when he saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money to purchase that authority (bear in mind that Simon, according to the Roman Catholic theology, committed a
‘mortal sin,’ so he had to confess his sin to the apostles). How did the apostles react? What did they say to Simon? The Scripture says that Peter said to Simon: ‘Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.’ Peter did not say to Simon: ‘Repent therefore of this your wickedness and confess your sin to us, for we have the authority to forgive men their sins’, but he said to Simon to repent and to pray God so that He might forgive him his sin.

As you can see, from the above mentioned incident we learn that in the days of the apostles believers had to confess their sins, committed after their water baptism, to God, and not to someone else, in order to obtain the forgiveness of their sins.

This is confirmed by the apostle John, one of the apostles to whom Jesus said: “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them”, who wrote in his first epistle: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 – NKJV). To whom did they have to confess their sins? To God, of course, for the apostle said that if they – so he included himself – confessed their sins to God, He in His faithfulness and righteousness, would forgive them their sins and would cleanse them from all iniquities. It could not be otherwise, for John knew that Jesus, when He taught them to pray, had commanded them to say to God: “Our Father in heaven .... Forgive us our debts ....” (Matthew 6:9,12 – NKJV), and thus they had to address their confession to God. A little further, still in his first epistle, the apostle John said: “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world!” (1 John 2:1-2). Note that he did not say: ‘If any man sin, you have the apostles of the Lord, or the elders, who can forgive you your sins’, but he said: “We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous”. That means that John believed that even if a believer sins he will be forgiven by God, coming directly to Him in the name of His Son.

Let me quote also the following words written by James, the brother of the Lord, to the twelve tribes which were scattered abroad, so that you may understand that the ‘sacrament’ of penance did not exist in the days of the apostles: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts. Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:1-10). Now, according to the roman catholic theology those believers who had committed ‘mortal sins,’ in that they killed, they lusted, they had become friends of the world and enemies of God. So James should have told them to confess their sins to the apostles or to the bishops of the Church; don’t you think? Yet he did not mention the ‘sacrament of penance’ at all, for he said to them: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up”. Therefore, James also exhorted the saints to come to the throne of God, to confess their sins to God and not to an apostle or another minister of the Gospel.

All the above mentioned passages show that Christ gave no authority to the apostles to forgive sins, for the apostles never exhorted the saints to confess their sins to them. But they exhorted the saints to confess their sins to God so that He might forgive them their sins. On the other hand, the early believers had the writings of the Old Testament which confirmed that they had to confess their sins to God and not to men, even though those men (that is, the apostles of the
Lord) were holy men who had known personally Jesus. For instance, David said to God in the Psalms: “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:5). Do not these words prove that they had to confess their sins to God alone?

In the light of what I have said, therefore, if we sin we must confess our sin to God for God is ready to forgive us in His mercy, and He will certainly forgive us our sin.

Let all those who confess their sins to the priest know that they are wasting their time, for the priest has not the authority to forgive men their sins.

A true Christian has the assurance that God has forgiven him all his sins, therefore he is sure that when he dies he will go to be with the Lord in the Kingdom of heaven.

As I said before, when a man repents of his sins and believes in Jesus Christ he obtains the forgiveness or the blotting out of all his past sins, for it is written: “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43 – NIV). Therefore a man’s conscience is cleansed from dead works by faith, and not by water baptism for baptism follows faith (cf. Acts 15:9). Jesus Christ, by His blood, cleanses the repentant sinner from all the sins he has committed, and he becomes as white as snow in the sight of God. The repentant sinner receives not only forgiveness of sins but also eternal life, for Jesus said: “He who believes in Me has everlasting life” (John 6:47 – NKJV). Therefore, he is sure not only that his sins have been forgiven once for all, but also that when he dies he will go to heaven to be with the Lord Jesus Christ.

If anyone sins after his conversion, he must repent of his sins and confess them to God, for John wrote to the saints: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 – NKJV). As you can see, according to the promise of God, every child of God who confesses his sins to God will be forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness. This means that there remains no debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened to him. In other words, after a child of God has been forgiven by God, he must not ‘make satisfaction for’ or ‘expiate’ his sins. His debts have been forgiven and blotted out by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, why then should he do something more to make amends for the sins he has confessed to God? If we were to expiate the sins we have confessed to God and which have been forgiven us, that would mean that the forgiveness of sins promised by God to us is a false forgiveness and thus God has told us a lie. However, God cannot lie against the truth, but it is the papal theologians who lie against the truth, as it is written: “Let God be true but every man a liar” (Romans 3:4 – NKJV), for they make the Scripture say what it does not say. The truth is that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all iniquities, and it is able to make us whiter than snow: “Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psalm 51:7 – NKJV), says David in the Psalms. In other words, after we confess our debts to God they are blotted out by the blood of Jesus, thus there remains no debt of temporal punishment to be discharged. That’s why we have the assurance that when we die we will go to heaven to be with the Lord at once: because when we confess our sins to Him the blood which was sprinkled upon us cleanses us from all iniquities and makes us as white as snow, so that by the blood of Christ we are enabled by God to appear without stain before Him at any moment. Therefore, we are not presumptuous in saying that when we die we will go to heaven, but rather we show our trust in the purifying power of the blood of Jesus Christ. There is no condemnation to those who are sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ; there is no debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in a so called purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened to them, because the blood of Jesus made full satisfaction for all their sins.

Brothers, beware of what the papal theologians teach about salvation, for their teaching is contrary to the sound doctrine. What they teach about salvation is a damnable heresy which has plunged into the torments of hell hundreds of millions of people so far all over the world. Stand
firm in the faith, confess your sins to God for He is a faithful and merciful God, and He will forgive you and cleanse you from all iniquities by the precious blood of Jesus.

Venial sins and mortal sins

As we saw before, according to the Roman Catholic theology sins are divided in two classes: venial sins and mortal sins. The Scripture says that “all unrighteousness is sin” (1 John 5:17 – NKJV), and that when sin – no matter what kind of sin - is full-grown it “brings forth death” (James 1:15 – NKJV). Therefore, the wages of every sin is death. And in order to be forgiven we must repent of our sins, confess them to God, pleading with Him to forgive us our sins, for Jesus told His disciples to say to God: “Forgive us our debts” (Matthew 6:12 – NKJV).

However, there is a sin of which a believer cannot repent, that is, the sin unto death (cf. 1 John 5:16; Hebrews 10:26-27; 6:4-6), which consists in denying the Lord. It is impossible for those who commit this sin to be brought back to repentance for they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. That’s the only distinction which is made by the Scripture between sins.

Salvation by grace and salvation by works

The Scripture says: “And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work” (Romans 11:6 – NKJV). Therefore, if salvation is by grace it cannot be by works, while if it is by works it cannot be by grace alone.

According to the Scripture, salvation is by grace alone. In other words, a man is not justified nor delivered from his sins nor does he receive eternal life by works, but by grace alone. However, the Roman Catholic Church teaches that a man is justified, delivered from his sins and receives eternal life by works. By so doing the Roman Catholic Church sets aside the grace of God, and deceives millions of people all over the world. Abhor their teaching and expose it with all boldness.

The way of salvation according to Jehovah’s Witnesses

Here is what Jehovah’s Witnesses teach about salvation. Because of Adam’s sin all men have inherited physical death and inborn sin. Jesus Christ made atonement for us and thus removed for believers the results of Adam’s sin. They explain the word atonement by saying that the word atonement is drawn from the expression at one, and means that what makes satisfaction for another thing which has been forfeited must be ‘at one’ with that other thing, that is, must be exactly equivalent to it. When applied to the work of Christ, atonement means that ‘the human life that Jesus Christ laid down in sacrifice must be exactly equal to that life which Adam forfeited for all his offspring; it must be a perfect human life, no more, no less’ (You May Survive Armageddon, page 39). This human life which Jesus sacrificed for his people is called a ransom.

In other words, Jesus sacrificed His human body in order to atone for the sin of Adam, which means that He renounced His body permanently and did not take it back again. His human body was the ransom He had to pay, so he could not take it back through the resurrection. That’s why God did not raise Him from the dead as a human Son, but as a mighty immortal spirit Son (thus, the physical resurrection of Jesus is denied).

So God provided through Christ a redemptive price whereby ‘those of men who have faith in God’s provision may come into harmony with him and, serving him faithfully, they may receive the gift of life, being freed from inherited sin and from eternal death as a result of sin’ (Let God Be True, page 113). It should be noted at this point, that according to Jehovah’s Witnesses, the
penalty for Adam's sin was physical death which was to be followed by annihilation, thus the purpose of Christ's death was to rescue men from the annihilation in which they would otherwise have remained after death (Jehovah's Witnesses deny the existence of an immortal soul inside man's body which after death goes either to heaven or to hell).

For whom did Christ make this atonement? Not for everyone. For Adam is not included among those ransomed nor are included among those ransomed all those who remain eternally dead and are thus permanently annihilated (Cain, those who died in the flood, the people of Sodom, Judas Iscariot, and the religious hypocrites of Jesus' day). Christ laid down His life for the other sheep as well as for the bride class (the 144,000), for non-Jews as well as for Jews, for all the worthy ones of Adam's children and for all the believers of Adam's family. This ransom provides the basis for the resurrection of the dead who are in God's memory and their eventual gaining of life. The ransom, in fact, extends its benefits even to those who practiced vile things on earth, but who will be raised during the millennium and will then be given the opportunity of responding to the gospel.

Who will benefit from the ransom of Christ? Two classes of believers, that is, the anointed class and the other sheep: 'All who by reason of faith in Jehovah God and in Christ Jesus dedicate themselves to do God's will and then faithfully carry out their dedication will be rewarded with everlasting life (Romans 6:23). However, that life will not be the same for all. The Bible plainly shows that some of these, that is, 144,000, will share in heavenly glory with Christ Jesus, while the others will enjoy the blessings of life down here on earth (Revelation 14:1,3; Micah 4:1-5)' (Let God Be True, page 298). However, the way of salvation is not the same for both classes.

The anointed class

Let us first look at the doctrine of salvation as it applies to the anointed class or 144,000. How do they obtain salvation? They must first believe and repent. Obviously, they must believe that Jesus is not God, for faith in the Divinity of Christ is a false faith. This faith must be followed by a change of life.

True faith and true repentance require that one should give up one's selfish course and dedicate oneself to do God's will, just as Jesus did. Since Jesus publicly confessed His dedication to do His Father's will by being baptized, everyone who has agreed to do God's will should be baptized (by immersion), as a symbol of his dedication.

We are told that God declares such people righteous because of their faith in Christ's blood, so since they exercised faith in Christ's blood before their baptism, we should come to the conclusion that when they were baptized they were already justified. However it appears that this justification takes place after their baptism or dedication. Here is what we read in Let God Be True: 'Christ Jesus then [after one has exercised faith and has dedicated himself to God] acts as an advocate, covering the sins of such a dedicated one by the merit of his sacrifice. The dedicated one is now in position to be justified or declared righteous by God, and thus he has access to God through Christ Jesus. He has an acceptable body and the right to perfect life on earth, and all this can be presented for sacrifice with Christ Jesus' (Let God Be True, page 299).

What happens after baptism? God causes His active force (that's how they call the Holy Spirit for they deny His personality and deity) to act upon them so as to bring them forth as spiritual sons with the hope of life in the heavens and God acknowledges them as His sons. They
become members of Christ’ body, and are made kings and priests of God. However, they do not yet have eternal life, for they will receive it if they maintain their integrity until death. In other words, they will obtain the right to share heavenly life with Christ after death if they gain it through their own sacrifice. Here is what the Watchtower Society says: ‘To gain that incorruptible prize they must be loyal to God even at the cost of their human lives’ (This Means Everlasting Life, page 121), and again: ‘Before such members of Christ’s body can receive their heavenly inheritance they must be set apart more and more from this world and to the holy service of Jehovah God, demonstrating their dependability by carrying out their dedication faithfully until death’ (Let God Be True, page 301). In the light of their teaching, therefore, the members of the anointed class must earn their own way to heaven! They don’t obtain salvation by the grace of God when they believe, for salvation is something which they will receive at the end of their earthly course if they are faithful to God or rather to the Watchtower Society.

At this point I need to speak of the first resurrection in order to understand how, according to the Jehovah’s Witnesses, those who belong to the 144,000 are enabled to share heavenly life with Christ after death, for, as you know, Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the existence of an immortal soul which continues to live after death. First of all, they affirm that in 1918 Christ came to the temple, that is, the Jehovah’s Witness organization, to cleanse it of rebellious members. A very short time after the temple’s cleansing, still in the year 1918, the members of the anointed class who had died by that time were ‘raised’ with spiritual (that is, non-physical) bodies, and were placed on the throne with Jesus Christ. That was the ‘first resurrection’. Now, since a remnant of the anointed class is still alive today (they are in the Watchtower Society, of course), when the members of this remnant die it happens that they undergo the ‘first resurrection’ at the moment of their death. Immediately at death they enter into an eternal spirit existence! They are resurrected in the spirit, are changed instantaneously to spirits immortal, incorruptible, and they go to heaven with Christ!! ‘…. At death they are changed from human to divine, incorruptible, immortal, spiritual, in but a moment or twinkling of an eye’ (New Heavens and a New Earth, page 320). The 144,000, during the millennium (which will start after the battle of Armageddon) will reign with Christ (in heaven and not on the earth). We are told that, during the millennium, they join Christ in dispensing the benefits of Christ’s ransom sacrifice to the believers of mankind during the thousand years of the kingdom rule (cf. This Means Eternal Life, pages 274-275).

The other sheep

How do the other sheep obtain salvation? They, too, need to have faith in God and in Jesus Christ; they, too, must dedicate themselves to do God’s will and must faithfully carry out their dedication; they, too, must be baptized by immersion as a symbol of their dedication. However, the other sheep are not justified by God – at least not during their present existence -, nor are they regenerated by God, for they cannot be born again, nor are they made kings and priests, nor are they sanctified by God. There are great differences, therefore, between the members of the anointed class and the other sheep. However, one thing must be clear; the other sheep can’t affirm that they have been saved either, for they need to work very hard to deserve to be saved; to be saved from what? Above all from Armageddon. However, the fact is that even though the other sheep do all their efforts to be counted worthy to survive Armageddon, they are not sure they will be saved at Armageddon.

William J. Schnell, who was a Jehovah’s Witness for thirty years, has affirmed that during his years with the movement the other sheep were told that if they stayed close to the Watchtower organization, listened attentively to its indoctrination, went out regularly to distribute literature, and rigidly reported the time spent in doing so, they might be saved at Armageddon (that is, perhaps they would be saved at Armageddon)!! I have personally realized this, for I have talked with many members of ‘the other sheep’ who have told me that they are not sure they will be saved at Armageddon; they hope to be saved but they can’t affirm that will surely be saved!! To support this ‘hope’ with the Scripture they quote the following Bible passage: “Seek
righteousness, seek humility; perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord’s anger” (Zephaniah 2:3 – NIV).

Now, you may ask: ‘Since only the members of the anointed class go to heaven at the moment of their death (through an invisible resurrection!), for they alone are worthy to reign with Christ in heaven, what happens to the other sheep when they die?’ Well, they remain in the condition of non-existence, into which death has plunged them, till their ‘resurrection’, which will take place during the millennium (which will start just after the devastation of Armageddon). Their resurrection is called ‘resurrection of life’ (as a matter of fact it is a recreation because they were totally annihilated when they died), and through this ‘resurrection’ they will be enabled to live again on this earth during the millennium. Besides the other sheep who died before Armageddon, many other people will be raised during the millennium: the Old Testament people who were faithful to God and those who lived at the time of Christ but died before Pentecost. These people also will take part in the ‘resurrection of life’. There are still many other people who will be raised during the millennium: they are those whose hearts may have been wanting to do right but who died without ever having had an opportunity to hear of God’s purposes or to learn what He expects of men. However, the resurrection of these people is called ‘resurrection of judgement’.

All those people who will be raised during the millennium (that is, both those who will take part in the ‘resurrection of life’ and those who will take part in the ‘resurrection of judgement’) will be physically raised but not with perfect human bodies. The following people, however, will not be raised during the millennium: those who are killed at Armageddon, those who knowingly and deliberately did wrong, those who have sinned against the Holy Spirit, Adam and Eve, Cain, those who died in the flood, the people of Sodom, Judas Iscariot, and the religious hypocrites of Jesus’ day.

Now let me explain to you what Jehovah’s Witnesses teach about the millennium. The millennium is called ‘Judgement Day’ because all those who will be on earth during the millennium (that is, the survivors of Armageddon and all those who will be raised from the dead during the millennium) will be judged by Christ. In other words, they will be tested by God, in that the millennium is a thousand-year day of test. The basis for this judgement will not be the lives people have lived before they died, but the works they perform during the millennium! Those who pass the judgment-test will receive the right to eternal life. In other words, they will receive eternal life if they deserve it; once again you can see that salvation is by works even during the millennium. However, though the ‘day of judgement’ extends throughout the millennium, this is still not the last judgement; the final judgment will not come until the end of Christ’s thousand-year reign. At the end of the millennium Satan and his demons will be loosed or released from the abyss in which they have been confined for a thousand years. Satan will use some sly appeal to selfishness, making people think they will be better off if they follow him. This attempt of Satan will be a final test of obedience which everyone on earth will have to face. Satan, his demons, and his followers will assault the camp of the holy ones, but fire will come down out of heaven and devour all those who follow Satan. All human rebels, all the demons, and Satan himself will be cast into the lake of fire, which means that they will be annihilated and they will be as if they had never existed. Those who don’t yield to Satan’s temptation however, and who thus pass the final test, will be declared righteous by God and will be given the right to perfect life on the earthly paradise forever. Listen to what the authors of You May Survive Armageddon say: ‘God will be vindicated as true by their unbreakable steadfastness and he will judge them worthy of the right to everlasting life in the earthly paradise. He will accordingly justify them [the other sheep], and the names of these unchangeably righteous ones will be ‘written in the book of life’ (page 360). As you can see, the members of the ‘other sheep’, both those who will survive Armageddon and those who will be raised during the millennium, need to pass a test which will last one thousand years before they can say that they have been justified and they have eternal life!!
Confutation

Jesus took back His body

First of all, I want to affirm that according to the Scripture after Jesus offered Himself for our sins, that is to say, after He died on the cross to make atonement for our sins, He rose again physically. His physical resurrection took place on the third day. We affirm that His resurrection was physical because when Jesus appeared to His disciples His body was made of flesh and bones and had the prints of nails on it (consequently, He could not be a spirit). Here is what Luke says: “And as they thus spake, Jesus himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And he said unto them, Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. And when he had thus spoken, he shewed them his hands and his feet. And while they yet believed not for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here any meat? And they gave him a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And he took it, and did eat before them” (Luke 24:36-43). David foretold the physical resurrection of the Messiah centuries before it took place, saying: “My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:9-10 - NKJV). Jesus had to be raised physically in order to destroy death and put away sin. Therefore, it is true that He gave Himself as a ransom for us to redeem us from our transgression, but in order to complete His work of redemption, and thus to redeem us, He had to rise again with the same body that He had offered on the cross for us. Therefore, Jesus renounced His body temporarily, that is, for three days and three nights, to take it back. Glory be to His name forever. Amen.

Jesus died and rose again to save us not only from sin but also from an everlasting torment

The Scripture teaches that one does not cease to exist totally when he dies for he has an immortal soul which lives on. The soul of a man goes either to heaven or to hell after death depending upon the spiritual state of the individual at death. Heaven is a wonderful place of rest (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:1-4), while hell is an awful place of torment (cf. Luke 16:22-23) where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Jesus died on the cross and rose again in order to save us not only from the bondage of sin, but also to save us from hell. Therefore, Jesus did not die in order to rescue men from the annihilation in which they would otherwise have remained after death, but in order to rescue them from hell. Besides hell, there is another place of torment, which is called the lake which burns with fire and brimstone which is the final destination of all the wicked for when all sinners are raised from the dead (at the end of the Millennium) they will be judged according to their works and cast into it, where they will be tormented forever and ever (cf. Revelation 20:11-15; 14:11; Matthew 25:46). When one repents of his sins and believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he is sure he will be saved both from hell (Hades or Sheol) and from the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is called the second death. Therefore, Jehovah’s Witnesses are wrong when they deny the existence of an immortal soul which continues to live after death as well as when they deny the existence of a place of torment where the souls of the wicked go. Furthermore, they are wrong also when they affirm that not all men will be raised from the dead and that the wicked will be annihilated.

The people of God is not divided into two classes

Those who have believed in the Lord are not divided into two classes of believers with two different kinds of hope, that is, those who were appointed to reign in heaven and those who were appointed to live on earth. There is one people, one Church, one body, according to the Scripture. And all the members of the Church of God have the same hope. For Paul says:
“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling” (Ephesians 4:4), and also: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:26-29).

Jesus gave Himself for all men so that they might be justified by His grace

As we have seen, according to Jehovah’s Witnesses Jesus died in order to enable those who believe on Him to be justified through their good works. It should be noted, however, that while the 144,000 will be justified (declared righteous) if they prove to be faithful imitators of Christ to the close of their earthly life, the ‘other sheep’ will be justified not during their present existence but at the end of the millennium if they are counted worthy to be justified (in that they will be ‘raised’ from the dead to be tested for a thousand years at the end of which if they pass the test they will be justified forever and live forever on the new earth!) By the way, among those who will be tested during the millennial reign there is even Abraham, for he was not a member of the 144,000! Now I will refute their teaching on justification.

The ‘anointed class’.

The teaching on the justification of the 144,000 taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses is false for the following reasons.

The Scripture teaches that justification is obtained by faith alone before water baptism, as it is written: “The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4 - NKJV), and not after water baptism. Furthermore, the Scripture teaches that all those who have repented and believed in Jesus Christ have been justified. Paul did not make any difference between the 144,000 and the ‘other sheep.’ To him all those who have believed have been justified, for he said to the Jews of Antioch in Pisidia: “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39 – NKJV). As you can see, the expression ‘everyone who believes’ nullifies the doctrine on justification taught by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, because it shows that all those who believe, and not just some of them, are justified. However, they are justified when they believe, and not after water baptism (because faith precedes water baptism), not after mouths or years or after one has shown through his life his faithfulness to God. For the Scripture says that when Abraham believed God, God accounted it to him for righteousness at once, as it is written: “And he believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6 - NKJV). Therefore, Abraham was justified on the same day he believed; not some time later, such as when he was circumcised or when he offered his son Isaac, but on the same day he believed in the Lord. The example of Abraham shows how and when God declares a person righteous in His sight; He does declare a person righteous by his faith and not by his conduct; consequently when he believes and not some time after he has believed. All this because justification is obtained by faith alone apart from good works, as it is written: “….. knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ ….” (Galatians 2:16 – NKJV), and also: “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:28 – NKJV), and again: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1 – NKJV).

As for Abraham, I want to say the following things to refute the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Now, according to them, Abraham was not a member of the anointed class (the 144000), and thus he was not justified fully (for they say that even Abraham will have to be tested during the millennium before he can be justified); however, strange to say, the Jehovah’s Witnesses affirm that the teaching on justification which is in the fourth chapter of the epistle to the Romans
applies to the 144000! Therefore, I ask these people, ‘How is it that Paul, in order to speak about the justification of the 144000, took as an example Abraham who was not a member of the anointed class? If Abraham was not justified for life (the justification for life is the kind of justification which is received by the members of the anointed class), as you say, and thus he also must be tested during the millennial reign in order to be justified for life, how is it that the justification he received applies to the justification of the 144,000, who don’t have to pass the millennial test?’ Furthermore, I ask you this, ‘How is it that the father of all those who believe was appointed by God to live on earth, while his children were appointed to live in heaven? Why should his children (the 144000) be in heaven and their father on earth? And why from heaven should they rule over their father?’ The truth is, Jehovah’s Witnesses, that even though Abraham does not belong to the 144000 (however, not for the reasons you say), he was fully justified by his faith, and he had a heavenly hope because he wanted to go to his heavenly country, for in the epistle to the Hebrews it is written that Abraham and others “confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth” (Hebrews 11:13 – NKJV) and now “they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly country” (Hebrews 11:16 – NKJV). And we, who have believed in Christ, also have been justified as Abraham, who is our father, and we too desire a better country, that is, a heavenly country, as did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I will say something else about our father Abraham: even though he is not a member of the 144,000, he is in the kingdom of heaven for one day Jesus said: “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 8:11).

I want to remind you that when God declares a man righteous through his faith, He gives him eternal life as well, so he who is justified has the assurance that he has eternal life, as it is written: “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13 – NKJV), and also: “... That having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (Titus 3:7 – NKJV). However, such an assurance is foreign to the theology of the Watchtower society, for nobody can say that he has eternal life! Not even the members of the anointed class can say they have eternal life! For they must offer themselves in order to obtain eternal life. According to what I have read in their books, a man can’t receive eternal life as a gift from God because of the merits and the sacrifice of Christ, but rather men can receive eternal life on account of their own merits and sacrifices. Works, works, works, they speak always of good works, as if God put eternal life up for sale! Their message is the same as the message of the Roman Catholic Church, that is, ‘We must earn eternal life!’ But they are greatly mistaken, for eternal life is the gift of God in Christ Jesus our Lord, which is obtained by faith alone, as it is written: “He who believes has everlasting life” (John 6:47 – NIV), and also: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36 – NKJV). Glory to God forever. Amen.

I want to remind you also this. When a person is justified by God through his faith, he is also saved; so he can say that he has been saved. For the apostle Paul says to the Ephesians: “For by grace you have been saved through faith ....” (Ephesians 2:8 – NKJV). However, Jehovah’s Witnesses can’t affirm that they have been saved. Not even the members of the ‘anointed class’ can say such a thing. Why? Because, in order to be saved, they (the 144000) must obey God till the end of their life. To them, if someone who has believed in the Lord states that he has been saved, he is a presumptuous person! But how can a person be accused of being presumptuous when he says that he possesses what God in His great mercy has given him freely?

The ‘other sheep’

The teaching on the justification of the ‘other sheep’ is false for the following reasons. The Scripture unequivocally states that when a person repents of his sins and believes in the blood of Christ is justified by God at once. When God justifies a man, He imputes to him the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus; Paul says that Christ became for us righteousness from God (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:30), so Christ is our righteousness before God. And
since Christ fulfilled the law, the righteousness which is imputed to him is complete. In other words, he is considered as if he has never sinned, because God has justified him from all his sins, and He remembers his sins no more. Here are some biblical passages which confirm what I have just said. Paul says to the Colossians: “And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses” (Colossians 2:13 – NKJV), and to the Romans: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1 – NKJV). As you can see, a Christian has already been justified, and he does not need to wait for the end of the Millennium before he can say that God has justified him. He believes in Jesus, therefore he has now the righteousness which is from God by faith. And since he has been justified by God, he has the assurance that he will be saved from the wrath to come, as it is written: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:9-10). What a Christian must do, therefore, is to continue in the faith, that he may be found in Him, not having his own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

If he continues in the faith, he will surely be saved from the wrath to come. He is also sure that if he continues in the faith, he will go to heaven after death, for he has eternal life. For the Scripture says: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36 – NKJV), and also: “God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son” (1 John 5:11 - NKJV). There is a glorious life awaiting all the believers after death, for they go to a marvellous place of rest called Paradise. Those who go to heaven are not just 144,000, for, according to the Scripture, all those who have been born again of water and the Spirit will enter the kingdom of heaven (cf. John 3:5); all those who do the will of God will enter the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matthew 7:21); God has given the kingdom of heaven to all those who belong to the flock of the Lord (cf. Luke 12:32).

To confirm that those who go to heaven are more than 144,000 I remind you that the apostle John saw also a great multitude in heaven, besides the 144,000, as it is written: “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb” (Revelation 7:9-10). I want you to notice that those people were before the throne of God and before the Lamb, that is, in heaven.

If we consider carefully this teaching on the justification of the ‘other sheep,’ we will notice that it attacks the atonement made by Christ, because according to this teaching the blood of Jesus is not able to blot out all sins from a Christian’s conscience when he believes in Christ and, consequently, it is not able to justify him nor to reconcile him to God during his present existence. For the full reconciliation between believers and God will take place at the end of the Millennium!! While the Scripture clearly states that all our sins have been taken away by the blood of Jesus Christ and we have been reconciled to God through Christ. For the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says: “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:13-14); and Paul says to the Corinthians: “And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:18-19), and to the Colossians: “And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight” (Colossians 1:21-22 – NKJV).
All those who believe in the Lord are born of God

As we saw before, according to the Jehovah’s Witnesses only the 144,000 are born again; however, that’s not true, because the Scripture says: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13), and again: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ….” (1 John 5:1 – NKJV). Therefore, in the light of the Word of God, all those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, are born of God, and consequently when they die they will enter the kingdom of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

The first resurrection has not yet taken place

According to the Jehovah’s Witnesses, in 1918 the members of the anointed class who had died by that time rose again with non-physical bodies and were placed on the throne with Christ. That’s untrue, for, according to the Scripture, the first resurrection is a bodily resurrection and it will take place when Jesus is revealed from heaven. Here is what Paul says: “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17).

After the dead in Christ are raised and the living are changed, the Millennial Reign will start. And all the saints will reign with Christ on the earth, as it is written: “And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4-6).

It follows that it is not true that when the members of the remnant of the 144,000 die, they undergo the first resurrection. For when Paul says: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds” (1 Thessalonians 4:17), he does not refer to the invisible and spiritual resurrection of the members of the remnant of the 144,000, but rather to a completely different thing, that is, he refers to the fact that the body of the saints who are alive and remain till the coming of the Lord will be transformed that it might be conformed to the glorious body of Christ, which is a physical body and not a spiritual body for Jesus rose from the dead physically and not spiritually.

The resurrection of life and the resurrection of judgement, according to the Scripture

According to the Bible, the resurrection of life, of which Jesus spoke, is the resurrection of the just, which will take place at the return of the Lord. It is also called the first resurrection, and those who will take part in this resurrection will reign with Christ on the earth, as it is written: “Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years …. Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4,6 - NKJV).
Therefore, all those who take part in the resurrection of life, will obtain an immortal and incorruptible body and will reign with Christ during the Millennium. They will not be raised to be tested by Christ. When they are raised, they will appear before the judgement seat of Christ that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10). Therefore, they will be rewarded for what they have done in their body (that is, in the present existence).

Instead, the resurrection of judgement (or condemnation), of which Jesus spoke, is the resurrection of the unjust which will take place at the end of the Millennium, as it is written: “But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. …. And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell [Hades] delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell [hades] were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:5,11-15).

As you can see, those who will take part in this resurrection will be judged according to their works done during the life they have lived before they died, and they will be sentenced to the second death, which does not stand for everlasting destruction, but for everlasting torment for it is written that they “will go away into everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46 – NKJV), and they will have no rest day or night (cf. Revelation 14:11).

All men will be raised

As for the teaching that not all men will be raised from the dead, it is false because Jesus said that “the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth ….” (John 5:28-29 - NKJV).

Men will be given no second opportunity to accept the Gospel after death

As for the teaching according to which during the Millennium many sinners will be raised and they will be given the opportunity to become part of the sheep of the Lord, it is false because Jesus said that “he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16 – NKJV), and the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says that it is appointed for men to die once, and after this the judgement (cf. Hebrews 9:27). They died in their sins, so they will be raised from the dead to be judged and cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

The Millennium is not a judgement day

The teaching of the Watchtower about the Millennium has nothing to do with the truth, it is a heap of nonsense. The Millennium is a period of time which will last a thousand years, during which the saints (both those who will be raised from the dead and those who will be changed at the coming of Christ) will reign with Christ on the earth (cf. Revelation 20:1-4). It is not a ‘Judgement day’ at all.

The Day of Judgement

The Judgement day of which the Watchtower Society speaks has nothing to do with the Day of Judgement of which the Bible speaks. For the Day of Judgement is a day on which all the sinners will be raised from the dead and appear before the throne of God to be judged according to the works done in this life, and they will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).
Conclusion

According to the Word of God, justification is by grace through faith in Christ. All those who have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, have been justified by God, and consequently they have been reconciled to God through Christ. They are sure that their sins have been purged from their conscience by the precious blood of Christ. They have eternal life, and shall not come into judgement, but have passed from death into life. So when they die, they will go to be with the Lord in the kingdom of heaven where they will wait for the resurrection from the dead. Then, when they are raised from the dead, they will reign with Christ on the earth for a thousand years. Beloved, let no man deceive you with empty words.

The way of salvation according to Mormons

Mormons teach that ‘Christ gave His life willingly and voluntarily for the redemption of mankind’ (James E. Talmage, A Study of the Articles of Faith, Salt Lake City, Utah (USA), 42nd edition, 1968, page 79). He ‘bore the weight of the sins of the whole world, not only of Adam, but of his posterity’ (Ibid., page 76). In other words, they teach that Christ offered Himself to make atonement for the sins of all. Talmage says: ‘The doctrine of the atonement comprises proof of the divinity of Christ’s earthly ministry, and the vicarious nature of His death as a foreordained and voluntary sacrifice, intended for and efficacious as a propitiation for the sins of mankind, thus becoming the means whereby salvation may be secured’ (Ibid., page 74).

At this point, however, it must be noted that Mormons teach two kinds of salvation, that is, general and individual salvation.

General salvation

General salvation is salvation from death through resurrection and comes to everyone, it is also called unconditional redemption for no condition needs to be fulfilled for a man to receive it. Joseph Fielding Smith gave the following explanation of it: ‘We need a little more explanation as to just what we mean by unconditional redemption. That means to restore us from this mortal state to the immortal state; in other words, to give unto us the resurrection. That comes to every creature, not only to men but also to the fish, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field…. All of them had spiritual existence before they were placed upon the earth; therefore they are to be redeemed’ (Doctrines of Salvation, II, 10-11). Orson Pratt said about this kind of redemption: ‘We believe that through the sufferings, death and atonement of Jesus Christ all mankind, without one exception, are to be completely and fully redeemed, both body and spirit, from the endless banishment and curse to which they were consigned by Adam’s transgression; and that this universal salvation and redemption of the whole human family from the endless penalty of the original sin, is effected without any conditions whatever on their part; that is, they are not required to believe or repent, or to be baptized, or do anything else, in order to be redeemed from that penalty …..The most righteous man that ever lived on the earth, and the most wicked wretch of the whole human family, were both placed under the same curse without any transgression or agency of their own, and they both alike will be redeemed from that curse, without any agency or conditions on their part’ (quoted by Talmage in A Study of the Articles of Faith, pages 477-478).

Individual salvation

Individual salvation means escape from hell and entrance into the highest heaven within the celestial kingdom (this salvation will be experienced at the end of the millennial reign and not immediately after death because according to Mormons at death those who have gained
individual salvation go to paradise, which is not the celestial kingdom). For Bruce McConkie says: ‘Salvation in its true and full meaning is synonymous with exaltation or eternal life and consists in gaining an inheritance in the highest of the three heavens within the celestial kingdom’ (Bruce McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 1993, page 670). This salvation is called conditional redemption because it is obtained by man on certain conditions. Let us see then how one can receive individual salvation according to the Mormon doctrine. Articles 3 and 4 of the Articles of faith read as follows: ‘3. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel. 4. We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; second, Repentance; third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost’ (James Talmage, op. cit., page 1). Furthermore, a man must do the following things: he must receive endowment, which is ‘a course of instruction, ordinances, and covenants given only in dedicated temples of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, vol. 2, page 454); he must get married for both time and eternity in a temple ceremony; he must abstain from wine, coffee and tea; he must pay tithe, and keep all those precepts which command him to be honest and to love his neighbour as himself. A faithful Mormon must also be baptized for the dead and perform other ordinances on behalf of the dead if he wants to receive eternal life or to be exalted to the highest degree. As you can see, Mormons teach that one is saved by works, individual salvation depends on his merits through his own acts through life and by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel; Bruce McConkie wrote: ‘Conditional or individual salvation, that which comes by grace coupled with gospel obedience, consists in receiving an inheritance in the celestial kingdom of God. This kind of salvation follows faith, repentance, baptism, receipt of the Holy Ghost, and continued righteousness to the end of one’s mortal probation …..Salvation in the celestial kingdom of God, however, is not salvation by grace alone. Rather, it is salvation by grace coupled with obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel’ (Bruce McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, pages 669-670, 671). They affirm that since the transgression of Adam is infinite in its consequences, those consequences cannot be averted, except through an infinite atonement (cf. James E. Talmage, op. cit., page 479). They firmly reject the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone, for James Talmage calls this doctrine ‘pernicious doctrine’ and affirms that ‘the sectarian dogma of justification by faith alone has exercised an influence for evil’ (James Talmage, op., cit., page 480). Brigham Young was firmly opposed to the doctrine which says that a sinner may repent of his sins even just before death and receive eternal life through faith alone, for he wrote: ‘Some of our old traditions teach us that a man guilty of atrocious and murderous acts may savingly repent on the scaffold; and upon his execution will hear the expression – ‘Bless God! he has gone to heaven, to be crowned in glory, through the all-redeeming merits of Christ the Lord!’ This is all nonsense. Such a character will never see heaven’ (Journal of Discourses, vol. 8:61). Faith in Jesus Christ and faith in Joseph Smith. It must be noted that even though Mormons speak of faith in Jesus Christ, faith in Jesus and faith in Joseph Smith their prophet must go together. For Joseph Smith, ‘the Prophet and Seer of the Lord, has done more, save Jesus only, for the salvation of men in this world, than any other man that ever lived in it’ (Doctrine and Covenants, 135:3). Do you know what did Joseph Smith do? He restored the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That’s why, according to Mormons, a man must believe in Joseph Smith. Unless a man believes in Joseph Smith, he cannot be saved. Here is what Brigham Young affirmed: ‘No man or woman in this dispensation will ever enter into the celestial kingdom of God without the consent of Joseph Smith … every man and woman must have the certificate of Joseph Smith, junior, as a passport to their entrance into the mansions where God and Christ are – I cannot go there without his consent … he reigns there as supreme a being in his sphere, capacity and calling, as God does in heaven’ (Journal of Discourses, 7:289) and here is what Joseph Fielding Smith declared: ‘No salvation without accepting Joseph Smith. If Joseph Smith was verily a prophet, and if he told the truth … then this knowledge is of the most vital importance to the entire world. No man can reject that testimony without incurring the most dreadful consequences, for he cannot enter the Kingdom of God’ (Doctrines of Salvation, pages 189-190)
Water baptism. Mormons teach that water baptism is absolutely necessary for the salvation of both the living and the dead. Here is what James Talmage says: ‘Baptism is necessary for salvation; for, inasmuch as remission of sins constitutes a special purpose of baptism, and as no soul can be saved in the kingdom of God with unforgiven sins, it is plain that baptism is essential to salvation .... And, as baptism is essential to the salvation of the living, it is likewise indispensable to the dead. This was known by the saints of old, and hence the doctrine of baptism for the dead was taught among them’ (James Talmage, op. cit., pages 128, 149). The Bible verse cited to support the baptism for the dead is 1 Corinthians 15:29. Therefore, the living may be baptized as substitutes for the dead – that is, for those who died without a knowledge of the ‘restored’ gospel. If the dead accept the baptism performed for them, this baptism is credited to their account, as if they had acted for themselves. You may ask at this point: ‘How can the dead hear the ‘restored gospel’ and thus believe in it?’ Well, you must understand that there are Mormon missionaries in the afterlife who goes into the spirit prison (which is a temporary hell) where the dead are temporarily kept and preach the ‘restored gospel’ to them so the dead have the opportunity to repent and believe in it!! We read in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism as follows: ‘As part of his redemptive mission, Jesus Christ visited the spirit world during the interlude between his own death and resurrection, and from among the righteous, He organized his forces and appointed messengers, clothed with power and authority and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness – in other words to the spirits in prison .... Thus, the gulf between paradise and Hell that is spoken of in Jesus' parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31) was bridged by the Saviour's ministry in the spirit world. This bridging allows interaction among the righteous and wicked spirits to the extent that the faithful present the gospel to ‘those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets’ (D & C 138:32). Latter-day Saints believe that preaching the gospel in the spirit world continues today and will continue until every soul who wishes to do so and repents properly will be released from such imprisonment. Repentance of imprisoned spirits opens the doors of the prison, enabling them to loose themselves from the spiritual darkness of unbelief, ignorance, and sin. As they accept the gospel of Jesus Christ and cast off their sins, the repentant are able to break the chains of hell and dwell with the righteous in paradise’ (vol. 3, page 1406). It must be said, however, that baptism for the dead is not sufficient to enable the dead to obtain the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom, for the living must also receive the laying on of hands for the dead, they must receive endowment in the Mormon temple for the dead, and last but not least the living (husband and wife) must be sealed to each other for both time and eternity in a temple ceremony for the dead. At this point, if the dead accept all these ordinances performed for them, they will gain exaltation!! I would like to point out that even though Mormons teach that water baptism is administered for the remission of sins, actually the actual remission of sins comes through the laying on of the hands for we read in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism: ‘While water baptism symbolizes purification and rising from death to life, the actual cleansing or remission of sins comes by obedience, and as a gift from God, ‘by fire and by the Holy Ghost’, by which the individual is born of God, having become a new creature’ (vol. 2, page 557). In other words, remission of sins is received through the laying on of the hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost (called also baptism of fire and the Holy Ghost): ‘Among the most important spiritual blessings associated with the gift of the Holy Ghost is the sanctifying or cleansing power of the Holy Ghost, whereby men and women are born of God’ (Ibid., page 543), Joseph Smith remarked that ‘baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the baptism of the Holy Ghost’ (vol., 1, page 97). Celestial marriage. As I said before, in order to receive the fullness of exaltation a man must have a wife, and a woman must have a husband, and a couple must be sealed to each other for both time and eternity in a temple ceremony. Here is what Bruce McConkie wrote: ‘Marriages performed in the temples for time and eternity, by virtue of the sealing keys restored by Elijah, are called celestial marriages. The participating parties become husband and wife in this mortal life, and if after their marriage they keep all the terms and conditions of this order of the priesthood, they continue on as husband and wife in the celestial kingdom of God .... Celestial
marriage is the gate to an exaltation in the highest heaven within the celestial world .... The most important things that any member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ever does in this world are: 1. To marry the right person, in the right place, by the right authority; and 2. To keep the covenant made in connection with this holy and perfect order of matrimony – thus assuring the obedient persons of an inheritance of exaltation in the celestial kingdom' (Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1993, pages 117-118). Therefore those who get married for both time and eternity will be gods in the life to come, their union will last forever. On the contrary, those who were married for time – that is, not in a temple – will be single in the life to come (thus their marriage will be dissolved by death), and will there live as angels, not as gods.

*The millennium and the final state of man.* In order to understand fully the doctrine of salvation taught by Mormons it is necessary to explain what they teach about the resurrection from the dead. Now, Mormons believe that Christ will return to earth to set up His millennial kingdom. He will reign personally upon the earth. They believe that there will be two resurrections: one at the beginning and one at the end of the millennium. At the beginning of the millennium the believing dead will be raised; these shall be caught up to meet the returning Lord in the air, and shall descend with Him. At this time the saints that are upon the earth, who are alive, shall be quickened and be caught up to meet Him. Among those who are raised at this time will be included the heathen who were groping for the light, but did not hear the Gospel. This resurrection is called ‘the first resurrection’. As the millennium begins, all the wicked shall be burned as stubble, that is to say, they will be put to death. During the entire millennium the spirits of the wicked will remain in the prison-house of the spirit world. Here they will be able to repent and to cleanse themselves through the things they shall suffer. A great era of peace will now be ushered in. Satan will be bound, and his power will be restrained. At the end of the millennium all the wicked will be raised. This will be the second resurrection. Also at this time Satan will be loosed and will again assert his power, some of those living on the earth will follow Satan in his last attempt to deceive the nations, and will thus become Sons of Perdition. The hosts whom Satan will gather will include some from the inhabitants of the earth, and some from among the wicked dead who have just been raised. A last great battle will be fought, in which Satan and his hosts will be defeated. At the end of the millennium the earth will be renewed and will become a celestialized body fit for the abode of the most exalted intelligences. Now, let us see what the final state of man will be. Mormon theology assigns beings in the final state to four different groups.

The first of these groups consists of the so called Sons of Perdition. There are two classes of Sons of Perdition; the first class consists of the devil and his angels, while the second consists of human beings whose sins have also placed them beyond the present possibility of repentance and salvation. These are people who, having full knowledge of the power and purposes of God, rebelled against Him, putting Jesus Christ to open shame. Their transgression is also described as the unpardonable sin. The Sons of Perdition are a small portion of the human race and will be permanently consigned to hell. Their torment will be endless. The Sons of Perdition constitute the only group which shall not be redeemed. Those who are redeemed, however, will spend eternity in one of three different kingdoms. Beginning with the highest of these kingdoms, they are as follows:

1) *The Celestial Kingdom.* This kingdom will be located on this earth after its renewal and is reserved for those who receive a testimony of Jesus and fully embrace the gospel, that is, they have faith in Jesus Christ, repent of their sins, are baptized by immersion by one having authority, receive the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, and endure in righteousness. All who attain this kingdom shall dwell in the presence of God and his Christ forever and ever’ (*Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, vol. 1, page 368). Most of those who enter this kingdom receive full exaltation and are gods. Those who receive full exaltation will live forever with their spouses and shall continue to procreate children in the celestial state.

2) *The Terrestrial Kingdom.* ‘The inhabitants of the terrestrial kingdom are described as the honorable people of the earth who received a testimony of Jesus but were not sufficiently valiant in that testimony to obey all the principles and ordinances of the gospel. Also, those of ‘the
heathen nations’ who died without law, who are honorable but who do not accept the fullness of the gospel in the postearthly spirit world, are candidates for the terrestrial glory’. In the hereafter, they receive the presence of the Son, but not the fullness of the Father’ (Ibid., pages 368-369).

3) The Telestial Kingdom. ‘Those who on earth are liars, sorcerers, whoremongers, and adulterers, who receive not the gospel, or the testimony of Jesus, or the prophets, go to the telestial kingdom. They are judged unworthy of being resurrected at the second coming of Christ and are given additional time in ‘hell’ to repent and prepare themselves for a later resurrection and placement into a kingdom of lesser glory. During this period, they learn to abide by laws they once rejected (….) At the end of the millennium they are brought out of hell and are resurrected to a telestial glory. There ‘they shall be servants of the Most High, but where God and Christ dwell they cannot come, worlds without end’. However, they do receive ‘of the Holy Spirit through the ministration of the terrestrial’ (Ibid., page 369).

Confutation

Universal redemption is not scriptural

Does the Scripture talk about the universal redemption of the Mormon theology? No, it doesn’t. The Scripture speaks of the universal resurrection, that is, of the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust, but this resurrection is never called universal redemption nor unconditional redemption, because only the righteous will obtain the redemption of their body, even though the unrighteous also will be raised from the dead.

Let me explain this concept through the Scripture. Paul says to the Romans: “Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body” (Romans 8:23 – NKJV). However, these words apply only to those who repented of their sins and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and not to all men. That this full redemption applies only to the sons of God is evident from these other words that Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14 – NKJV). The Italian Bible Riveduta Version reads “fino alla piena redenzione di quelli che Dio s’è acquistati a lode della sua gloria” that is, “until the full redemption of those whom God purchased to the praise of His glory”. As you can see, only those who were purchased by God will be redeemed or will receive full salvation. The righteous will be redeemed when they are raised from the dead and transformed (those saints who are alive and remain till the coming of the Lord will be changed in a twinkle of an eye without tasting death), therefore at the resurrection.

As for the unjust, they also will not be raised from the dead and will get a body which will not die any longer. However that body will not be glorious because they are to be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, where they will be tormented forever. They will rise to be condemned. But their resurrection can by no means be called salvation because they are to be condemned. How could we say that the wicked will be saved from the first death in order to be condemned to the second death? Don’t you think that this would be a contradiction? As things are, it is wrong to call the final resurrection of all men ‘universal redemption’ because the Scripture speaks of the redemption of the body only in relation to the righteous.

What shall we say about the redemption of the fish, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field? Nowhere does the Scripture say that they also will be raised, for only human beings will be raised from the dead.

Salvation is by grace and not by works

As we have seen, according to Mormons, salvation in its true and full meaning is synonymous with exaltation or eternal life and consists in gaining an inheritance in the highest of the three
heavens within the celestial kingdom and those who will obtain it will become gods and will be able to procreate children. However, such a meaning given to the word salvation is foreign to the teaching of the Holy Scripture. When the Scripture says that one has been saved and obtained eternal life does not mean that one day he will become God and will be able to procreate children in the celestial state, rather it means that he has been delivered from this present evil age and he has the assurance that he will live with the Lord in His Kingdom forever. What must a man do in order to obtain salvation? He must repent and believe in the Gospel. For Jesus preached to the multitudes: “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15 – NKJV). And Paul exhorted both Jews and Gentiles to repent and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation. Therefore, according to the Scripture, salvation is obtained through repentance and faith in the Gospel.

Thus Mormons are greatly mistaken when they affirm that in order to be saved faith is not sufficient. Their salvation is based on good works, while the salvation of which the Scripture speaks is based on faith. Therefore, a dying man can be saved if he repents of his sins and calls on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for it is written: “Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:13 – NKJV). What did one of the thieves do on the cross just before his death? Is it not true that he acknowledged his guilt and admitted that he deserved to be put to death for his sins, and he asked Jesus to have mercy on him? And is it not true that he was saved, for Jesus said to him: “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43 – NKJV)?

A man can be saved through faith alone and not through good works, and therefore we are saved by grace alone apart from the good works. The following Bible passages support this important doctrine.

- “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31 – NKJV). Note that Paul and Silas did not say to the prison keeper of Philippi that besides believing he had to do something else as Mormons teach, but they told him that in order to be saved he had to believe in Jesus Christ.
- “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). Salvation, therefore, is something that believers have for they received it freely from God through faith. Where is boasting then? It is excluded by the law of faith. Believers have nothing to boast about before God for they have been saved by faith and not by works.
- “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1:16). Therefore anyone who believes is saved through the Gospel at once, without doing any good works but by faith alone.
- “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:9-13). These words are very eloquent: we are saved through faith by the grace of God. This is what a man must do in order to be saved: he must believe in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and call upon His name. No other thing is required in order to receive salvation. That’s the Good News we preach to men.

In the light of these Scriptures, therefore, Mormons are greatly mistaken. Indeed they have perverted the way of salvation. Yes, they talk about grace, but, as we have seen, they give another meaning to it. They are like the Roman Catholics who talk about the grace of God and say that a man is saved by faith, but when one examines carefully their doctrine about salvation he finds out that according to their theology a man actually is saved by works and not by grace.
In order to be saved it is absolutely necessary to believe in Jesus Christ alone

Mormons have believed in Joseph Smith (who was a false prophet) rather than in Christ; that’s why they can’t affirm that they have been saved and their sins have been blotted out by the blood of Jesus.

Of course, they talk about Christ, they talk about God, they say they are Christians, but their Christ is not the Christ of God, their God is not the God of our Lord Jesus Christ but another God. Their purpose is only one: to deceive us and thus to lead us astray. There is no doubt about it.

Mormons missionaries announce another Christ and another Gospel, which cannot save people from their sins and eternal damnation, so beware of them. They are like those false apostles who were in the Church of Corinth, of whom Paul said the following things: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

As for us, we have believed in the One who said: “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6), that is, in Jesus Christ, and we will continue to proclaim that only Jesus Christ saves, only through Him a man can enter the Kingdom of God. He is the door, anyone who enters by Him will be saved. But he who believes in Joseph Smith “the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36 – NKJV).

Neither water baptism nor the baptism with the Holy Spirit purifies man from his sins,

Water baptism was instituted by the Lord, however it is not through water baptism that a man is cleansed from his sins, for it is not “the removal of the filth of the flesh” (1 Peter 3:21 - NKJV) – thus, sins are not cleansed by the water in which believers are immersed – but “an appeal to God for a good conscience” (1 Peter 3:21 – NASB). To confirm this I remind you of the following words Peter spoke in Jerusalem concerning the purification of the hearts of the Gentiles worked by God: “So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8-9 – NKJV). Peter did not say that God purified their hearts by water baptism (even though those Gentiles received water baptism, as it is written: “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” Acts 10:48 – NKJV), but by faith in Jesus Christ because remission of sins is obtained through faith as Peter said to those Gentiles: “To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43 - NKJV).

Therefore, to sum up, since faith precedes water baptism and remission of sins is obtained through faith alone, water baptism cannot blot out sins from man’s conscience.

Let me say now something about the baptism with the Holy Spirit, because as we have seen, according to Mormons it is necessary to obtain remission of sins. For Joseph Smith said that “Baptism by water is but half a baptism, and is good for nothing without the baptism of the Holy Ghost” (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 1, page 97). The baptism with the Holy Spirit is not necessary to receive remission of sins because as I have just showed remission of sins is obtained only through faith in Christ Jesus. The baptism with the Holy Spirit is necessary to be endued with power from on high, for Jesus said to His disciples: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ....” (Acts 1:8 – NKJV), and not: ‘You shall receive remission of sins when the Holy Spirit has come upon you.’ And since the Holy Spirit, once He has come upon a believer, enables him to speak to God with another tongue (cf. Acts 2:4), or with several tongues (if the believer receives the gift of different kinds of tongues), the baptism with the Holy Spirit enables a believer to pray to God and to give thanks to God with another tongue.
The baptism for the dead is useless

Those who died in their sins can by no means be saved because they are lost forever. Here are some passages taken from the Holy Scriptures which confirm what I have just said.

Jesus said to the Jews: “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24), and also: “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5). Jesus said to Nicodemus: “He who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (John 3:18 – NKJV), and to His disciples He said: “He who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16 – NKJV). John the Baptist said: “He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36 – NKJV).

Therefore, when those who have refused to repent and to believe in the Gospel die, they will go to hell to be tormented. This is why Paul said to the Corinthians: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2 – NKJV), because he knew that after death there is no possibility for sinners to be reconciled to God.

There are many other Bible verses that confirm that sinners go to hell (and there they will be waiting for the judgement day) and thus they have no chance to be saved after death. Here are some of them.

“For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he may gain much, if God takes away his life?” (Job. 27:8 – NKJV);

“The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psalm 9:17);

“They spend their days in prosperity and suddenly they go down to Sheol” (Job 21:13 – NASB);

“Whoever desires to save his life will lose it” (Matthew 16:25 – NKJV);

“He who loves his life will lose it …” (John 12:25 – NKJV).

In the light of all the above mentioned scriptures we affirm that water baptism can by no means save those who are in hell.

As for the words of Paul quoted by the Mormons to show that the early Church administered the baptism for the dead, I want to say the following things. Paul through them did not teach the Corinthians to be baptized for the dead. For if you read carefully his words, you will notice that he mentions the baptism for the dead in relation to the resurrection from the dead, that is to say, he mentions that baptism which was practiced by some in the Church of Corinth in order to ask the Corinthians why then some of them were baptized for the dead if the dead don’t rise at all as some affirmed. However, Paul did not say that those who were baptized for the dead did a good thing nor did he encourage the Corinthians to be baptized for the dead. Anyway, the meaning given by the Mormons to the baptism for the dead practiced by some Corinthians is absolutely wrong. If things were as Mormons say, there would be no need to preach repentance and the cross to the sinners, and it would be useless to pray for them so that God may save them, because there would be for them after death another possibility to be saved.

As for us, knowing that the doctrine of a second chance for sinners to be saved after death is a damnable heresy, we will continue to proclaim to men what Peter said to the Jews on the day of Pentecost: “Be saved from this perverse generation” (Acts 2:40 – NKJV) and to pray for them that God may save them.

How could Paul think that the baptism for the dead could save those who had died in their sins when he taught that water baptism could not save the living? How could Paul preach the baptism for the dead when he said that Christ did not send him to baptize (even though he baptized some believers), but to preach the Gospel (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:17)?

Celestial marriages are unscriptural

As we have seen, according to Mormons to obtain eternal life means to become God, and in order to obtain it a man must do many things because eternal life is given by God to those who keep the commandments of the Lord among which we find the commandment to get married for time and eternity in one of the Mormon temples.
Let us begin by saying that such a definition of eternal life is wrong because according to the Scripture to receive eternal life does not mean to become God. For according to the Holy Scripture, when one receives eternal life he receives this grace, to live with the Lord in heaven after death, that is to say, to live in paradise without his body. Then at the resurrection his soul will return to his body, which will be glorious, incorruptible and immortal. It must be said, therefore, that he who has eternal life is a mortal being and does not yet possess immortality because immortality will be given to him when he returns to live in his own body made by God immortal. However, the fact still remains that he has an immortal soul inside his body which at death will depart from it and go to heaven to be with the Lord. As for those believers who will not see death because when Jesus comes they will be changed in the twinkling of an eye, they, having eternal life, will receive an immortal body and with that body they will live with the Lord forever. Therefore, they also will obtain immortality when Jesus comes from heaven.

How does a man receive eternal life? By faith in Christ. Here are some Scriptures which attest this: “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life” (John 3:36), “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16), “And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40). As things are, therefore, eternal life is obtained freely from God and cannot be earned by good works: this is why it is written that “the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23 – NKJV).

Now, let me say something about celestial marriages. They are contrary to the sound doctrine for Jesus said that “in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30 – NKJV). I remind you that Jesus said these words to the Sadducees, who said there is no resurrection (cf. Matthew 22:24-28). Therefore, according to the words of Jesus, every marriage is dissolved by death. This is confirmed by the following words of Paul: “For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man” (Romans 7:2-3). It should be noted that Paul says that if the husband dies, the woman is released from the law of her husband, thus she can remarry. This means that death puts an end to marriage and enables the spouse who is alive to remarry lawfully. Such a thing could not happen if marriage were valid even after the death of a husband or wife. In the light of these Scriptures, therefore, we affirm that the mormon doctrine of celestial marriages is a false doctrine.

If marrying for time and eternity were absolutely necessary to obtain the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom, that is, eternal life, it should be recommended to all both by Jesus and the apostles. Do we find such a recommendation in their teachings? Not at all, for according to their teachings one is not bound to get married. For instance, Jesus said that those to whom it has been given are able not to marry (cf. Matthew 19:11) and some have made themselves eunuchs because of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matthew 19:12), not condemning at all those who make themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. Now, I say: if Jesus, who came down from heaven and spoke the words of His Father, had known that in order to enter the kingdom of God (and obtain the highest degree of glory, according to Mormons) celestial marriages were absolutely necessary, would He have ever spoken those words? I don’t think, because with those words He would have hindered some of His disciples from obtaining the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom! Why did He speak those words then? It is simple, because He did not believe that His disciples were bound to get married (nor did He believe that they had to get married for eternity) in order to receive eternal life.

Now, let us come to the apostle Paul. He wrote to the Corinthians: “For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that” (1 Corinthians 7:7), and also: “Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife” (1 Corinthians 7:27), and the same apostle says about the man who has to decide whether to give
or not his daughter in marriage: “So then he that giveth her in marriage doeth well; but he that giveth her not in marriage doeth better” (1 Corinthians 7:38). Now, if we say that Paul wrote for our own profit, as he himself said, and if it were absolutely necessary to get married (even for eternity) in order to gain the highest degree of glory in the Kingdom of God, would Paul have written those words about marriage? Certainly not, because in that way he would have put a leash on us. Therefore, the fact that even Paul did not teach believers to get married for eternity proves that the doctrine of celestial marriage taught by Mormons is a false doctrine.

In conclusion, I want to say this: if things were as Mormons say, I can’t understand how the 144,000 men who did not get married (in that they are virgins) can follow the Lamb wherever He goes and how they can be firstfruits to God and to the Lamb, as it is written: “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb” (Revelation 14:4). For if we assume for the sake of argument that celestial marriage is absolutely necessary to receive the highest degree of glory in the Kingdom of God, how is it that those men who were not defiled with women follow Christ wherever He goes and thus in the ‘highest level’ of the celestial kingdom? As you can see, the Scripture does not support celestial marriage. Therefore, I urge you to reject this heresy taught by Mormons.

The Way of Salvation According to Oneness Pentecostals

Oneness Pentecostals teach the following thing about salvation: ‘The salvation experience comes by grace through faith, but a profession of faith alone is not the salvation experience. Saving faith is obedient faith, for faith is equated with calling upon His name, confessing Jesus’ death and resurrection, repenting of our sins, being baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost …. The New Testament asserts that the process of becoming a Christian is through faith, and it reveals that this faith is expressed in repentance of sins, baptism in the name of Jesus Christ, and receiving the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38). We may call repentance, water baptism, and the reception of the Spirit steps or links in the salvation process, for together they constitute the full experience of salvation. These links also correlate to the new birth of water and the Spirit that Jesus proclaimed as necessary in entering into the kingdom of God’ (J. L. Hall and David K. Bernard, editors, Doctrines of the Bible, Word Aflame Press, Hazelwood, MO, USA, 1998, pages 180-182).

Now let me tell you what Oneness Pentecostals say about faith, repentance, water baptism and the baptism with the Holy Spirit, so that you may understand fully their way of salvation.

Faith. ‘The faith that saves must be in the person and work of Jesus Christ. A correct belief in the person of Jesus is therefore necessary to salvation …. Jesus defined saving faith to mean believing on Him as the Scriptures teach …. In his Gospel, Matthew identified Jesus from prophecy to be Jehovah and Elohim …. Jesus identified Himself as the Father incarnate’ (Ibid., pages 179-180). In other words, a man must believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, the Lord, and the Father incarnate. And that He died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He was raised from the dead.

Repentance. ‘Jesus defined repentance as turning from a life of sin …. The blessing of repentance offers a sinner the opportunity to begin anew; to change his mind, heart, and will about Jesus Christ, sin, self, and purpose in life; to experience sorrow and contrition for his sins; to confess his sins to God; to forsake his sinful past; to submit himself humbly to God; and to accept Jesus’ substitutionary, atoning death on the cross for his sins. Moreover, repentance leads the person to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and prepares him to receive the Holy Ghost’ (Ibid., page 184).

Water baptism. ‘The Bible does not present water baptism as optional …. A person should not think he can be saved without obeying the command of baptism …. We should notice that the Bible speaks of baptism ‘for the remission of sins’ …. Jesus’ sacrificial death is the only means
of remission of sin; He died once, and there is no other offering for sins. We do not offer sacrifices at altars today, but God gave us a way to receive remission of sins. (See Hebrews 10:18) And that way is water baptism in the name of Jesus Christ. … (Ibid., pages 189, 192, 193). However, it must be said that according to Oneness Pentecostals water baptism, in order to be efficacious and valid, must be administered in the name of Jesus Christ for they say: ‘Every reference to a baptismal formula in the Book of Acts and the references in the Epistles either explicitly states or indicates that the name of Jesus and not the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was used in the baptismal formula .... For Oneness believers, baptism in the name of Jesus follows the apostolic pattern, affirms their faith that God is one, that He was incarnate in His Son Jesus Christ, and that He now dwells in us by His Spirit. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ expresses faith in the Incarnation, the authentic human life of Jesus, the death of the Son of God on the cross for our sins, and the remission of sins through the name of Jesus’ (Ibid., 195, 197). Another important thing that must be said about water baptism is that for Oneness Pentecostals water baptism does not regenerate, or rather baptism alone does not regenerate, for in order to be born again one must also receive the baptism with the Holy Spirit. They are very clear also about this point: ‘Jesus called the transforming of a person from sin to the kingdom of God a birth of water and the Spirit. (John 3:5) This new birth is more than water baptism, for it includes the transforming work of the Spirit of God. A person may be baptized in water in the name of Jesus and still not be born again; he will remain outside the kingdom of God until he also receives the Holy Spirit …. Without the infilling of the Holy Spirit, a person’s birth is not complete; he may be forgiven of his past sins, but he is not born again. His new birth is not finished. He need a spiritual change of his sinful nature that comes only by the infilling of God’s Spirit. A saved person, then, is one who is both forgiven and regenerated, both pardoned and transformed’ (Ibid., page 201)

The baptism with the Holy Spirit. As we have just seen, Oneness Pentecostals consider the baptism with the Holy Spirit an essential experience in salvation. The reason why they affirm this is that they teach that Jesus Christ is the Holy Spirit, consequently ‘to receive Christ is to receive the Holy Spirit, and vice versa’ (David K. Bernard, Essentials of Oneness Theology, Word Aflame Press, Hazelwood, MO, USA, 1995, page 26). The initial evidence of the baptism with the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues: ‘Speaking with tongues (languages) is closely linked with the reception of the Holy Ghost …. Only one sign accompanies Spirit reception, that of speaking with tongues as the Spirit gives the utterance’ (Doctrines of the Bible, pages 204,207).

Confutation

The apostle Peter believed and preached that remission of sins is obtained through faith alone

As we have seen, according to Oneness Pentecostals water baptism is the way given to us by God to receive remission of sins, for they say that this is what the apostle Peter preached to the Jews on the day of Pentecost when He said to them: “Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins ....” (Acts 2:38 – NKJV). Did Peter believe and preach that remission of sins is obtained through water baptism then? No, he didn’t, because there are some other words of Peter written in the book of the Acts of the apostles which nullify that interpretation given by the Oneness Pentecostals to those words of Peter. Let us see these other words of his.

● After Peter healed the lame who was at the gate of the temple which was called ‘Beautiful’, he said to the Jews: “Repent therefore and be converted [that is, turn to God], that your sins may be blotted out…” (Acts 3:19 – NKJV). Note how the apostle did not speak of water baptism to those Jews for he told them that they had to repent and turn to the Lord so that their sins might be blotted out.

● Peter said to Cornelius and his household that “to Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43 – NKJV). As you can see, according to Peter remission of sins is obtained through faith alone, and not through
water baptism which follows faith. That Peter believed this is confirmed by what he said in Jerusalem (when the apostles and elders gathered together to consider the matter which had arisen, that is, whether the Gentiles had to be circumcised or not) about the conversion of Cornelius and his household. Listen carefully to what Peter said to the other apostles and the elders about those Gentiles who had believed His message: “Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they” (Acts 15:7-11). Note that Peter stated that God had purified the hearts of those Gentiles by faith, and not by water baptism, which was administered to them after they believed. Therefore, remission of sins is obtained only through faith in Christ.

The apostle Paul believed and preached that remission of sins is obtained through faith alone

When we talk about remission of sins we need to bear in mind that when a man obtains it he is justified by God because remission of sins consists in having one’s sins blotted out and when God blots out every sin from the conscience of a man God justifies him, that is to say, He declares him to be righteous. Let me ask you the following question then? ‘When, according to Paul, is a man justified?’ According to what we read in the book of the Acts of the apostles and in the epistles written by Paul, a man is justified when he believes in the Gospel. Let us look at some words of Paul which attest what I have just said.

● In the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia, Paul said: “Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:38-39). The expression ‘all that believe are justified’ means nothing but ‘whoever believes in Him receives remission of sins’, in other words it means exactly what Peter said to Cornelius and his household (cf. Acts 10:43).

● Paul wrote to the saints in Rome: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith” (Romans 3:21-30) and also: “Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Romans 4:4-5) and again: “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:9-10). Note that Paul affirms several times and in various ways that a man is justified by faith alone.

Therefore, according to both Paul and Peter, remission of sins is not obtained through water baptism but through faith alone. Of course, water baptism was important for Paul and Peter, but it followed the remission of sins.

I have proved, therefore, that it is by faith and not by water baptism that remission of sins is obtained.
The baptismal formula to be used

The teaching of the Oneness Pentecostals about the formula that should be used in water baptism is wrong for the following reasons.

1) It is true that the book of the Acts of the apostles says that some water baptisms were administered in the name of Jesus Christ. For Luke wrote: “When they [Peter and John] had come down, prayed for them [believers in Samaria] that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 8:15-16 – NKJV); “And he [Peter] commanded them [Cornelius and his household] to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48 - NKJV); “When they [the about twelve disciples of Ephesus] heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5 – NKJV).

However, this does not lead us to exclude that those believers were baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; the reason is that to baptize in the name of the Three Divine Persons was a command and in addition to this it had to be taught to the disciples, as it is written: “Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20 – NKJV). Therefore, the water baptism administered to believers in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, is absolutely Scriptural.

2) Now, Oneness Pentecostals teach that ‘every reference to a baptismal formula in the Book of Acts either explicitly states or indicates that the name of Jesus and not the titles of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was used in the baptismal formula’ (J. L. Hall and David K. Bernard, editors, *Doctrines of the Bible*, Word Aflame Press, Hazelwood, MO, USA, 1998, page 195), and they quote the words of Peter spoken on the day of Pentecost, they cite the baptism administered to the believers in Samaria, the baptism administered to Cornelius and his household, and the baptism administered to the disciples of Ephesus, and also the baptism administered by Ananias to Saul. However, we say, if the fact that is written that those believers were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ means that this is the right formula to be used at an actual water baptism, what should we infer from the fact that concerning the conversion of some people in the Acts of the apostles it is not written at all that they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ? For instance, Luke says about the eunuch that Philip “baptized him” (Acts 8:38 – NKJV), and about Lydia that “she and her household were baptized” (Acts 16:15 – NKJV), and about the keeper of the prison in Philippi that “immediately he and all his family were baptized” (Acts 16:33 – NKJV). What shall we say then? Shall we say that on those occasions Philip and Paul did not use any baptismal formula because no baptismal formula is mentioned in all these water baptisms, and thus we are not bound to use a baptismal formula when we baptize believers? Certainly not! But there is something else that must be said: in the Acts of the apostles it is not written that the believers of Thessalonica as well as those of Berea were baptized, shall we reach then the conclusion that we don’t need to administer water baptism to those who have believed in the Lord? Certainly not! If we reached these conclusions we would be like the Roman Catholics who affirm that water baptism can be administered even by sprinkling because not always it is written that believers were baptized by immersion, and also like those believers who affirm that speaking in tongues does not accompany always the reception of the Holy Spirit because in the Acts it is not written that the believers of Samaria began to speak in other tongues when they received the Holy Spirit. Therefore we must take heed to ourselves and we must see that we do not reach the conclusion that the apostles did not use the Trinitarian formula when they baptized believers just because it is not written that they baptized believers in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. I cite another scriptural example to explain to you what I have just said. At the end of one of the epistles written to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul wrote: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all” (2 Corinthians 13:14 – NKJV). However, in reading the other epistles written by Paul we note that at the end of them he did not write the same words; for instance, he wrote to the Romans as well as to the Philippians: “The grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ be with you all" (Romans 16:24 and Philippians 4:23 – NKJV). What shall we say then? Shall we say that Paul wanted the grace of Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit to be with the saints of Corinth, while he wanted only the grace of Christ to be with the saints who lived in other towns? Certainly not; we only say that the Holy Spirit prompted Paul to write a different expression at the end of one of his epistles to the saints of Corinth, even though Paul wanted the grace of Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit to be with all the other saints.

3) Oneness Pentecostals affirm that we must notice that when Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, ‘the word name is singular and the name is not given in this text. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are not proper names but titles of relationship.’ Therefore water baptism must be administered in the name of Jesus only. However, they are wrong because if Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were just titles of the Deity which referred to Jesus, Jesus did not need to give that order to His disciples; He would have said: ‘Baptizing them in my name.’ For instance, when Jesus opened the understanding of His disciples that they might comprehend the Scriptures, He said to them that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations” (Luke 24:47 – NKJV); He did not say that ‘repentance and remission of sins should be preached in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, to all nations’. Therefore the fact that when Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize He mentioned the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit, is a clear proof that even though Jesus believed in the Oneness of the Godhead He did not believe that He was at the same time the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the fact that in the baptismal formula the word ‘name’ is singular indicates that the Three, that is, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, are one God but at the same time three distinct Persons. Therefore, in the light of the Scriptures, I exhort you servants of the Lord to baptize people using the formula ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’, rather than the formula ‘in the name of Jesus Christ’, because that’s what Jesus commanded His apostles to do. Furthermore, I want you to know that by saying ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ you baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus because you baptize with the authority given to you by Jesus. Let no one of the Oneness Pentecostals deceive you with empty words. And when you meet them and they begin to tell you that your baptism is not valid and you need to be rebaptized in ‘the name of Jesus’ tell them that you have already been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and rebuke them sharply refuting their false doctrine about the Godhead and water baptism,

A man is born again when he repents and believes on the Lord Jesus Christ and not when he is baptized with the Holy Spirit

Can we affirm that anyone who has believed in the Lord but has not yet been baptized with the Holy Spirit is not born of God? The answer is ‘no.’ For the Word of God teaches that all those who have received Christ, that is to say, who believed in Jesus Christ, are sons of God because they were born of God, as it is written: “He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13). It should be noted that John did not say ‘as many as received the Holy Spirit’ but ‘as many as received Him, that is, Jesus Christ’. Therefore, they are all sons of God through faith in Jesus Christ. Even if one has just believed in the Lord he is a son of God because when he repented and believed in the Gospel God brought him forth by His word and the Holy Spirit.

They can say that they are sons of God because of the Holy Spirit who is in them. For when they repented and believed in the Lord, the Holy Spirit came to dwell in them and from that very moment on He began to bear witness with their spirit that they are sons of God, as it is written: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:16 - NKJV). Therefore, one is born of the Spirit when he repents and believes in the Lord. The
baptism with the Holy Spirit is an experience which follows the new birth. Now, I am going to demonstrate this through these biblical examples: the apostles before the day of Pentecost, the believers in Samaria and the disciples at Ephesus.

Were the apostles believing persons before speaking in other tongues on the day of Pentecost? Yes, of course, because Jesus said to them: “You believe at last!” (John 16:31 – NIV) and He said to His Father: “They believed that you sent me” (John 17:8 – NIV). Were the apostles born again believers before the day of Pentecost? Yes, of course; because they believed that Jesus was the Christ and John says that “whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1 – NKJV). Did they belong to Christ before speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost? Yes, of course, because Christ said about them: “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them” (John 17:9-10). Did they have a certain measure of the Spirit before speaking in tongues at Pentecost? The answer is ‘Yes,’ because when Jesus appeared to them after His resurrection He said to them: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22 – NKJV). Therefore the apostles were saved even before they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke in other tongues.

Were those Samaritans, who believed in the Gospel of the Kingdom preached to them by Philip, saved and born of God before they received the Holy Spirit through the laying on of the hands of the apostles Peter and John? Yes, of course, for “when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12 – NKJV). They also, therefore, having believed that Jesus was the Christ of God, were born of God, as it is written: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1 – NKJV). And consequently, since they were sons of God they had a certain measure of the Spirit, who bore witness with their spirit that they were sons of God; all this before Peter and John laid their hands on them that they might received the Holy Spirit and they spoke in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance.

Were those disciples (about twelve) believing persons, whom Paul met at Ephesus? Yes, of course, because Paul asked them: “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” (Acts 19:2). Paul therefore regarded them as believers. Therefore, as in the above mentioned cases, they were born of God before Paul baptized them and laid his hands on them that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

We agree with Oneness Pentecostals when they say that speaking in tongues is the sign which accompanies the reception of the Holy Spirit (by Holy Spirit we mean the fullness of the Holy Spirit and not that measure of the Spirit which every man receives when he believes) because this is confirmed by the Holy Scripture, but we don’t agree with them at all when they say that one who has believed in the Lord but has not yet received the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not saved because he does not have the Holy Spirit, for this is contrary to the Scripture. What they teach is a false doctrine, there is no doubt about that.

What it means to be born of water and the Spirit

At this point, someone will ask: ‘Then, if that’s how things are, what is the meaning of the words of Jesus according to which one must be born of water and the Spirit, as He said: “Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God” (John 3:5 - NKJV)?

As for these words Jesus said to Nicodemus, the water is not water baptism but the Word of God. For in the book of Isaiah the Word of God is compared to the water which comes down from heaven and don’t return there without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish (cf. Isaiah 55:9-10). For God has caused us to be born again by His Word and not by the water in which we were immersed because Peter says: “You have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23 – NIV) and James says: “He chose to give us birth through the word of truth” (James 1:18 – NIV). To be born of water, therefore, means to be regenerated by the Word of God.
To be born of the Spirit means to be transformed spiritually by the Spirit of God; when does this transformation take place? It takes place when the Holy Spirit convicts a man of guilt in regard to sin and He comes to dwell in his heart because he believes in the Son of God. At that moment, a renewing takes place in the believer; his desires, his purposes, his way of thinking and speaking change.

Therefore, the new birth or regeneration takes place in a man when he accepts the Word of God which regenerates him, and when the Holy Spirit comes to dwell in his heart (after He has convicted him of guilt in regard to sin) and transforms him.

That the new birth takes place when a person repents and believes in Christ and not when he is baptized with the Holy Spirit (therefore if a believer dies without the baptism with the Holy Spirit he will go to heaven), is evident from the example of the thief on the cross who turned to the Lord just before breathing his last. For although that man had not been baptized with the Holy Spirit (nor had he been baptized in water) he entered into Paradise, for Jesus said to him: “Today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43 – NKJV).

Conclusion

As I have shown from the Scripture, the way of salvation taught by Oneness Pentecostals is a false way of salvation because according to their way of salvation a man can be a believer and even be baptized in water and at the same time he can still be lost because he has not yet been baptized with the Holy Spirit! While the Holy Scripture teaches that one is forgiven and saved through his faith alone, therefore he is saved before being baptized in water and baptized with the Holy Spirit. Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, who died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification, is forgiven, saved, reconciled to God, and born again. No matter if he has not yet been baptized in water or he has not yet received the baptism with the Holy Spirit, in the sight of God he is a son of God washed in the blood of the Lamb, he has eternal life and if he dies (without undergoing water baptism and receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit) he will go immediately to heaven. Of course, those who have believed must be immediately baptized, and must desire to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, yet in the meanwhile they are at all effects sons of God on the way to heaven.

Brothers, beware of Oneness Pentecostals and refute their heresies.

The way of salvation according to The New Life Mission (founded by Paul C. Jong)

Paul C. Jong, founder of The New Life Mission, teaches that in order to be saved a man must believe in Jesus’ baptism and in His death on the cross. Here is what he wrote: ‘To be saved from all our sins, we must believe in the gospel that states that John the Baptist passed all sins onto Jesus through the means of baptism. …. In order to be redeemed of all our sins, we have to believe in His baptism, through which John the Baptist passed all the sins of the world onto Jesus and the Cross…’ (Have you truly been born again of water and the Spirit?, e-book, page 229). However, it is important to note that when Jong affirms that John passed all sins onto Jesus ‘through the means of baptism’ he means that this happened through the laying on of the hands of John: ‘John the Baptist passed the sins of the world onto Jesus for our salvation when he laid his hands on Jesus’ head’ (from their website: http://bjnewlife.org). Jong explains us that baptism ‘means ‘to pass on to, to be buried, to be washed’ — the same as ‘the laying on of hands’ in the Old Testament’ (Ibid,). In other words, John baptized Jesus by laying his hands on the head of Jesus.

At this point, in order to help you understand why Jong attaches so much importance to this alleged laying on of hands which took place at the Jordan river, it is necessary to say that
according to Jong, John the Baptist was predestined by God to be the last High Priest because the Old Testament ended when Jesus Christ was born. The Bible, according to Jong, confirms the priesthood of John for it says that he was a descendant of Aaron the High Priest (since Zechariah, the father of John, was of the division of Abijah – Luke 1:5). And since according to the law of Moses, when the High Priest made atonement for the sins of the Israelites he had to lay his hands on the head of the live goat to put all their sins upon its head, so John the Baptist had to lay his hands on Jesus to put all the sins of the world on him. Here are the words of Jong: “Before the people, Aaron laid his hands on the second goat and confessed before God. "Lord, the people of Israel have committed murder, adultery, theft, covetousness, deceit...and they have bowed before idols. They have not kept the Sabbath holy, they have called Your name in vain, and they have broken all the articles of Your Laws and commandments." Then he took away his hands. With this, all the sins of the people for the whole year were passed on to the sin offering. Let's read Leviticus 16:21. "And Aaron shall lay both his hands on the head of the live goat, confess over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins, putting them on the head of the goat, and shall send it away into the wilderness by the hand of a suitable man." The scapegoat would then wander around in the wilderness and die with the sins of the people of Israel on its head. The scapegoat, "Azazel" in Hebrew, means "to put out." It means that the sin offering was cast out before the Lord, for all the people of Israel. Now, the sins of Israel were passed on to the scapegoat through the laying on of Aaron's hands. In this way the Israelites were forgiven for their sins. When they saw the high priest laying his hands on the goat and saw it led into the wilderness, all the people of Israel who believed in the ritual of atonement were sure of the atonement for their sins. All the rituals of the Old Testament were the shadow of 'the gospel of the being born again' of the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the laying on of hands and the blood of the sacrifice was the gospel of salvation from sin. It remained basically the same in the New Testament’ (Ibid.,). Therefore, since the laying on of the hands of the High Priest was part of the ritual of the day of atonement through which the Israelites were forgiven, the laying on of the hands of John the Baptist is an essential part of the atonement God provided through Jesus Christ. For Jong affirms that 'Jesus was baptized to wash away all the sins of mankind' and that God sent 'His own Son Jesus to this world to wash away all sins through His baptism by John the Baptist and His death at the Cross'. Therefore, anyone who wants to be saved from his sins must believe in Jesus' baptism and His death on the cross: 'True faith is to believe that Jesus Christ completely cleansed us of all our sins when He was baptized; it is to believe that He took the judgment for all our sins at the Cross. We have to believe in the righteous salvation of God. God loved man so much that He saved us through the baptism of Jesus and His blood at the Cross. When we believe in this gospel, we are saved from all our sins, freed from judgment and become righteous before God’ (Ibid.,). There is no salvation outside the gospel of the baptism of Jesus which is preached by Paul Jong: ‘If we don’t believe in the redemption of the baptism and the blood of Jesus, we are still sinners and not saved, no matter how faithfully we attend church .... Therefore, the belief in the baptism of Jesus and the blood on the Cross is a must for our salvation. We must believe in the water and the blood.’ (Have you truly been born again of water and the Spirit?, e-book, page 436, 442-443).

Confutation

It is true that on the Day of atonement the high priest had to lay his hands on the live goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat and he had to confess over it all the sins of the Israelites and then that goat was sent into the desert as a scapegoat, for it is written: ‘And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited:
and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness" (Leviticus 16:20-22); and it is also true that this foreshadowed the fact that one day the Lamb of God would bear all our iniquities. But it is also true that on that day the High Priest did not have to lay his hands on the head of the other goat which was to be offered to make atonement for the sins of the Israelites (for on that day the High Priest had to take two male goats for a sin offering), nor did he have to confess over it the sins of the Israelites. For it is written: “Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat” (Leviticus 16:15). Therefore, the High Priest had to lay his hands on the head of the live goat alone, and he had to confess the sins of the Israelites over the live goat alone, yet the other goat also was used for making atonement for the sins of the people of Israel and foreshadowed the atonement that Christ would make, even though the High Priest did not have to lay his hands on its head nor confess over it the sins of the Israelites. And keep in mind that the first goat (that is, the one whose lot fell to the Lord) had to be slaughtered, offered upon the altar, and its blood had to be taken behind the curtain into the Most Holy Place, while the second goat (the one chosen by lot as the scapegoat) was not slaughtered but it was sent into the desert. However, even though there was this difference in the ritual of the day of atonement, we are sure that the second goat also foreshadowed the Christ who would bear all our iniquities in His own body. I have said these things to show that the first goat also was used for making atonement for the sins of the people, even though the Scripture does not say that the High Priest had to lay his hands on it or that he had to confess over it the sins of the Israelites.

How were our iniquities to be passed onto Jesus then? How was Jesus to take on Himself our sins? Maybe through the laying on of the hands of a High Priest and the confession of all our sins made over him by this High Priest? Not at all. Furthermore, even if we grant for the sake of argument that all our sins had to be passed onto Jesus through the laying on of the hands of a High Priest, without any doubt that High Priest had to be the High Priest of the temple, who was Caiaphas at the time; however such a thing did not happen. How could such a thing ever happen? However, what does Mr. Jong do then? He comes out with the teaching that John the Baptist was a High Priest, or rather, the last High Priest; we can’t accept such a thing because it is not supported by the Scripture in any way, even though John was certainly a descendant of the sons of Aaron, that is, he was of priestly descent. In addition to this, I want to say this: where does the Scripture state that John the Baptist laid his hands on the head of Jesus or that he administered the baptism to Jesus through the laying on of his hands? The answer is, ‘Nowhere,’ so the teaching according to which John passed onto Jesus all sins of the world through baptism, or rather through the laying on of his hands, does not have any Scriptural basis. There is no Biblical evidence, not even a hint, that John performed that act.

Furthermore, as we have seen, the High Priest had also to confess over the live goat all the sins of the people of Israel (this is something that Mr. Jong does not emphasize), therefore John would have to confess over Jesus all the sins of the world. However, where does the Scripture speak of this confession made by John the Baptist over Jesus Christ? The answer is still the same, ‘Nowhere.’ Therefore, we really don’t understand how the alleged High Priest John the Baptist passed onto Jesus all the sins of men at His baptism when the Scripture is silent on this alleged laying on of hands as well as on a confession of all the sins of the world made by John over Jesus. I ask you: ‘If these important things, which according to Mr. Jong we need to know in order to be saved, had really taken place when Jesus was baptized by John, could the Scripture be silent on them?’ I firmly believe that it could not.

However, what I want to stress is that this doctrine attaches too much importance to the baptism of Jesus, that is to say, this doctrine leads believers to think that in order to be saved they must believe in the baptism of Jesus, while the Scripture never states that in order to be saved a man must believe in the baptism of Jesus. According to the Scripture, one must believe that Jesus is the Christ of God who died on the cross for our sins (that is to say, He bore our sins in His body on the cross), who was buried and the third day He rose again for our justification (cf. Romans 4:24-25). That’s the Gospel which the apostle Paul preached to both Jews and Gentiles, listen to
what he wrote to the Corinthians: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures: And that he was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep. After that, he was seen of James; then of all the apostles. And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:1-8).

Therefore the events of the life of Jesus which a sinner must ABSOLUTELY believe in order to be saved are the atoning death of Christ and His resurrection. Even if he does not know anything about the baptism of Jesus, his faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus will certainly save him. This is confirmed by the fact that when the apostle Peter preached the Gospel to the Jews on the day of Pentecost and to the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius some time later, he did not speak of the baptism of Jesus, while he spoke of His death and His resurrection (cf. Acts 2:22-36; 10:34-43). The same thing must be said about the apostle Paul, for when Paul preached at Antioch of Pisidia he did not speak of the baptism of Jesus, but he preached His death and His resurrection (cf. Acts 13:16-41). And I would like to point out that both Peter and Paul, the former on the day of Pentecost while the latter at Antioch of Pisidia, preached the Gospel to the Jews (there were also some proselytes), thus to people who knew the ritual of the day of atonement (unlike the Gentiles who had no knowledge of these things). What a great opportunity for those apostles to explain to their hearers the meaning of Jesus’ baptism preached to us by Mr Paul Jong!! Yet they did not mention it, they said nothing about it, they did not speak of His baptism and its alleged meaning. The reason why they were silent on Jesus’ baptism is that they did not attach this great importance to Jesus’ baptism nor did they give to it the meaning given by Mr Jong.

Neither does the Scripture affirm that in order to be saved, a man must believe that when Jesus was baptized John the Baptist passed onto Him all the sins of the world through the laying on of his hands, for as we have seen such a thing did not take place. Therefore all those arguments according to which “one Man’s righteous act” (Romans 5:18 – NKJV) accomplished by Jesus to justify us includes Jesus’ baptism are vain, because that righteous act is the death of Christ, the shedding of His blood which took place for the remission of our sins, which was followed by the resurrection of Jesus which was worked by His Father. Didn’t Jesus teach this when on the night He was betrayed He took the cup and gave it to His disciples saying: “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:27-28 – NKJV)? Of course, that cup symbolized His blood. What has the baptism of Jesus to do with the remission of sins then? Of course, Jesus’ baptism was an important event, I am not questioning its importance, Jesus had to be baptized by John; however what cleanses our conscience from dead works is the precious blood of Jesus alone which Jesus shed on the cross and not His baptism. Therefore, we were reconciled to God through His death and not through His baptism; this is something which is attested by the Scripture many times. For instance Paul says to the Romans: “Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:9-10), and to the Colossians: “For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight” (Colossians 1:19-22). Are not sufficiently clear the words of the apostle Paul? Therefore, the doctrine which holds that in order to obtain the remission of sins and be justified we must believe that Jesus’ baptism was an atoning act, that is, an act through which our sins were blotted out or
taken away (anyhow something that, together with His death, is able to take away our sins) is a false doctrine, that is, a heretical teaching, there is no doubt about that.

We must preach the cross of Christ, as the apostles did, and not the baptism of Christ, and we must exhort men to repent and believe in the atoning death of Christ and in His resurrection as well, but we must not add the baptism of Jesus to these things as Mr Paul Jong does ignorantly, who in his books speaks more of Jesus’ baptism than of His death. In other words, we must follow the example of the apostle Paul. Obviously, with regard to the death of Christ we must preach that it was necessary because without shedding of blood there is no remission, and that the shedding of His blood was foreshadowed many times by the law of Moses, and we must preach also that Jesus Christ bore our sins in His own body on the cross, however let us see that we don’t say that John the Baptist was the last High Priest appointed by God who had to lay his hands on Jesus to pass onto Jesus all our sins because such a thing is untrue. The Scripture says that “the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6), and that “he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11). The Scripture does not say that a High Priest would lay on Jesus all our sins!!! In addition to this, Jesus did not need a High Priest for He Himself was the High Priest of our confession who had to offer Himself for our sins (cf. Hebrews 7:26-28 and 3:1) and therefore he had to bear all our sins and that’s what He did on the cross. Therefore Jesus Christ was at the same time the Sacrificer and the sacrifice which had to be offered for our sins. To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen.

When did Jesus bear our sins? When and where did God lay on Him all our sins? The Scripture teaches that this took place on the cross when Jesus was crucified, for Peter says: “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24 – NKJV). This is confirmed also by Paul when he says that “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21 – NKJV) and also that “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Galatians 3:13 – NKJV). Therefore it was on the cross that Jesus took on Himself all our sins, and not at His baptism! Reflect upon this: it can’t be true that Jesus Christ took on Himself all our sins at His baptism, because if it had been so He would have been made to be sin even before He began His ministry. At His baptism Jesus did not take on Himself the sins of the world, but He was anointed with the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, to sum up, I tell you that we must not interpret the baptism of Jesus in the way Mr Jong does, nor must we believe that in order to receive remission of sins it is absolutely necessary to believe that through the baptism all sins were passed onto Jesus. Take heed to yourselves, beloved, because this strange doctrine of Mr Jong has had evil consequences on the way of salvation, for according to Mr Jong in order to be saved faith in the atoning death of Christ is not sufficient, for a man must believe also that John the Baptist passed all sins onto Jesus at the Jordan River!! Indeed Mr Jong preaches a doctrine of demons and creates great confusion in the midst of the people of God. Beware of the leaven of Mr Jong. Repudiate it and expose it. Hold fast the Gospel as it is written in the Bible without adding to it this diabolical teaching of Mr. Jong, which has nothing to do with the truth which is in Christ Jesus.

The way of ‘salvation’ according to Judaism

According to Judaism man has two inclinations, one good (yetzer tov) and the other evil (yetzer hara), which are both created by God (Berakoth 61a). However, while the evil inclination is in the human being since his birth, the good inclination begins to manifest itself when the human being is thirteen years old. The good inclination prompts man to do good, while the evil inclination prompts man to do evil. Therefore the reason why a man keeps the commandments which God gave to Israel on Mount Sinai is that he follows the good inclination which is in him, while the reason why man transgresses the law of God is that the evil inclination deceives him into doing
evil things (Sukkah 52b). Judaism recognizes that often the evil inclination prevails over the good inclination, however man is able to master the evil inclination, for he is able to choose whether to follow the evil inclination or the good inclination. Jewish rabbis quote the following Talmudic saying: ‘Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except the fear of Heaven’ (Berakoth 33b), in order to show that it is man who chooses whether to fear God or not. So, according to Judaism, man is not born inherently evil or sinful or in need of a personal Saviour who may deliver him from the bondage of sin. Man is born sinless (Joma 22b), and even though during his life he often does evil things, he is still able to master the evil inclination which is within him. At this point, you may ask, ‘How can a man obtain the forgiveness of sins, according to Judaism?’ Well, Judaism teaches that a man can be forgiven through repentance – called *teshuvah* (which must be sincere and followed by good works for the Talmud says: ‘And these are man's advocates: repentance and good deeds’ Shabbath 32a), for repentance makes atonement for his sins. Repentance – as a means to expiate one’s sins – has replaced the atoning sacrifices which were offered according to the law of Moses to make atonement for one’s sins, for after the destruction of the second temple (which took place in 70 A.D.) they could not be offered any longer. The Talmud says about repentance: ‘Great is Teshuvah, for it enables a person to reach the throne of God,’ as it says ‘Return, O Israel, to the Lord your God’ (Masechet Yoma: 86a).

However, it must be said that repentance alone does not suffice to expiate certain sins, for the Talmud says: ‘There are four different modes of Atonement. If a man fails to fulfil the duty incumbent upon him in case of a sin of omission, for him repentance suffices, as Jeremiah (iii. 22) says, ‘Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backsliding.’ If he has transgressed a prohibitory law - a sin of commission - the Day of Atonement atones: of him the Law says, ‘On this day He shall atone for your sins to cleanse you’ (Lev. xvi. 30). If he be guilty of crimes such as entail the death penalty and the like, repentance and the Day of Atonement cannot expiate them unless suffering works as a purifying factor: to this the Psalmist refers when he says, ‘I will visit their transgressions with the rod and their iniquities with stripes’ (Ps. lxxxi. 33 [A. V. 32]). And if the crime amount to a desecration of the name of God and the doing of great harm to the people at large, nothing but death can be the penalty; as Isaiah (xxii. 14) says, ‘Surely this iniquity shall not be atoned for you [A. V. “purged from you”] till ye die, saith the Lord God of Hosts”’ (Talmud, Yoma, 86a; compare Mishnah Shebu. i. 1-6). As you can see, in order to obtain the forgiveness of certain sins repentance is not sufficient, for a Jew must wait for the Day of Atonement (on which the Jews humble themselves before God, fasting and confessing their sins to God) which atones for all the sins of commission the Jews have committed (sins against God); furthermore there are certain sins – crimes such as entail the death penalty and the like - which are expiated through suffering, and there is a particular sin, that is, the profanation of God's name, which is expiated only through death. That's why Jews when dying or in peril are called to say: ‘Let my death make atonement for all my sins,” (Berachoth 60a; Sanh. vi. 2).

**Confutation**

The Holy Scriptures teaches that man is born evil, for David said: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5 – The NIV reads: “Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me”), and God, after He punished the ancient world through the flood, said about man that “every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood” (Genesis 8:21 – NIV). Therefore, man’s nature is evil and sinful, that is, corrupt, from his birth. That’s why it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:10-18). The reason why men are born evil or sinful is that
Adam, the first man, sinned and through him all his descendants were made sinners (cf. Romans 5:19).

Man is a slave of sin, as it is written: “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin” (John 8:34 – NKJV). Sin masters man for it is stronger than man, as it is written: “The evil deeds of a wicked man ensnare him; the cords of his sin hold him fast” (Proverbs 5:22 – NIV), so man needs a Saviour, that is, someone who is able to deliver him from the bondage of sin. Since man is a slave of sin he is not able to do all the things prescribed by the law which God gave to Israel on Mount Sinai, therefore he is under the curse of the law, for the law of Moses says: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10 – cf. Deuteronomy 27:26 – NKJV). So he needs to be redeemed from the curse of the law.

Man is a transgressor of the law, for he breaks continually the law of God, and the transgressions of the law he commits separate him from God, as Isaiah said to the Israelites: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2 - NIV). So a man needs to be made alive in order to be able to have fellowship with God.

Man is deeply in debt, for every transgression of the law he commits is a debt. He is unjust in the sight of God, that is to say, he is an enemy of God. Therefore he needs to be justified so that he might be reconciled to God.

That’s the spiritual condition of man in the sight of God. Now, how can a man be saved from his sins, redeemed from the curse of the law, made alive, and justified? The answer is this: by faith in Jesus of Nazareth, for He is the Messiah (that is, the Anointed One), whom God sent into the world in the fullness of the time (about two thousand years ago) to save us from our sins, to redeem us from the curse of the law, to make us alive, and to justify us. How did Jesus accomplish all these things? Through the offering of His body, that is, through His atoning death He tasted for all of us on the cross.

Here is what God said through the prophet Isaiah about the atoning death of the Messiah: “For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearsers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” (Isaiah 53:2-12).

The above mentioned words of Isaiah were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth. For those who dwelt in Jerusalem and their rulers condemned Him (even though He had gone about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him) and asked Pilate, governor
of Judea, that He should be put to death. Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested, even though he had found no reason for death in Jesus. So Jesus was brought to the place called Golgotha, which was outside Jerusalem, and there He was crucified with two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. After He breathed His last, He was laid in a tomb which belonged to Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple of Jesus who was a rich man. But the story of Jesus of Nazareth did not end with His death, for on the third day God raised Him from the dead, that it might be fulfilled what was spoken by David, saying: “My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:26-27; Psalm 16:9-10 - NKJV). After He rose again He was seen for many days by those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem; and after those days He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, so that it might be fulfilled what David said by the Spirit: “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool’ ” (Matthew 22:44; Psalm 110:1 – NKJV).

Now let me explain to you how Jesus, through His death, has saved us from our sins, redeemed us from the curse of the law, made us alive, and justified us, who were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hating and hateful one another, children of wrath just as the others.

Jesus has saved us from our sins because through His death on the cross He nailed to the cross the law of commandments contained in ordinances which was against us (cf. Colossians 2:14; Ephesians 2:15), that is to say, He nailed to the cross the strength of sin, for it is written that “the strength of sin is the law” (1 Corinthians 15:56 – NKJV). Jesus was able to nail to the cross the handwriting of requirements which was against us because He was born sinless and lived a sinless life. Jesus, having borne our sins (all the transgressions of the law we committed) in His body on the cross, put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and we by faith in Him were freed from the power of sin. The apostle Paul said to the Romans that ‘our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin” (Romans 6:6-7 – NKJV). That’s why the angel of the Lord who appeared to Joseph, Mary’s husband, said to him: “…. You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21 – NKJV), for Jesus is the Saviour. Therefore those who want to be saved must put their trust in Jesus Christ.

Jesus has redeemed us from the curse of the law because He became a curse for us, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree” (Galatians 3:13; cf. Deuteronomy 21:23 – NKJV). By faith in Him we have been delivered from the curse of the law and blessed with believing Abraham, for just as Abraham was justified through his faith when he believed that God would multiply his descendants as the stars of the heaven, so we also were justified when we believed in Jesus, that is, when we believed that Jesus died for our sins and rose again for our justification (cf. Romans 4:24-25). We are blessed along with Abraham, for the Scripture says: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered: blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin” (Romans 4:7-8 – NKJV). Therefore all those who cease relying on the works of the law and put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ receive the blessing of Abraham.

Jesus has made us alive through His death because the result of His death was justification that brings life for all men. The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans: “Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness [His death] was justification that brings life for all men” (Romans 5:18 – NIV). So, in the light of this, our spirit is alive because of the death tasted by Jesus Christ. We were once dead in our trespasses and sins, but now we are alive, and thus we can have fellowship with God. So just as the fellowship between God and Adam was broken through one trespass, so the fellowship between God and men was restored through one act of righteousness, that is, the death of Jesus Christ.

Jesus has justified us through His death because — as we saw before — He bore our iniquities in His body on the cross, and consequently the result of His death was justification. So when we believed that He died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification, our faith was
accounted to us for righteousness. So it was fulfilled in us the Scripture which says: “The just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4 – NKJV). You, being a Jew by birth, may ask me now: ‘Did God not say in the law: “You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgements, which if a man does, he shall live by them” (Leviticus 18:5 – NKJV)?’ Yes, He did say those words. However, the point is that no one keeps the things written in the law, for David says: “All have turned aside, they have together become corrupt, there is no one who does good, not even one” (Psalm 14:3 – NIV). Therefore, all are under the curse of the law, for God said: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10 – cf. Deuteronomy 27:26 – NKJV). The law – according to the apostle Paul – “entered that the offense might abound” (Romans 5:20 – NKJV), therefore the purpose of the law was not to justify man. The law entered also that we might become conscious of sin, as Paul says: “By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20), and also: “I would not have known sin except through the law” (Romans 7:7 – NKJV). That’s why no one can be justified in the sight of God by observing the law. However “now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ …” (Romans 3:21-22 – NKJV). So all those who believe in Jesus are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses (cf. Acts 13:39). So, you who are Jews by birth, know this, that by repenting of your sins, by confessing them on the Day of atonement, and by doing good deeds to expiate your sins, you can’t be justified before God. What you must do in order to be justified is to repent of your sins and to believe that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, who died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification. The mistake you are making is this: you seek the law of righteousness not by faith, but as if it were by the works of the law. So, I say to you, stop seeking to establish your own righteousness – which is like filthy rags in the sight of God –, and submit yourselves to the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus, the promised Messiah, who is “the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4 – NKJV). You are attempting to expiate your sins through your good deeds, not knowing that Jesus, the Messiah, atoned for our sins by the offering of His own body when He was crucified. So what you must do in order to obtain the forgiveness of your sins is to repent of them and to put your trust in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus of Nazareth and in His resurrection. Only then will you be able to affirm in full assurance of faith: ‘We are forgiven!’

I know very well that you say that Jesus of Nazareth is not the Messiah, however you are greatly mistaken because you don’t know the Scriptures. Examine carefully the prophetic Scriptures of the Old Testament which speak of the Messiah, and the Scriptures of the New Testament which speak of Jesus of Nazareth, His life, His ministry, His death, His resurrection, His ascension to heaven, and you will realize that Jesus is really the Messiah. Read my teaching on the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth, which shows that the prophetic biblical passages written in the Old Testament, which speak of the Messiah, were fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth.

The sin offerings offered on the Day of Atonement

The atoning death of the Messiah was not only foretold by God through the prophets but also foreshadowed by the law through the sin offerings which were to be offered on the Day of Atonement by the High Priest. Here is what the law says: “And the LORD spake unto Moses after the death of the two sons of Aaron, when they offered before the LORD, and died; And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on. And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer his
bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house. And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD's lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness. And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself: And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel. And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung. And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever. And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen clothes, even the holy garments: And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the
As you can see, on the Day of Atonement the high priest had to kill a bull for his sins and for his house, and a goat for the sins of the people. Then he had to enter the Most Holy Place with the blood of those animals – which were offered as a sin offering - and sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. In that way he made atonement for his sins, for the sins of his house and for those of the people. However, since the law has a shadow of the good things to come and not the very image of the things (for God had said to Moses when he was about to make the tabernacle: “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain” Hebrews 8:5; Exodus 25:40 - NKJV), those sacrifices which were offered continually year by year could not make the worshipers perfect in regard to the conscience. Do you not think that if those sacrifices had been able to cleanse the conscience of the worshipers, they would have ceased to be offered, for the worshippers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins? But in those sacrifices there was a reminder of sins every year, for it was impossible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins. So God sent the Messiah into the world – that is, Jesus of Nazareth, who was born of a virgin and thus sinless - so that He might offer His own blood for our sins once for all, and through His blood we might be made perfect in regard to the conscience. Yes, for His blood cleanses the conscience of those who believe (in Him) from dead works. Therefore, while under the Old Testament in the atoning sacrifices which were offered continually for the people’s sins there was a reminder of sins every year, now under the New Testament God remembers no longer the sins of those who have been sanctified through the blood of Jesus Christ, for their sins have been blotted out from their conscience.

So, you who are Jews by birth, I exhort you to repent of your sins and to put your trust in the blood of Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, which He shed on the cross for the remission of our sins, so that you may obtain the remission of sins. Do not rely on the works of the law, for the works of the law cannot atone for your sins nor cleanse your conscience from your iniquities, but put your trust in the precious blood of Jesus for it can cleanse your conscience from all your dead works.

**The way of salvation according to the Muslim religion**

Muslims teach that man is born free from sin and good, like a blank book, and when he reaches the age of maturity he becomes accountable for his deeds and intentions, if his development is normal and if he is sane. Each person must bear his own burden and be responsible for his own actions, because no one can expiate for another’s sin. How can a man attain salvation then, according to the Muslim religion? Every man must work out his salvation through the guidance of God. This means that in order to attain salvation a person must combine Faith and action, belief and practice. The Kuran – which is, according to the Muslim religion, ‘the word of God revealed to Muhammad through the agency of the angel Gabriel’ - affirms: ‘Surely (as for) those who believe and do good, their Lord will guide them by their faith; there shall flow from beneath them rivers in gardens of bliss. Their cry in it shall be: Glory to Thee, O Allah! and their greeting in it shall be: Peace; and the last of their cry shall be: Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.’ (10:9-10) ‘Surely (as for) those who believe and do good, We do not waste the reward of him who does a good work.’ (18:30) ‘I swear by the time, Most surely man is in loss, Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.’ (103:1-3), To have faith, according to Muslim religion, means to believe in ‘one God, Supreme and Eternal, Infinite and Mighty, Merciful and Compassionate, Creator and Provider’, and in all the messengers sent by God. The Kuran mentions the names of twenty-five of them. The names of some of the great messengers are Noah, and Abraham, Ishmael and Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. The message of all the messengers sent by God was basically the same and was
called Islam, because it came from One and the Same Source, that is, God. All of them, with the exception of Mohammad, were ‘national’ messengers. Furthermore, among them Mohammad stands as the last messenger.

On the Day of Judgement, then, the dead will rise to stand for their final and fair trial. People with good records will be generously rewarded and warmly welcomed to the heaven of God, and those with bad records will be severely punished and cast into hell.

Confutation

The Bible teaches that man is born evil, for David said: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” (Psalm 51:5 – The NIV reads: “Surely I have been a sinner from birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me”), and God said about man that “every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood” (Genesis 8:21 – NIV). Therefore, man’s nature is evil and sinful, that is, corrupt, from his birth. That’s why it is written: “There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Romans 3:10-18). The reason why men are born evil or sinful is that Adam, the first man, sinned and through him all his descendants have been made sinners (cf. Romans 5:19). Man, therefore, being a sinner, is on the way to perdition. However, he can be saved. How? The Bible teaches that the only way a man can be saved from perdition is by believing in Jesus Christ, the Son of the only true God, whom was sent by God into the world about two thousand years ago to save the world. It is written: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He who believes in Him is not condemned, but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16-18 – NKJV). What did Jesus do in order to save men from perdition? He died on the cross for our sins and rose from the dead on the third day. Therefore, eternal life cannot be obtained by good deeds, for it is obtained by faith in Jesus Christ. It is the gift of God.

Remission of sins also is obtained by faith in Jesus Christ, thus it is the gift of God, as it is written: “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43 – NIV). The reason why remission of sins is obtained by faith in Jesus, is that Jesus Christ atoned for our sins through His death on the cross. He bore our sins in His own body on the cross, so that we might receive remission of sins. So, you who are Muslims, know this, that You can’t attain salvation by good works, for salvation is the gift of God, which is given by God to all those who believe in His Son, that is, Jesus Christ. So repent of your sins, and believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification, and you will be immediately be saved from perdition and forgiven by the grace of God.

Good people from all religions are saved

In his book What the Bible Actually Teaches, John Odhner, who is a follower of spiritist Emmanuel Swedenborg, states: ‘The Bible states clearly that it is the way a person lives, not just what he believes, that determines whether he goes to heaven or not. …. One reason why a non-Christian can be saved, is that he can love his neighbor. Anyone who genuinely loves his
neighbor also loves Christ, although he may not realize it. ....’ References from Swedenborg: Heaven and Hell 318-328, Divine Providence 326

Confutation

The Scripture has confined all under sin, as it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: Their feet are swift to shed blood: Destruction and misery are in their ways: And the way of peace have they not known: There is no fear of God before their eyes" (Romans 3:10-18). Therefore all are dead in their sins for “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), and are on the way to perdition. No matter what kind of religion a person professes, no matter how good he may appear to others, he is a child of wrath for he is a slave of sin and he deserves to go to hell at his death. How can he escape hell then? The Scripture says that he can be saved from hell through faith in Jesus Christ. “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved ....”’ (Acts 16:31 – NKJV), that’s what the Word says to everyone who wants to know what he must do to be saved. There is no other way of salvation in the sight of God except the faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus stated that He is the Way and no one comes to the Father except through Him (cf. John 14:6), that is to say, no one can be reconciled to God nor enter the kingdom of God except through faith in Him. That’s why Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to every creature, for He knew that outside Him there is no salvation. Did Jesus not say: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16 – NKJV)? Is it not written: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36 – NKJV)?

Therefore, anyone who is a non-Christian, that is, anyone who does not believe in Jesus Christ, is not saved, and unless he repents of his sins and believes in Jesus he will go to perdition at his death. That a non-Christian is not saved by good works is evident from the story of Cornelius. The Scripture says that Cornelius "was a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to God always" (Acts 10:2 – NKJV) - Here is a man who loved his neighbour and did much good to his neighbour! - Yet he was lost, yes, he was lost, for one day an angel of the Lord appeared to him and said to him: “Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon whose surname is Peter, who will tell you words by which you and all your household will be saved” (Acts 11:13-14 – NKJV), and when Peter came to his house and preached the Gospel to them, they were saved. The conversion of Cornelius shows very clearly that a man is not saved by good works, but by faith in the name of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, beware of all those who teach that a person can be saved through good works, for they are deceivers of mind. They lie against the truth, they oppose the truth just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses. Hold to the teaching on salvation which you were taught. Let no one deceive you with empty words. Remember these things: first, by grace we have been saved through faith, not by works, lest anyone should boast (cf. Ephesians 2:8); secondly, if a man could be saved through good works, then Christ died in vain (cf. Galatians 2:21); and thirdly, if it were not necessary for an individual to believe in Jesus in order to be saved, then there would be no need to preach the cross to men.
All people will finally be saved (Universalism)

Universalism is the teaching that God, through the atonement of Jesus, will ultimately bring reconciliation between God and all people throughout history. This reconciliation will occur regardless of whether they have trusted in or rejected Jesus as savior during their lifetime. This universal redemption will be realized in the future where God will bring all people to repentance. This repentance can happen while a person lives or after he has died and lived again in the millennium or some future state. In ancient times, some of the so called Church Fathers (Clement of Alexandria, Gregory of Nyssa, and Origen) held and taught Universalism.

The second article of the Winchester Profession (New Hampshire, 1803), which is the historic symbol of the Universalist denomination, says: ‘We believe that there is one God, whose nature is Love, revealed in one Lord Jesus Christ, by one Holy Spirit of Grace, who will finally restore the whole family of mankind to holiness and happiness’.

To support their teaching, Universalists quote some Bible passages from the Holy Scriptures which are the following ones: John 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Titus 2:11; 1 John 2:2; 1 Timothy 2:4; Ephesians 4:6; Romans 3:23-24; 5:18.

Confutation

I am going to expound briefly the above mentioned passages to show you that Universalism is a false doctrine which must be rejected.

- Jesus said: “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32 – NIV).

According to Universalists ‘all men’ means all mankind; is that true? Not at all. Let me explain to you why. On that occasion Jesus spoke of His death, or rather of the kind of death He was going to die, in that immediately after these words it is written: “He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die” (John 12:33 – NIV). Therefore Jesus spoke of His crucifixion. However, He did not mean that when He would die He would save all men, that is to say, He did not mean that even the unbelieving people would be saved by Him, because Jesus Himself said to Nicodemus: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:14-15). Therefore, in the light of these words spoken by Jesus to Nicodemus, the above mentioned words: “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself’ mean that when He would die He would draw to Himself and save all those who would believe on Him. Consequently, those who refuse to believe in Him are excluded from that ‘all men’.

- Paul says to the Corinthians: “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them” (2 Corinthians 5:19 - NIV). Now, these words seem to say at first glance that all men have been reconciled to God, and thus all men are friends of God and there are no enemies of God on earth. But I am going to show you that this is not the true meaning of those words of Paul. God, through the death of His Son on the cross, offered reconciliation to all men, but men need to be reconciled to God for the apostles preached to men the word of reconciliation saying: “Be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:20 – NIV). It is evident therefore that those people to whom the apostles preached that message were people who were enemies of God by nature or believers who had become enemies of God because they had become friends of the world. We must affirm, therefore, that only those who have repented of their sins and believed in the Gospel have been reconciled to God, as Paul wrote to the saints of Colosse: “And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreproveable in his sight” (Colossians 1:21-22). And when did this reconciliation take place? It took place when we repented of our sins and believed on the Son of God. Someone may ask then: ‘Do you mean then that when Jesus died on the cross He did not reconcile us to God?’ No, I don’t mean that, because we can say both things because Paul says to the
Romans: “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” (Romans 5:10 – NIV). However, we must keep in mind that as long as we were without Christ and dead in our sins we were enemies of God and we needed to be reconciled to God in order to live in peace with God. And that, according to Paul, not all men were reconciled to God is confirmed by the following words he wrote to the Romans about the unbelieving Jews: “As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account” (Romans 11:28 – NIV).

Let me tell you now something about the following words of Paul “not counting men’s sins against them” or “not imputing their trespasses to them” (NKJV). It is evident that they don’t mean that all men have been forgiven, otherwise why should we still preach remission of sins to all men? Why did Paul preach remission of sins to all men? Furthermore, it is evident that it is not true that God did not impute sin to all men because the Scripture says: “Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin” (Romans 4:8 - NKJV).

● Paul says: “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men” (Titus 2:11 – NASB). These words don’t mean that all men are saved or that all men will be saved by the grace of God, but they mean that the grace of God which can save all men has appeared, or that God’s grace which extends to men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation has appeared.

● John says that Jesus Christ “is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (1 John 2:2 - NKJV). These words don’t prove that all men are saved because the apostle meant simply that Jesus Christ, through His blood, has purified us who have believed in Him from all our sins and He can purify through His blood even those who have not yet believed on Him. Yes, because in order to be purified from one’s sins one must believe in Jesus. For it should be noted that Paul said to the Romans that God presented Jesus Christ “as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood” (Romans 3:25 – NIV). Consequently, the propitiation of one’s sins is dependant upon one’s faith. In other words, a man can’t be forgiven by God unless he believes in Jesus Christ. And since Paul says to the Thessalonians that “not all have faith” (2 Thessalonians 3:2 – NKJV), we conclude that not all have been forgiven.

● Paul says that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4 – NKJV). According to the Universalists, these words mean that God will save all men and nobody will perish. However, that’s not the true meaning of these words, because if it were so then all those Bible verses which affirm that not all men will be saved would be nullified. For instance, Jesus said that on that day those on His left hand “will go away into everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46 – NKJV); He said that at the end of this age “the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41-42); He said that “broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it” (Matthew 7:13 – NKJV); one day one asked Him: “Lord, are there few who are saved?” and He said: “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:24 – NKJV); and the apostle Paul said that the Lord Jesus “shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). As you can see, neither Jesus nor Paul said that all men will be saved, but they said in different ways, yet very clearly, that many will not enter into the kingdom of God but will be punished with everlasting destruction.

However, the fact still remains that God desires all men to be saved and that He will save all those who were appointed to eternal life, that is to say, all those who were predestined to believe. And what about the others? They will not inherit eternal life because God will not qualify them to believe. Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says: “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have
compassion” (Romans 9:15 – NKJV), and Paul says that “God has mercy on whom he wants to have mercy, and he hardens whom he wants to harden” (Romans 9:18 – NIV).

- Paul says to the Ephesians that there is “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6 - NIV).

These words seem to say at first glance that all men are sons of God, thus all men were begotten by God, saved and purified from their sins. However that's not the real meaning of those words. God is the Father of those who believe in Him, He is not the Father of the wicked. This is confirmed by the Scripture according to which in order to become sons of God men need to receive Christ, as it is written: “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name” (John 1:12) and also: “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26).

Someone will ask: ‘What about those who don’t believe in Jesus Christ? They are not children of God but they are children of the devil. Yes, because according to the Scripture the devil also has children, for Jesus said to those Jews who did not believe in Him and wanted to kill him: “You are of your father the devil ….,” (John 8:44 – NKJV), and John says: “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:10).

- Paul says: “Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life” (Romans 5:18).

As far as these words are concerned, I have to say something similar to what I have just said about the above mentioned words of Paul. The apostle explained that while on the one hand all have sinned and are under divine condemnation because of the sin of Adam, on the other hand everybody can benefit from the free justification that God offers to all men because justification of life came to all men. Of course, we can’t affirm that men are justified even if they don’t believe that Jesus died on the cross and rose again because the Scripture says that God justifies a man when he believes in Him, as Paul says: “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end that promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all, (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were. Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara's womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God: And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed
to him; But for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead” (Romans 4:16-24).

I conclude by saying that those who hold Universalism don’t realize that God is not only love but also a righteous judge who will not leave the wicked unpunished. If God should leave the wicked unpunished, He would be unjust and would deny Himself. Of course, we recognize that, humanly speaking, it is more pleasant to hear people speak of the love and the mercy and the compassion of God, than hear people speak about the justice of God and His vengeance and about the fact that God will condemn all unbelievers and wicked to an everlasting torment in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. However justice also is a moral attribute of God and we were called to proclaim also this moral attribute of God and by the grace of God we will proclaim it until the end, even though we know that some would like us to speak of pleasant things alone. To God be the glory now and forever. Amen.

Beware of all Universalists, they lie against the truth.

* A few Universalists even maintain that Satan and all demons will likewise be reconciled to God. This teaching also is false because the Scripture teaches that the devil, the demons, and all his angels, will be cast into the everlasting fire “prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41 – NKJV), where they will be tormented forever, as it is written: “The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:10 – NKJV).

### Men can be saved apart from the name of Jesus Christ

In an interview with *McCall’s* magazine, January 1978, entitled "I Can’t Play God Any More," evangelist Billy Graham said: "I used to believe that pagans in far-off countries were lost — were going to hell — if they did not have the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached to them. I no longer believe that. … I believe that there are other ways of recognizing the existence of God—through nature, for instance—and plenty of other opportunities, therefore, of saying ‘yes’ to God.” Though Graham later tried to stem the controversy brought about by his comments, he continued to allow for the possibility that the unsaved in other religions might not go to hell if they respond to natural light. In 1985, Los Angeles reporter David Colker asked Graham: “What about people of other faiths who live good lives but don’t profess a belief in Christ?” Graham replied, “I’m going to leave that to the Lord. He’ll decide that” (*Los Angeles Herald Examiner*, July 22, 1985). Some years later, during an interview with Robert Schuller (Source: 5/31/98 television interview with Robert Schuller, as reported in the May-June 1997, *Foundation* magazine) he confirmed that to him a man can be saved apart from the name of Christ. Here is part of that interview.

**SCHULLER:** Tell me, what do you think is the future of Christianity?
**GRAHAM:** Well, Christianity and being a true believer—you know, I think there’s the Body of Christ. This comes from all the Christian groups around the world, outside the Christian groups. I think everybody that loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they’re conscious of it or not, they’re members of the Body of Christ. And I don’t think that we’re going to see a great sweeping revival that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time. I think James answered that—the Apostle James in the first council in Jerusalem, when he said that God’s purpose for this age is to call out a people for His name. And that’s what God is doing today, He’s calling people out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they’ve been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their hearts that they need something that they don’t have, and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think that they are saved, and that they’re going to be with us in heaven.
SCHULLER: Well, what I hear you saying, that it’s possible for Jesus Christ to come into human hearts and soul and life, even if they’ve been born in darkness and have never had exposure to the Bible. Is that a correct interpretation of what you’re saying?

GRAHAM: Yes, it is, because I believe that. I’ve met people in various parts of the world in tribal situations, that they have never seen a Bible or heard about a Bible, and never heard of Jesus, but they’ve believed in their hearts that there was a God, and they’ve tried to live a life that was quite apart from the surrounding community in which they lived.

SCHULLER: [R.S. trips over his tongue for a moment, his face beaming, then says] This is fantastic! I’m so thrilled to hear you say that! There’s a wideness in God’s mercy!

GRAHAM: There is. There definitely is.

What Billy Graham stated agrees with the Roman Catholic teaching about salvation for the Roman Catholic Catechism affirms: ‘Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his Church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and, moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience - those too may achieve eternal salvation’ (para. 847)

**Confutation**

In order to be saved it is absolutely necessary to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say, to believe that He died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification. The Holy Scripture says that “the just shall live by faith” (Hebrews 10:38 - NKJV) and it says also: “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Romans 10:6-13). Therefore, how can a man call upon the name of Christ if he has not believed in Him? And how can a man believe on Jesus Christ if he has not heard of Jesus Christ? He can’t, because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (cf. Romans 10:17).

How can Billy Graham affirm then that some are members of the Body of Christ even though they don’t know the name of Jesus, when the Scripture teaches very clearly that one becomes a member of the Body of Christ only by faith in Jesus Christ? His words reveal a terrible lack of knowledge of the Holy Scripture.

Therefore, if a man has not believed in the Lord Jesus and dies he has no possibility of being saved, he will by no means enter the Kingdom of God. To affirm that such a man will be saved by God even though he did not believe in Jesus Christ, is tantamount to affirming that besides faith in Christ there is another way of salvation. Far be it from us to affirm such a thing. Jesus Christ is the way, the life, and the truth, and no one comes to God the Father except through Him (cf. John 14:6). It is only through Jesus Christ that a man can know God, therefore unless one knows Jesus Christ he cannot know God, for Jesus said: “All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him” (Matthew 11:27); unless one follows Jesus Christ he will remain in darkness and on the way which leads to destruction. Did Jesus not say that He is the light of the world and he who follows Him shall not walk in darkness but have the light of life (cf. John 8:12)? Therefore if one is not a follower of Jesus he is in darkness. It is impossible for a man to have the light of life if he doesn’t follow Jesus Christ; just as it is impossible for a man to know God if he doesn’t know Jesus Christ.
In the light of what the Scripture teaches, therefore, it is impossible for a man who is far from God, no matter where he lives, to know God without knowing Jesus; a man may even believe that God exists because His works bear witness of His eternal power and Godhead, but if he does not know Jesus Christ he does not know God. The same thing must be said about Jesus Christ: one may even believe that a man called Jesus of Nazareth lived in the land of Israel about two thousand years ago, but if he has not repented of his sins and believed in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus and in His resurrection, he does not know Jesus Christ and thus is not saved. I know many people who believe that Jesus Christ lived on the earth, but they are lost because they refuse to believe His words. Therefore, one may even believe that God exists but if he does not know and believe that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life, he can’t be saved from his sins and from eternal destruction. In other words, if he doesn’t believe the Gospel of the grace of God, he will be condemned, for Jesus said: “He who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16 – NKJV), and John wrote that “the unbelieving …. shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8 - NKJV). Therefore, let us preach the Gospel of God to all those who have not yet heard it so that they may believe in it and be saved from their sins and from eternal destruction. Only one message can save people from their sins and from everlasting destruction, and that message is the Gospel; only one faith can save people from their sins and from everlasting destruction, and that faith is the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let no one deceive you with empty words. Beware of Billy Graham and all those who teach that a man can be saved without believing in Jesus Christ, for they want to deceive you.

Those who have not heard the Gospel in this life will have the opportunity to hear it and to turn to the Lord in the afterlife

There are some Protestants who believe that those who have not heard the Gospel in this life will have the opportunity to hear it and to turn to the Lord in the afterlife. In La Religione Cristiana. Manuale d’istruzione religiosa ad uso delle Chiese Evangeliche [The Christian Religion. Manual of religious education used by the Evangelical Churches], it is written: ‘As for the possibility for the wicked to be converted during the life which follows immediately the earthly death, no one is allowed to deny it categorically, setting limits to the omnipotence and love of God; furthermore, the New Testament does not forbid us to have a generous hope with regard to this [1]. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the greater is the hardening of the heart the more difficult is the conversion’ (La Religione Cristiana. Manuale d’istruzione religiosa ad uso delle Chiese Evangeliche, Torre Pellice, Torino, 1920, page 184. Translated by myself [1] The footnote says: ‘The passage of Matthew 12/32 says that only those who consciously and wilfully reject the Gospel will be condemned; is it not lawful to infer that those who did not hear the call of the Christ during their earthly existence will hear it in another life? That’s why the forgiveness ‘in this world and in the world to come’ is mentioned’)

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that when the wicked die they go to hell, as it is written: ‘The wicked shall be turned into hell’ (Psalm 9:17 – NKJV). No matter if they have heard the Gospel or not, they are wicked in the sight of God and so they deserve to go to hell and thus they will be brought down to hell, which is a place of torment where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth and where no one can hear the Gospel. They died in their sins, and consequently they will be lost forever.
Jesus said: “He who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16 – NKJV), and John the Baptist said: “He who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36 – NKJV). Is it not clear that unbelievers – whether they have heard the Gospel or not – after death will have no opportunity to turn to the Lord?

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews wrote: “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgement” (Hebrews 9:27 – NKJV). That means that those who have died in their sins, that is, both those who heard the Gospel and rejected it and those who did not hear it, will be judged according to their works (not immediately after death but on the day of judgement), and thus, since they did not obtain remission of sins they will be condemned and cast into the lake of fire. While those who have died in the Lord will appear before the judgement seat of Christ (when Jesus returns) so that they may receive the things done in the body, according to what they have done, whether good or bad. There will be no condemnation to them because while they were on the earth they were forgiven and reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

**God has not predetermined that some will be saved and others lost**

Many Evangelical Churches affirm that God foreknew but did not foreordain the salvation of those who are saved. In other words, He foreknows those who will believe but has not foreordained their salvation, that is to say, they believe in Jesus Christ simply because they want and decide to believe, not because God, according to His own purpose, causes them to believe. God does not influence their decision at all. The same thing they say about those who reject God's salvation and go to perdition, God foreknew but did not foreordain their damnation. According to these Churches, therefore, man is totally free to choose or reject the offer of salvation through Christ; God has not predetermined that some will be saved and others lost. To use the words of Simon Episcopius (1583-1643), Dutch theologian, the systematizer of Arminianism: ‘God never decreed to elect any man to eternal life, or to reprobate him from it, by his mere will and pleasure, without any regard to his foreseen obedience or disobedience, in order to demonstrate the glory of his mercy and justice, or of his power or absolute dominion.’ God has chosen some because He knew that they would obey, while He has rejected the others because He knew that they would not obey. So according to this position the election of God is based upon God foreseeing the faith of certain individuals rather than only being in accordance with His pleasure and will. As a consequence, the salvation of individuals is ultimately the result of their choice rather than divine appointment. Among the Churches who hold this position are also most Pentecostal Churches.

**Confutatio**

Before I start refuting the above mentioned position on predestination which is held by many Churches today, I want to make it clear that I am not a Calvinist, that is to say, I do not believe nor teach that it is impossible for a person once saved to be lost (read the refutation of the doctrine called ‘once saved always saved’), nor do I believe or teach that Christ died only for some people for I firmly believe that Christ died for all men. Furthermore, I want to tell you very clearly that even though I believe in predestination I do not understand or know all things concerning this doctrine. My understanding and my knowledge are limited, however, this limitation of mine does not keep me from believing in predestination or speaking of predestination, for the Holy Scriptures contain many passages that support this doctrine. But predestination is not the only doctrine that I accept for it is in the Bible even though I do not understand it nor do I know it fully. The doctrine of the Trinity, for instance, is one of the other doctrines which I am not able to understand fully, yet I accept it for it is a sound doctrine. So the fact that we do not understand nor know fully a doctrine taught by the Scriptures, must never
keep us from believing or teaching that doctrine. If a doctrine is in the Bible, it must be accepted, even if we do not comprehend it fully. Now let me refute the above mentioned things which are taught by many Churches on predestination.

The elect, that is, the vessels of mercy prepared beforehand for glory

First of all let us talk about those who have repented of their sins and believed in the Gospel, and thus by their faith they have obtained remission of sins, that is to say, let us talk about God’s elect. After they served sin for a certain period of time, the day came when they heard (for the first time or for the umpteenth time as in my case) about Jesus Christ and His sacrifice and they repented of their sins and believed in Him, and by faith they obtained the forgiveness of their sins and became members of God’s family, that is to say, they obtained the salvation foretold by the prophets and announced to us by Jesus Christ in the fullness of the time. Now let us ask ourselves this question, ‘Was their decision a decision in which God did not interfere at all? That is to say, was their decision only foreknown by God but not determined before the foundation of the world, as some affirm?’ Let me put this question in this way, ‘Did God know that they would believe, for He is omniscient, without determining that they would believe, or besides knowing that they would believe He had determined that they would believe, and thus He worked in an irresistible way so that at His appointed time those men were ‘forced’ to take that decision, without knowing what He had purposed in Himself for them?’ Here is how the Scripture answers this question: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” (Romans 8:28-30). Therefore all those who have been justified by God were foreknown by God. However, as you can clearly see, Paul does not interpret the foreknowledge of God as a passive foreknowledge according to which God knew that they would believe but He remained inactive both before and when they believed, for Paul says that whom God foreknew before the foundation of the world, He also predestined to be justified. Therefore the foreknowledge of God toward the elect involved a definite work of God. In other words, those who have obtained the righteousness which is through faith were appointed by God before the foundation of the world to obtain it. That’s why we speak of predestination; for believers were appointed before the foundation of the world to obtain this righteousness which is based on faith and not on the works of the law. That means that they have believed and have been justified solely because of a decree hidden in God, which He accomplished in an irresistible way at His appointed time. The apostle Paul confirms the predestination toward the saints also in his epistle to the Ephesians, when he says that God chose us in Christ “before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Ephesians 1:4-5 – NKJV), and also when he says that in Christ “also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will” (Ephesians 1:11 – NKJV). The apostle Peter also confirms the predestination of the saints when he says to the elect: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:2 – NKJV). However, let us continue to talk about the predestination concerning the elect, and we will do it by quoting some other clear biblical passages.

John tells us that Jesus said to the Father about His disciples the following words: “They were Yours, You gave them to Me ...” (John 17:6 – NKJV). What does that mean? That means that God had set them apart before the foundation of the world and then in the fullness of the time He gave them to Christ Jesus. Therefore they had been predestined to believe in Jesus.
came to Jesus for they had been predestined to be given to Jesus. That’s why Jesus said to them: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you . . . .” (John 15:16 – NKJV).

Luke says that the believers of Antioch in Pisidia believed for they had been appointed by God to eternal life, for he says that “as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48 – NKJV). Therefore they also had been predestined by God to believe.

The apostle Paul says to the Galatians: “But when God, who set me apart from birth and called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son in me so that I might preach him among the Gentiles . . . .” (Galatians 1:15-16 – NIV). Note that Paul had been set apart for the Gospel from his mother’s womb and that the day came when God was pleased to reveal His Son in him. Therefore he also was predestined by God to believe in His Son. That is confirmed also by the following words which Ananias said to Paul three days after God revealed His Son in Paul: “The God of our fathers has chosen you that you should know His will, and see the Just One and hear the voice of His mouth” (Acts 22:14 – NKJV – The NASB reads: “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will . . . .”).

Paul says to the Thessalonians: “But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth” (2 Thessalonians 2:13 – NIV). Therefore the saints of Thessalonica also believed in Christ because from the beginning they had been appointed by God to believe.

From all the above mentioned biblical passages we learn that salvation does depend on God’s will, and not on man’s will (even though God uses the will of man to accomplish what He purposed in Himself). The apostle Paul expressed this concept in this way: “It does not, therefore, depend on man’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy” (Romans 9:16 – NIV. The NKJV reads: “So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy”). And Jesus proclaimed the same concept in another way, that is, by saying to the Jews: “No one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father . . . All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:65,37 – NKJV), and again: “. . . no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him” (Matthew 11:27 – NIV). Is God unrighteous because, acting in this way, He shows that He has decided to save some and not to save others? Certainly not, for God said to Moses: “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion” (Romans 9:15 – NIV). Who dares to talk back to God? The apostle Paul cites the example of Jacob and Esau in order to explain the fact that God determined to have mercy on some before they were born, and not to have mercy on the others, saying that “before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad – in order that God’s purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls – Rebecca their mother was told: ‘The older will serve the younger.’ Just as it is written: Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated” (Romans 9:11-13 – NIV). Note that God had decided to have mercy on Jacob and to reject Esau even before they were born, and thus even before they had done anything good or bad. Therefore it was not because of their works which they did after they were born, nor because God saw that Jacob deserved one thing while Esau deserved another thing, nor because Jacob wanted to have the birthright of Esau and Esau sold it to Jacob, that Jacob was chosen while Esau was rejected, but because of God’s set purpose (that is, because of the sovereign good pleasure of His will) that He revealed to Rebecca before the twins were born, and that afterward He accomplished in the way we all know. I realize that it is hard to accept all this, yet it is the truth and we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:8). Therefore we are bound to thank God always for He from the beginning chose us for salvation through belief in the truth. This was His good pleasure: to Him be the glory in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The reprobate, that is, the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction

Let us speak now of the reprobate. Can we affirm that God did not appoint anyone to destruction, and that anyone who goes to perdition goes there solely by his will? In other words,
can we affirm that God knows who will go to perdition but He does not do anything so that they may go to perdition? In the light of what the Holy Scripture teaches, we must answer, ‘No.’ Let me explain to you why.

Paul, when he talks about the fall of Israel, in order to show from the Scriptures that the fact that the Israelites have stumbled (that is, the fact that most of them have refused to believe in Jesus Christ) does not mean that the Word of God has failed for that is part of the purpose of God, begins to say that not all who are descended from Israel are Israel, nor all the descendants of Abraham are children of Abraham, for the child of the promise was Isaac and not Ishmael. Therefore it was Isaac and not Ishmael who was the heir according to the promise. In other words, even though Isaac and Ishmael were both descendants of Abraham the patriarch and were born by God’s will, God had predestined Isaac to be the heir according to the promise, thus He excluded Ishmael. Then the apostle Paul cites the example of Esau and Jacob, saying: “And not only this, but when Rebecca also had conceived by one man, even by our father Isaac (for the children not yet being born, nor having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls), it was said to her, ‘The older shall serve the younger.’ As it is written, Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated” (Romans 9:10-13 – NKJV). From the words of Paul we learn that both Jacob and Esau were appointed to play a definite role even before they were born, and therefore even before they had done any good or evil. Therefore what God promised He would do to Esau did not depend on the foreseen works of Esau (or, to use an arminian expression, ‘on the foreseen disobedience of Esau’), but on His will: Esau would serve Jacob for so God had decreed (or for so it seemed good in His sight). Was God unfair to Esau? No, not at all, for Paul immediately after says: “What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? Certainly not! For He says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion.’ So then it is not of him who wills, nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy. For the Scripture says to the Pharaoh, ‘For this very purpose I have raised you up, that I may show My power in you, and that My name may be declared in all the earth.’ Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens” (Romans 9:14-18 – NKJV). Therefore God cannot be charged with unfairness to Esau, for He said that He will have mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and will harden whom He wants to harden, and nobody will be able to prevent Him from accomplishing His purpose. As Pharaoh was hardenened by God for so God had decreed, so many Israelites have been hardened by God for so God had decreed so that His counsel might stand. Therefore as Esau was predestined to serve Jacob, and Pharaoh was predestined to be hardened to the glory of God, so most of the Israelites have been hardened by God according to a definite decree of God lest they should believe and obtain remission of sins. The apostle Paul confirms this a little further, when he says that “the rest were blinded. Just as it is written: ‘God has given them a spirit of stupor, eyes that they should not see and ears that they should not hear, to this very day’ (Romans 11:7-8 – NKJV). The apostles John and Peter also confirm this. For John says; “Therefore they could not believe, because Isaiah said again: ‘He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them’” (John 12:39-40 – NKJV), and he says also that Jesus said to the Jews who refused to believe that He was the Messiah: “...But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep” (John 10:26 – NKJV), which means that those Jews could not believe because they were not among those sheep God had foreordained to give to Jesus, but they were among those who had been hardened by God that they should not believe. As for Peter, he confirms that those who have stumbled, that is, the unbelievers, were appointed by God to this, when he says: “They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed” (1 Peter 2:8 – NKJV). Note this expression “to which they also were appointed,” which makes it clear that their stumbling had been foreseen and foreordained by God.

Paul, after he has explained why only a part of the Israelites have obtained mercy, says: “You will say to me then, ‘Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?’ But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, ‘Why
have you made me like this?’ Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (Romans 9:19-24 – NKJV). Now Paul says that God is like the potter who has power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor; which means that He has the power to predestine some to eternal salvation and the others to eternal perdition, for Paul says that there are the vessels of mercy prepared beforehand for glory, and the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. Therefore God, according to His purpose, has predestined a part of men to perdition. We know that they are around us in this world, but we do not know who they are, therefore we can’t judge sinners saying that Tom or Dick were predestined to perdition. For among those who still refuse to believe there are some vessels of mercy prepared for glory, whom God will save later on and perhaps without us knowing it. Therefore we need to be prudent, refraining from judging our neighbour. Only in that day shall we know who are all those God has appointed to perdition. However we already know who some of the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction are. Among them are that rich man who died and went to hell (cf. Luke 16:19:31), and Judas Iscariot. As for Judas, the Scripture says that he was one of the apostles of the Lord, he received power to heal and to cast out demons, he healed the sick and cast out demons; however after he conferred with the chief priests and captains how he might betray Jesus to them, Jesus said to the Father: “None of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12 – NKJV). Note that Jesus spoke those words before Judas came with a great multitude with swords and clubs, and thus before Judas hanged himself, which indicates that Judas had to go to perdition for to this he had been appointed. In other words, Judas had to go to perdition that the Scripture might be fulfilled. How many times do we find in the Bible the following expression ‘that the Scripture might be fulfilled’ or some other expressions like that? Many times. For instance I remember you that the virgin birth of the Messiah, the fact that Joseph fled to Egypt with Mary and the young child Jesus, the killing of the male children (from two years old and under) who were in Bethlehem and in all its districts, the miracles of Jesus, His sufferings, His resurrection and His ascension, took place so that the Scriptures might be fulfilled; what does that mean? It means that those specific events had been foretold by God beforehand and they took place for God caused them to happen. Therefore Judas betrayed the Lord Jesus because God had predetermined that Judas would betray Jesus, and he went to perdition (he is called the son of perdition like the antichrist who is coming) for God had predetermined that he would go to perdition. Besides the above mentioned vessels of wrath, who lived on earth in the past, there are some other vessels of wrath who are still to be born: among them are the beast, the false prophet and those who will worship the beast. For the Scripture says about the beast and the false prophet: “These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone” (Revelation 19:20 – NKJV) — therefore both of them are to come and go to perdition. As for the beast that will ascend out of the bottomless pit, the Scripture says that he “will ... go to perdition” (Revelation 17:8 – NKJV). Therefore we can affirm that they also are among the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction. Who can deny what I have just said? Who can affirm that these two men will be cast into the lake of fire because they chose to be cast into it, and not because God, before their birth, determined that they would go to perdition? Let us speak now of those who will worship the beast: who are they? John says: “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain” (Revelation 13:8 – NASB), and since it is written also that “if anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the
beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9-11 – NKJV),
that means that all these people are among the vessels of wrath which were prepared for eternal
destruction before the foundation of the world. For their names have not been written in the book
of life from the foundation of the world. In other words, they are not among those whose names
have been written in that book of life since the foundation of the world, they are not among those
who were appointed to be delivered from the wrath of God.

The heart of man is in the hand of God

Someone may conclude that I do not believe that man has a will, however I have not said that
man has not a will. Man has a will, there is no doubt about that. However, the point is another,
that is, the will of man, without him knowing it, is moulded by God and turned wherever He
wishes, and God fulfils His purpose toward him when and how He wishes. We can’t fully
understand how God does these things, yet we know that He does them. Brothers, let me ask
you this, have you never read, “The king’s heart is in the hand of the Lord, like the rivers of
water; He turns it wherever He wishes” (Proverbs 21:1 – NKJV)? Have you never read, “The
deceived and the deceiver depend on Him” (Job 12:16 – Italian Bible, Riveduta Version)? Have
you never read, “A man’s steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his
own way?” (Proverbs 20:24 – NIV)? Have you never read, “A man’s heart plans his way, but the
Lord directs his steps” (Proverbs 16:9 – NKJV)? Have you never read, “The way of man is not in
himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23 – NKJV)? Have you
never read that God opened the heart of Lydia to heed the things spoken by Paul (cf. Acts
16:14)? Have you never read that God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, so that he
might make a proclamation in favour of the Israelites who dwelt in his empire in order to let them
return to their land to build the temple of God, so that it might be fulfilled what the prophet
Jeremiah had said (cf. Ezra 1:1-4)? Have you never read that God, in order to send Joseph son
of Jacob to Egypt and to appoint him over Egypt, turned the heart of his brothers to hate him and
to sell him as a slave to a company of Ishmaelites who were on the way to Egypt (cf. Genesis
37:1-28; 45:4-8)? Have you never read that God, in order to fulfil His purpose, turned the heart
of the Egyptians to hate the Israelites, to deal craftily with His servants (cf. Psalm 105:25)? Have
you never read how God caused Saul to go to the prophet Samuel, without Saul knowing that
the day before God had said to Samuel that He would send him to Samuel, that is to say, how
God caused the donkeys of Kish, Saul’s father, to be lost, and how He prevented Saul and his
servant from finding the donkeys of Kish, so that Saul and his servant might go to Samuel to ask
him to show them the way they should go (cf. 1 Samuel 9:1-27)? Have you never read how king
Rohoboam followed the bad advice of the young men rather than the good advice which the
elders had given him, so that the words of the prophet Ahijah might be fulfilled (cf. 1 Kings 12:1-
24)? Have you never read that God, through Ahaziah’s visit to Joram, brought about Ahaziah’s
downfall, for when he arrived, he went out with Jehoram against Jehu, whom the Lord had
anointed to destroy the house of Ahab (cf. 2 Chronicles 22:3-8)? And finally, have you never
read that God will put it into the heart of the beast and of the ten kings to fulfill His purpose, to be
of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled (cf.
Revelation 17:17-18)?
If then God is able to make a man do what He wishes, to make a man go wherever He wishes,
and to make a man accept what He wishes, why should we be surprised or offended if God has
decided, without them knowing it, to open the heart of some men so that they may believe and
obtain mercy, and to harden the heart of some others lest they should believe and obtain
mercy? Why should we be surprised or offended at this way of acting on the part of God, when
Jesus praised God for He has hidden the mysteries of the kingdom of God from the wise and
learned and has revealed them to little children, for that was His good pleasure (cf. Matthew
11:25-26)? And He said to His disciples that it had been given to them to know the mysteries of
the kingdom of heaven, but to the others it had not been given, so He spoke to the people in
parables, so that hearing they might hear and not understand, lest they should turn, and their sins be forgiven them (cf. Matthew 13:10-15)?

Replies to some of the objections raised against predestination

1) **This doctrine makes the preaching of the Gospel useless. For the elect do not need to hear the Gospel since they will be saved whether they hear the Gospel or not, while the reprobates will be condemned whether they hear the Gospel or not.**

That’s not true, because the ministers of the Gospel are called to keep the commandment of the Lord: “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature ….” (Mark 16:15 – NKJV), without wondering who they are who were appointed to obtain salvation or who they are who will go to perdition. In other words, they must preach the Gospel to all people, even though they know that only a small part of those who hear the Gospel will be saved. The apostle Paul, for instance, even though he knew that not all would accept the Gospel he preached, for many of them – both Jews and Gentiles – would be hardened by God, preached the Gospel every time he had an opportunity to preach it, and it was so devoted to the preaching of the Gospel that he said: “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Corinthians 9:16 – NIV). And not only did he preach the Gospel, but he also prayed for the Jews (as well as for the Gentiles) so that God might save them, as it is written: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved” (Romans 10:1 – NKJV). Even so we should proclaim the Gospel to as many people as possible, and desire to see them reconciled to God, and we should pray to Him that He may save them, even though we know that many of those to whom we speak of the Lord were predestined to go to perdition. What will be the use of our preaching and of our prayer then? They will be useful to the elect for they will work together for their salvation God will give them in His own time. As for the reprobate, our preaching will be useful for in that day they will be judged by the word we have preached to them. Remember that we are called to work with God. The example given by Jesus is even better, for even though He “knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe” (John 6:64 – NKJV), He did not shun to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to all, for He travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the Word of God; He preached in the market places, in the streets, by the sea, in the synagogues and in the temple. He knew that most of the Jews could not believe in Him because Isaiah had said: “He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, lest they should see with their eyes, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them” (John 12:40 – NKJV), yet He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom to them too. In addition to this, when He was near Jerusalem He wept over it, for they were not willing to believe on Him.

2) **This doctrine does not encourage believers to pursue holiness, for they know that they were appointed to be saved.**

That’s not true for the following reasons.

First, because Paul says that we were chosen before the foundation of the world “that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4 – NKJV). Therefore we were chosen in Christ so that we might pursue holiness for we were called by God to live a holy life. So those who know that God has chosen them will make every effort to please God in all their conduct in order to honor Him through their life, who from the beginning chose them for salvation. They know that they have been saved by God’s decree, and therefore by His grace without any merit, but they know also that they must work out their own salvation with fear and trembling so that God might work in them both to will and to do, and thus they might be able to do good works, which God prepared beforehand that the saints should walk in them, and for which on that day they will receive a reward. In other words, the elect know that there is a reward which is awaiting them, and that the more they pursue holiness the greater their reward will be. We really do not understand, therefore, why a believer who accepts the doctrine of predestination should be discouraged from living a holy life.

Second, because the Scripture does not exclude the possibility for a believer to lose salvation. With regard to this, the Scripture is clear: “For it is impossible for those who were once
enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned .... For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.” (Hebrews 6:4-8; 10:26-31). The apostle Paul believed in predestination, yet he said to us: “If you live according to the flesh you will die” (Romans 8:13 – NKJV), and again: “If we deny Him, He also will deny us” (2 Timothy 2:12 – NKJV). Why did he say that? Because he taught the perseverance of the saints, that is to say, he taught that a believer must endure to the end in order to be saved. Therefore, if on the one hand we know that we were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and now we are one with Him in spirit, and this fills us with a great joy and consolation, on the other hand we know that “we have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first” (Hebrews 3:14 – NIV), and that without holiness no one will see the Lord (cf. Hebrews 12:14). That’s why we perfect holiness in the fear of God and we exhort the others to do the same.

3) This doctrine leads people to believe that God is unjust, for He lets those whom He appointed to eternal condemnation go to perdition.

Our God is a God who does whatever He pleases. He Himself said to Moses: “I will have mercy on whomever I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whomever I will have compassion” (Romans 9:15; Exodus 33:19). And Paul says that “He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens” (Romans 9:18 – NKJV). God does not have to give an accounting of any of His actions to anyone. The apostle Paul, after citing the example of Esau and Jacob according to which Jacob was chosen while Esau was rejected before they were born, asked this question: “Is there unrighteousness with God?” (Romans 9:14 – NKJV) Why did Paul ask that question? For he realized that in saying those things the reader might have come to the conclusion that God is unjust. But how did Paul answer that question? In this way: “Certainly not!” (Romans 9:14 – NKJV). However, it seems to me that some believers do not pay attention to his words.

So, let me tell you once again, God is free to do what He wishes with His own things, that is to say, He is free to give something to whom He wills and to refuse to give something to whom He wills, and we are called to submit ourselves to the will of God and not to reply against our Maker. “What if God has decided to make out of the same lump of clay some vessels for dishonor? Does not the Potter have this power over the clay? What kind of unrighteousness does God commit in letting some people go to perdition, who are under condemnation for the sin of which they are slaves? Does God have to give anything back to man, thus He is bound to have mercy on all and He can’t have mercy on some people only?’ The Scripture says: “Who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?” (Romans 11:35 – NKJV). Let the disputer know this, that God is just and He overcomes when He is judged.

4) This doctrine excuses sinners, for they go to perdition because of God’s will and not because of their choice. And thus implicitly God is to be blamed for on that day He will judge and condemn them unjustly.

That’s untrue, because sinners, even though they are hardened by God, are still responsible for their actions and their decisions. For instance, Pharaoh was hardened by God, yet he was guilty
before God. That’s why God put him and his army to death by drowning them in the Red Sea. Another example is that of Judas Iscariot, who is called the son of perdition; he betrayed the Lord for so God had decreed, that is to say, so that the words which had been spoken by the Holy Spirit about him might be fulfilled, yet in the sight of God he was guilty of betraying the Lord. Jesus knew that Judas would betray Him by the determined purpose of God, yet He did not justify Judas at all for He said: “Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26:24 – NKJV). The same thing must be said about the beast and the kings who will make war against the Lamb on that day; the Scripture says that God “has put it into their hearts to fulfill His purpose, to be of one mind, and to give their kingdom to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled” (Revelation 17:17 – NKJV), but it says also that the beast will be cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone and God will give the dead bodies of the kings and of their armies as food for the birds of the heavens (cf. Revelation 19:20-21). Therefore, sinners, even though they are hardened by God for they were prepared for destruction, still deserve to be punished; nothing can excuse them. How great is the power and the wisdom of God: He manages to harden sinners and to send them to perdition without committing any injustice toward them and without giving them any chance of excusing themselves for their behaviour. “All iniquity stops its mouth” (Psalm 107:42 – NKJV), says the Scripture.

5) The doctrine of predestination is biblical, but it must be interpreted in this way: God by His foreknowledge foresaw both the fate of the elect who would believe on Him and the fate of the wicked who would refuse to believe in Him, but He did not predetermine their fate. Such interpretation is untrue. For we have showed that God’s foreknowledge entails foreordination and thus a work of God so that what He foresaw and foreordained might take place. Let me ask you this: ‘What would be the point of affirming that God foresaw beforehand that the elect would believe but He did not work in them in order to cause them to believe? What would be the point of affirming that God foresaw that many people would not believe but He did not work in them in order to prevent them from believing? Don’t you think that to affirm this would be tantamount affirming that God has foreseen that tomorrow the sky will be clear over our nation but He will not do anything to prevent the clouds from coming over our nation? Or that God has foreseen that tomorrow it will rain over our nation but He will not send the clouds which will water the earth? Is it not God who has in His hand the clouds? Is it not at His direction that the clouds swirl around over the face of the earth to do whatever He commands them? Therefore if God foresees that tomorrow over our nation the sky will be clear, He will certainly prevent the clouds from coming over our nation; and if he foresees that tomorrow it will rain He will certainly send the clouds so that they may water our nation. Brothers, how can you say that God foresaw but He did not predetermine the fate of men, when Jesus stated that not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from our Father’s will, and that even the very hairs of our head are all numbered (cf. Matthew 10:29-30)? In other words, if it is by God’s will that even a little sparrow falls to the ground, how can you affirm that one has believed or refused to believe apart from the will of God (or God’s set purpose)? Don’t you think that what you say cannot be true? I could cite many more examples to show that the foreknowledge of God involves a work of God, for our God is not a lazy and inactive God who is seated on His throne watching the events He has foreseen and foretold without doing anything so that they may take place. Let me cite only two more examples. Would it not be like saying that God foresaw that the Jews would kill Jesus but He did not cause them (obviously, God was blameless) to commit that murder? That is to say, would it not be like saying that God foresaw that the Jews would kill Jesus, but that criminal plot did not take place by God’s set purpose? However, as you know (I suppose you know), things are not so for in the book of the Acts of the apostles it is written that Peter said to the Jews: “This man was handed over to you by God’s set purpose and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross” (Acts 2:23 – NIV), and on one occasion the disciples said to God during a prayer: “Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand
should happen” (Acts 4:27-28 – NIV. The NKJV reads: “For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done”). In the first epistle of Peter it is written that Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God without spot and without blemish “was foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20 – NKJV) to suffer for our sins.

And what will you say about Jeremiah? Will you say that God foresaw that he would be a prophet but He did not predetermine him to be a prophet to the nations? Have you not read that one day God said to Jeremiah when he was still a child: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations ….” (Jeremiah 1:5 – NIV), and on that very day He appointed him as a prophet to the nations saying: “See, today, I appoint you over nations ....” (Jeremiah 1:10 – NIV)? Therefore, the foreknowledge of God was followed by an act of God through which He accomplished what He had purposed for Jeremiah, before he knew that he had been predestined by God to be a prophet. Is it not enough clear that the foreknowledge of God concerning an event involves a decision He took before the beginning of time according to which decision that event must take place at God’s appointed time? Why don’t you realize, then, that as all the harm that the Jews and the Gentiles did to Jesus had been foreseen and predetermined by God, and as Jeremiah became a prophet for so God had foreseen and predetermined, so also those who have believed were appointed by God to believe, while those who have refused to believe were appointed by God to reject the Gospel?

Why the doctrine of predestination must be taught

I conclude by saying some of the reasons why the doctrine of predestination must be taught. First reason, because in the Scripture there are many passages and many stories which one way or another support the doctrine of predestination. Second reason, because it exalts the sovereignty of God and His omnipotence, for it leads people to realize that God does whatever He pleases and He does not have to give an accounting of any of His actions to anyone. Third reason, because it clearly confirms the doctrine of salvation by grace, that is, it makes believers realize that they have been saved solely by the grace of God. For it pleased God to give them His grace before the beginning of time, and therefore they have to say together with Paul that He “has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began ....” (2 Timothy 1:9 – NKJV). So, as things are, any personal merit or man's cooperation is excluded. And at this point I want to say this: some believers speak of their act of faith as if it were a meritorious act they did because of which they deserved to be saved, but they forget that they were able to believe only because God gave them the faith through which they received the grace God had appointed for them: faith is not of ourselves but is the gift of God, thus we have nothing to boast about in the presence of God. I want to ask these believers the same questions Paul asked the Corinthians: “For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7 – NKJV) Not only faith but also repentance is something which is received from God, for it is written that “God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (Acts 11:18 – NKJV), as well as the understanding of the Word of God, for it is written: “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true” (1 John 5:20 – NIV). What shall we say then? Well, we shall say: ‘O Lord, we thank You for having mercy on us; keep working in us so that Your Holy Name may be glorified in us. Your name is worthy of praise, yes, it is worthy of praise forever. Amen.’ Fourth reason, the doctrine of predestination comforts every believer during his pilgrimage in the midst of this valley of tears, that is, the world in which we live, and it establishes him powerful in the faith in the midst of his various trials he must endure for the Lord’s sake. A believer even
during the worst moments of his life, knowing that God chose him before the foundation of the world, will feel relieved and comforted greatly, because he will know that He who did not forsake him when he was still lost, will not forsake him now either, because he belongs to the Lord forever. So, after saying together with Paul: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified.” (Romans 8:28-30), we can say: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:31-39)

A believer in Jesus Christ can’t fall away from the state of grace (‘once saved always saved’)

Baptist Churches, Presbyterian Churches, Reformed Churches, and many other Protestant Churches teach that a true believer can by no means fall away from grace, that is to say, he can by no means lose his salvation and go to perdition.

The Southern Baptist Convention. The fifth article of the Confession of faith of the Southern Baptist Convention says: ‘.... All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation'

Presbyterian and Reformed Churches. The seventeenth chapter of the Westminster Confession of Faith says: ‘I. They, whom God has accepted in His Beloved, effectually called, and sanctified by His Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere therein to the end, and be eternally saved. II. This perseverance of the saints depends not upon their own free will, but upon the immutability of the decree of election, flowing from the free and unchangeable love of God the Father; upon the efficacy of the merit and intercession of Jesus Christ, the abiding of the Spirit, and of the seed of God within them, and the nature of the covenant of grace: from all which arises also the certainty and infallibility thereof. III. Nevertheless, they may, through the temptations of Satan and of the world, the prevalency of corruption remaining in them, and the neglect of the means of their preservation, fall into grievous sins; and, for a time, continue therein: whereby they incur God’s displeasure, and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded; hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves’.

As far as this point is concerned, the above mentioned Confessions of Faith are substantially based on the teaching of John Calvin, the well-known reformer, who said: …. but not one of
those whom Christ has once ingrafted into his body will he ever permit to perish, for in securing their salvation, he will perform what he has promised; that is, exert a divine power greater than all’ (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Third book, chapter XXII, 7) and: ‘Moreover, it cannot be doubted, that since Christ prays for all the elect, he asks the same thing for them as he asked for Peter, viz., that their faith fail not, (Luke 22: 32.) Hence we infer, that there is no danger of their falling away, since the Son of God, who asks that their piety may prove constant, never meets with a refusal. What then did our Savior intend to teach us by this prayer, but just to confide, that whenever we are his our eternal salvation is secure?’ (Ibid., Third book, chapter XXIV, 6).

Those who hold this belief quote several passages of the Scripture to support it. Here are some of these passages: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand” (John 10:27-29); “All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:37-40); “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39); “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6); “For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Romans 8:29-30)

**Confutation**

Now, all the above mentioned Bible verses are true and I firmly believe in them. However, there are other Bible verses that make it clear that we who have been saved will be saved if we hold the faith in Christ steadfast to the end, and some others which admit that a believer can draw back to perdition. Therefore those who teach ‘once saved always saved’ are wrong, for by so doing they deny what the Scripture admits, that is to say, they deny the fact that if, and I repeat myself, ‘if’, a believer draws back he will go to perdition, and thus they deny that throughout the history of the Church some believing men and women have denied the Lord and gone to perdition. By teaching such a doctrine they deceive believers for they make them believe that after all no matter what sin they may commit they will eventually be saved, because no matter how serious their sins might be the Lord will cause them to return to Him, that is to say, the Lord will give them repentance. Such a thing is not true for the following reasons; first of all, because the Scripture does not teach that one who wanders from the faith and truth will certainly be granted repentance so that he may know the truth; secondly, because there is a sin which leads to death. How do these believers explain those cases of believers who have denied the Lord then? In this way: they affirm that those people had not really believed and thus they were unbelieving people even though for a certain period of time they professed to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And how do they interpret those verses which admit that a believer can deny the Lord and go to perdition? In this way: they say that those passages suppose a certain thing for the sake of discussion, therefore those passages can’t refer to something which can really happen.

Now, I will confute this heresy by speaking of the sin which leads to death; and by expounding all those Scriptures which affirm in various ways that we will be saved if we stand firm in the faith.
till the end and that if we draw back the Lord will deny us. And at the end of my confutation I will reply to the main objections raised by those who hold this false doctrine.

The sin unto death, of which it is impossible to repent

The apostle John wrote: “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death” (1 John 5:16-17).

Brethren, all wrongdoing is sin and we know that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4), as John says. Now, the Scripture says that “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), therefore, if a son of God commits a sin the transgression of the law will repay him with death, that’s why if a believer sins, after he has sinned, he feels disturbed and unhappy and feels a pain that pierces him like an arrow inside him, because the wages of sin is death. But the apostle wrote: “If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death” (1 John 5:16), which means that if we see a brother commit a sin which does not lead to death, we must pray God so that he might be made alive; yes, because God gives life to those who commit a sin that does not lead to death and repent of it, confessing and forsaking it. However, there is a sin of which a believer cannot repent, because it is impossible for those who commit this sin to be brought back to repentance and thus it is useless to pray for them, as it is written: “I do not say that he shall pray for it” (1 John 5:17). In other words, for those brothers who have committed this sin leading to death there is no possibility that they may repent and receive life from God. What is the destiny awaiting these people? They will be condemned to the second death (that is, the lake which burns with fire and brimstone), because this kind of sin leads those who commit it to the second death.

What is the sin unto death? It consists in forsaking the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ on the part of a mature believer, that is to say, in denying the Lord. I say this on the basis of what is written in the epistle to the Hebrews. For it is written: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Hebrews 6:4-8).

As you can see, the Scripture says about these people who may fall away (and if they fall away it is impossible for them to be brought back to repentance) that they were once enlightened, they have tasted the heavenly gift, they have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, they have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come. There is no doubt that the author of this epistle is speaking of Christians, of true Christians regenerated by the Word of God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, that is, of children of God.

Brethren, those who, after they hear the Gospel of grace, approach God recognizing that they are sinners and need to be saved have been enlightened by God who is light; and when they believe with their heart in our Lord Jesus Christ obtaining the remission of their sins and eternal life they taste the heavenly gift, which is Jesus Christ, for Paul says: “The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23) and John says about the Son of God: “This is the true God, and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). Afterward, when they are baptized with the Holy Spirit they become partakers of the Holy Spirit because they are filled with the Holy Spirit (however, this does not mean that they did not have the Holy Spirit before, for every man receives a measure of the Spirit when he believes in the Lord).

The words “they have tasted the good word of God” mean that they have fed on “the pure milk of the word” (1 Peter 2:2 – NKJV) as well as solid food, which “belongs to those who are of full age,
that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14 – NKJV). The words “they have tasted the powers of the world to come” means that they have received some gifts of the Holy Spirit through which believers taste the powers of the world to come. Now, if these persons, who have experienced all these things, reject the Lord and draw back (they are again entangled in the pollutions of the world and overcome), deciding not to follow the Lord any longer and to renounce the Christ (they even don’t want to hear people speaking about Christ any longer), they commit the sin unto death, and we don’t have to pray for them because it is impossible to renew them again to repentance because they crucify again for themselves the Son of God and put Him to an open shame. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says that the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God, but if it bears thorns and briers, it is rejected and cursed and its end is to be burned; in the same way, if a believer abides in the Lord, the Lord abides in him, he bears much fruit to the glory of God and God blesses him; but if he ceases to abide in the Lord, the Lord will cease to abide in him and he will bear only thorns and briers, and thus he will become a man disapproved concerning the faith, an accursed child, who will be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone where he will burn and be tormented forever.

Why did the author of this epistle admonish so severely those believing Jews? Because they were enduring a great persecution because of their faith in Jesus Christ and they were tempted, in the midst of that persecution, to draw back; and so the writer of the epistle, knowing the sufferings they had to endure for the Gospel’s sake, exhorted them to hold their confidence in Christ steadfast to the end and warned them against drawing back and renouncing the grace to offer again those sin offerings whose blood could not take away sins, because if they drew back they would condemn themselves to the everlasting perdition, they would deserve such a punishment because in so doing they would trample the Son of God underfoot and count the blood of the covenant by which they had been sanctified a common thing and they would insult the Spirit of grace. Here is what the writer of that epistle wrote about the end awaiting those who draw back and about the punishment they deserve to receive from the living God: “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:26-31).

These words are addressed to all of us who have believed as well, because the writer himself, who was a believer, included himself among those who could draw back to perdition saying: “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth ...” (Hebrews 10:26) – we who are children of God have received the knowledge of the truth -, and because we are those people who were sanctified by the blood of the covenant (that is, the blood of Jesus Christ). Therefore, brethren, if those who have known the truth which is in Christ Jesus sin wilfully, that is, sin unto death, they commit a sin that will never be forgiven them (because it is a sin that will pay the transgressors back with the everlasting death) and they will go to perdition because they will lose the good hope (the hope of salvation) they have; only a fearful expectation of judgement and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God is left. They will deserve to be punished much more severely than those who broke the law of Moses and were put to death, because they have trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of Christ with which they were sprinkled a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace, that is, the Holy Spirit, who dwells in our hearts and by whom we cry out: “Abba, Father!” (with regard to this last thing, remember that Jesus said: “But he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation” [Mark 3:29 - NKJV]).
At this point I want to make it clear that both the expression ‘if they shall fall away’ (Hebrews 6:6) and the expression ‘if we sin wilfully’ (Hebrews 10:26) refer to the sin which leads to death and not to any sin, otherwise that would mean that it would be impossible for a believer to repent of any sin he has committed and he would be hopeless for he will surely be condemned to the everlasting fire. And that’s not true at all because the Scripture teaches in various ways that with the Lord is abundant redemption because if we sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous who is the propitiation for our sins (cf. 1 John 2:1-2). That’s why John says: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9 – NKJV).

Sins of which it is possible to repent

Now, I am going to show you from the Scriptures that not all the sins which a believer may commit are unto death, for he can repent of every sin which is not unto death and be forgiven. I find it necessary to write these things because I want you to understand very well the difference which exists between a sin which is not unto death and the sin which leads to death, with regard to the possibility of repentance and forgiveness.

- Paul wrote to the Galatians: “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). It is evident, therefore, that since a believer who commits ‘a fault’ can be restored, for him it is still possible to repent and be forgiven by the Lord. However, it is also evident that from these faults which a believer may commit is excluded the sin unto death because it is impossible for those who commit this particular sin to be restored, in that it is impossible for them to be brought back to repentance. In other words it is impossible for them to rise again from such a fall. Therefore when we read in the book of Proverbs: “A righteous man may fall seven times and rise again” (Proverbs 24:16 – NKJV), among the falls is not the fall which is the sin unto death, because a righteous man can’t rise again from such a fall.

- Jesus said: “Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4). Therefore, a brother who commits a sin which is not unto death can repent and be forgiven. Would Jesus have told us to rebuke someone for a sin of which he can’t repent? Certainly not. It is evident therefore that in this case also, the fact that a believer can repent and be forgiven shows that not all sins are unto death and that among the sins a brother may commit and for which we must rebuke him hoping that he will repent and ask for our pardon, is not the sin which leads to death because for those who have committed the sin unto death it is impossible to repent and thus it is useless to rebuke them and to pray for them.

- John said: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:9-10). Therefore, these words assure us that we can confess our sins to the Lord and the Lord will surely forgive us immediately, for we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. Therefore, since we can still confess these sins of ours to the Lord to be forgiven, that means that these sins are not unto death because we can’t repent of the sin which is unto death and thus we can’t confess it to the Lord. Once again, therefore, the Scripture makes it clear that not all sins are unto death. If all sins were unto death we would be hopeless, brethren, and the Scripture would be nullified because we could not even confess our sins to God to obtain their remission; we could not say to God: “Forgive us our debts” (Matthew 6:12 – NKJV), which would mean that God has deceived us. But God did not deceive us, for He is called Faithful and True and if He said through His Son that when we pray to God we must say, ‘Forgive us our debts’ that means that He promised to cleanse us from all the sins we may commit during our life on condition that we confess them to Him; obviously among these sins is not the sin unto death. In this case also we notice the justice of God manifested, if God had said that all sins are unto death it would have
been a great injustice on the part of God because that would have meant that we would have been hopeless, in that we could not have been forgiven by God for any sin we would commit. No forgiveness, no repentance, what an unjust God we would have had! And who could have lived a sinless life? No one of us, consequently that would have meant that we would have been condemned to the everlasting fire for the first sin we would commit!!

- James says: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20). From the words of James, therefore, we deduce that if a brother wanders from the truth he can be converted, thus he still can repent. Therefore, we cannot say that if a brother wanders from the truth, giving heed to some strange doctrines, he has committed the sin unto death and thus he cannot repent any longer, for James says that he can be turned from the error of his way and his sins can be forgiven. The point I would like to underline is this: it is possible to renew again to repentance a brother who has wandered from the truth, but it is not possible to do the same thing toward a brother who has committed the sin unto death. Paul also teaches that a brother who has wandered from the truth can be renewed again to repentance, for after saying to Timothy that Hymenaeus and Philetus are among those who have wandered away from the truth saying that if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will” (2 Timothy 2:24-26 – NKJV). As you can see, Paul says that the servant of the Lord must gently correct those who oppose the truth (they oppose the truth because they have wandered from the truth) because God may grant them repentance and allow them to escape from the trap of the devil into which they have fallen. The same thing cannot happen if a believer commits the sin unto death because – as we saw before – it is impossible for them to be brought back to repentance.

- Jesus Christ said to the angel of the Church in Thyatira: “Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works” (Revelation 2:20-23). In the Church of Thyatira there was a woman named Jezebel who taught and seduced the servants of Jesus Christ to commit adultery with her and to eat things sacrificed to idols (that is, two things which are condemned by the law and thus are sins). Then the Lord revealed to the angel of that church that He had given Jezebel time to repent but she did not want to repent and consequently He would punish her by casting her into a sickbed and killing her children with death; the Lord told the angel of that Church that His servants also would be punished severely if they did not repent of their evil deeds. It is clear that if Jezebel and those servants of Jesus, who had been deceived by her into doing those evil deeds, had committed the sin unto death the Lord would not have given them time to repent because we know that it is impossible for those who sin unto death to be brought back to repentance. So in this case also, even though those persons had committed some sins, it was possible for them to be brought back to repentance and be forgiven.

The above mentioned words that Jesus spoke to the angel of the church in Thyatira, which admit that even those who fornicate and commit adultery can repent and be forgiven, refute another false doctrine which is taught in some Pentecostal churches according to which fornication and adultery are sins unto death and those who commit them are guilty of eternal sins; for it is evident, I would say very evident, that since the Lord gave Jezebel and His servants time to repent this means that He did not declare them to be hopeless, He did not think that those people could no longer repent and be forgiven. In the sight of God it was still possible for
them to be brought to repentance. And if according to God those who commit these sins can repent of their sins, why should we say the contrary?

- Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envying, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults: And lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and that I shall bewail many which have sinned already, and have not repented of the uncleanness and fornication and lasciviousness which they have committed” (2 Corinthians 12:20-21). In the Church of Corinth there were some believers who had practiced uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness, which are all works of the flesh, and Paul was afraid that when he would come again to the Corinthians he would have to punish and judge those who had not repented of their sins. However, it was not because they had committed the sin unto death and thus it was impossible for them to be brought back to repentance that they had not repented of those sins, but simply because they themselves had not been willing to repent. In this case also, we see how the Lord gives a believer who sins time to repent, but if he doesn’t repent of his sins the Lord will punish him according to his works. I say it again, to those believers who commit the sin unto death is not given time to repent for it is impossible for them to repent of this sin.

Further Biblical evidences in support of the possibility of losing salvation

I have showed from the Scripture that there is a sin which leads to death, therefore if a believer commits this sin he will go to perdition because he has crucified again for himself the Son of God and put him to an open shame, and he has insulted the Spirit of grace by whom he was sanctified. However, I have showed also that not all sins are unto death, because it is possible for a believer to repent of all the other sins and be forgiven. Therefore my position is as follows: if a believer remains joined to the Lord during all his life, believing in Him and keeping His commandments till the end, he will surely be saved and nothing and nobody will be able to separate him from the love of Christ. Even though he makes many mistakes (is there anyone among us who can say that he doesn’t make mistakes?) he will finally be saved because he has kept his faith and has fought the good fight till the end. However, if at a certain point of his life he casts away his faith in the Lord and thus ceases to keep his commandments (the two things go together because a person who casts away the faith in the Lord does not keep the Lord’s commandments any longer) by committing the sin which leads to death, he will by no means be saved. In other words, he will be condemned, even though he once believed in the Lord. The Bible verses I have mentioned above, which are written in the epistle to the Hebrews, teach this very clearly. However, there are other passages of the Scriptures which affirm the same thing. Now I am going to quote them and comment upon them briefly.

- Jesus Christ said: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:1-6).

Jesus Christ is the vine and we who are His disciples are the branches and He commands us to abide in Him in order to bear fruit to the glory of God. What does it mean to abide in Him? To abide in Him means to keep God’s commandments, for it is written: “Now he who keeps His commandments abide in Him, and He in him” (1 John 3:24 – NKJV). Which commandments? John says: “This is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment” (1 John 3:23 – NKJV). Therefore, if we continue to believe in the Son of God and to love one another till the end, we will continue to bear fruits of righteousness till the end, we will keep ourselves attached to the vine and we will
inherit eternal life. However, what will happen if we cease keeping His commandments? We will cease bearing fruit, and thus God will throw us into the fire. For Jesus said that those branches which don’t bear fruit, for they don’t abide in the vine, are thrown into the fire and they are burned (cf. John 15:6). Therefore let us take heed to ourselves and let us abide in the Lord till the end, otherwise one day we will be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone!

● Paul wrote to Timothy: “This is a faithful saying … If we deny Him, He also will deny us” (2 Timothy 2:11,12 – NKJV). These words make it clear that if we who have believed in the Lord deny the Lord and His words in this generation the Lord also will deny us. This statement made by Paul (note that Paul included himself, as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews who says: “If we sin wilfully ….” [Hebrews 10:26 - NKJV]) is in agreement with the following words that the Lord Jesus said to His disciples: “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32-33). Beloved, let us not be ashamed of the Lord and He will not be ashamed of us.

● Paul said to the saints in Rome the following things regarding the fact that we were grafted into a cultivated olive tree: “For if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest he also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Romans 11:21-22).

We know that the natural branches which were broken off are the unbelieving Jews, as it is written: “Because of unbelief they were broken off” (Romans 11:20 – NKJV), so they don’t enjoy the blessings of Christ (His salvation, His peace, His gifts) because of their unbelief. On the contrary, we who are believing Gentiles were grafted into a cultivated olive tree because of our faith and by this faith we stand. All this leads us to understand the severity of God toward those Jews who don’t believe in His Son Jesus Christ, and also His goodness toward us believing Gentiles. However, God will continue to show His goodness toward us (by causing us to abide in the cultivated olive tree) on condition that we hold firmly the confidence we had at first. Without faith it is impossible to abide in the cultivated olive tree, so those who cast away their confidence are cut off and consequently they can’t enter the rest of God, which God prepared for those who believe. As the Israelites who rebelled against God in the wilderness could not enter the rest of God because of their unbelief, so those who once believed and then threw away their confidence will not be able to enter the Paradise of God. The Scripture says that “we who have believed do enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:3 – NKJV), but it teaches also that those who draw back can’t enter that rest.

At this point, someone may say: ‘All the passages you have quoted are passages which just suppose that a believer may draw back, but they don’t indicate that there are some believers who actually after some time draw back to perdition!’ In other words, ‘These passages are a severe admonishment, but nobody actually draws back!’ You are greatly mistaken in saying this because the Scripture says that there are some believers who deny the Lord and go to perdition. For instance the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says: “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:39 – NKJV).

Know this, therefore, that not only is there the possibility of losing one’s salvation, but also there are some believers who cast away their salvation and go to perdition. I would like to ask you the following question: ‘Don’t you think that if at that time there had been no believers who had drawn back to perdition, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews would not have spoken of ‘those who draw back to perdition’? For instance, if I say: ‘We are not of those who set their mind on earthly things, but of those who set their mind on things above’ what do I mean? Do not I mean that whereas on the one hand there are people who set their mind on earthly things on the
other hand there are people who set their mind on things above, and we are among the latter? Therefore, if the author of the epistle to the Hebrews did not include himself among those who drew back to perdition but among those who believed to the saving of the soul, that means that in his days there were some believers who drew back to perdition as well as some believers who stood firm in the faith till the end to the saving of the soul. Things are very clear, aren't they? On the other hand, we should not be surprised to read in that passage that there are some believers who draw back to perdition, because what they do is nothing but the fulfilment of some words spoken by the Lord Jesus when He told the parable of the sower. For, in speaking about the different kinds of places on which the good seed fell, He said: “Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth” (Matthew 13:5 – NKJV) and when He explained the meaning of these words He said: “But the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who believe for a while” (Luke 8:13 – NKJV). The Italian Bible Riveduta Version reads ‘si traggono indietro’ that is, ‘they draw back’ instead of ‘they fall away’). As you can see, those who receive the word on stony places are those who hear the Word and they immediately receive it with joy believing in it, however they don’t stand firm in the faith till the end because when persecution arises because of the word they draw back or fall away. The Scripture clearly affirms that they draw back. Is it not written: “If he shrink back, I will not be pleased with him” (Hebrews 10:38 – NIV)? Therefore, those who draw back cease to please God because they cease believing in God. How could these people, who cease believing in God, still please God, when it is written that “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6 – NKJV)? Now, let me ask you this question: ‘Did they really believe once?’ Of course they did. If Jesus said: ‘They believe for a while’ this means that they had believed, and if they had believed they, too, had accepted the Gospel of the grace of God and had been saved. Do you want to give another meaning to the words of Jesus? If that seed which fell on stony places sprang up that means that there was a beginning, don’t you think so? And furthermore, if those people had not really believed why did Jesus speak of tribulation and persecution because of the word? And again, if those people had not really began to walk on the way which leads to heaven why did Jesus say that they fall away or draw back? How can a person draw back, if he is still on the way which leads to destruction and refuses to take the road which leads to heaven and which is pointed out by the Gospel of God? Therefore, those who draw back to perdition are those who believe for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word (in which they once believed) they deny the Lord, that is to say, they commit the sin unto death, and therefore they will be cast into the everlasting fire. They have denied the Lord, and the Lord will deny them. They were ashamed of the Lord, and the Lord will be ashamed of them. Among those who fall away are also those who depart from the faith (or abandon the faith), as it is written: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils [demons]; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Timothy 4:1-5). As you can see, the fact that the Scripture says that these people will depart from the faith shows that they were once in the faith, because you can’t depart from a house where you have never lived, you can’t depart from a road you have never taken. On the other hand, this is confirmed by the fact that before saying that some will depart from the faith Paul says that Jesus “was believed on in the world” (1 Timothy 3:16 - NIV). As you can see, Paul says that the Son of God was believed on in the world, that is to say, a part of the world believed on Him. However, a few moments later he says that some of those who believed in the Son of God will depart from the faith. Therefore we conclude that those who depart from the faith were once true believers.

The fact that there are some people who once believed and afterward draw back to perdition is confirmed also by what Peter wrote in his second epistle about the false teachers, who are
among the people of God. Listen carefully to his words: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [tartarus], and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord. But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you; Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness: But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:1-22). As you can see, Peter says about these persons the following things: they denied the Lord who bought them; therefore they also were among those to whom Peter wrote: “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope
might be in God’ (1 Peter 1:18-21). Note that those who have been redeemed by the Lord with His precious blood are persons who believe in God. This is confirmed by Paul who wrote to the believers in Corinth: “For you were bought at a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20 – NKJV). Therefore, the false teachers also once believed because they had been bought by the Lord with His precious blood.

They forsook the right way and went astray. Which is the right way? Is it not the way about which the prophet Isaiah said: “And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness; the unclean shall not pass over it; but it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor any ravenous beast shall go up thereon, it shall not be found there; but the redeemed shall walk there: And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isaiah 35:8-10)? Note how the redeemed walk in this way, therefore it is the way in which those who were bought by the Lord walk.

They had escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Christ but then they were again entangled in them. The Scripture says that through the exceedingly great and precious promises of the Lord we became “partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4 – NKJV) and for this reason we must add to our faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love; therefore these false teachers also, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever, were once sons of God by their faith in Christ.

They knew the way of righteousness and then they turned from the holy commandment delivered to them. The way of righteousness is the way in which John the Baptist also walked, who believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. For Jesus said about John to the Jews: “John came to you in the way of righteousness” (Matthew 21:32 – NKJV). Therefore, these false teachers also believed in the Christ of God, then they turned from the holy commandment according to which we must believe on the name of the Son of God (cf. 1 John. 3:23).

What shall we say about the example of Judas Iscariot? Is it not a clear example of a believer who forsook the Lord and went to perdition? For on the night Jesus was betrayed, He said to the Father: “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled” (John 17:12). Therefore, Judas also had been among those whom God had given to His Son, but one day he betrayed the Master and went to perdition so that the Scripture might be fulfilled. Therefore, in the light of all these Scriptures, we must reject all those arguments which tend to make the saints believe that those who deny the Lord, that is to say, who draw back, actually did not believe. On the other hand, the way of thinking of these brothers (those who hold the doctrine called ‘once saved always saved) induces us to think that after all we can’t be sure that those who say that they believe have really believed in the Lord. For who says to me that they will stand firm in the faith till the end? For if a brother tells me that he has believed, he rejoices for he was saved, he suffers because of the Gospel, and then one day he denies the Lord, this would mean that actually he did not believe!! If things were so, we could not know whether one who professes to be a Christian is a true believer or not, and we should be very careful when we speak of a believer because if we say that he is a true believer and then one day he denies the Lord we will be considered believers who are not able to know a true believer. No, those who believe the doctrine ‘once saved always saved’ are wrong. I agree with them when they affirm that there are false brothers among the people of God, that is to say, people who claim that they believed but actually did not believe; however, we are able to know them very easily, it is sufficient to ask them if they are sure to be saved, if they are sure they have been forgiven, etc. thus it is evident that if these people forsake the assembling of ourselves together and join a cult, we can say about them that actually they had never believed in the Lord; but not always this is the case because there are some true believers who forsake the assembling of ourselves
together and deny the Lord who bought them. The argument of those who teach 'once saved always saved' is a subterfuge they use to support their false doctrine.

What should we say then about all those Israelites who came out of Egypt but did not enter the promised land because of their unbelief? Should we say that they had never come out of Egypt or that they had never believed in God nor in His servant Moses? Is it not written that those who heard and rebelled against God were all those Moses led out of Egypt? And is it not written that after God divided the Red Sea “the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and His servant Moses” (Exodus 14:31 – NKJV)? Therefore the Israelites had believed, but afterwards they gave place to unbelief and rebelled against God who swore that they would never enter the promised land and their carcasses would fall in the wilderness. And their example of unbelief is taken by the author of the epistle to the Hebrews to warn us not to cast away our faith. Listen to what the Scripture says: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief. Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Hebrews 3:12-19; 4:1-11). Therefore, if God warns us not to draw back, through the bad example of the Israelites, this means that there is a certain analogy between the unbelief of the Israelites and a possible unbelief of a believer in Jesus Christ, don’t you think so? Why then, if the Israelites had not believed in God nor in His servant Moses, would God tell us not to follow the same example of disobedience but to have faith till the end? Such a warning would make no sense if a true believer could not draw back to perdition!!! Judge for yourselves what I say. And what shall I say about the wife of Lot, whom we must remember for Jesus said: “Remember Lot's wife” (Luke 17:32 – NKJV)? Did she believe the angels of God? Was she saved from the destruction of Sodom? As far as I know she, too, believed the angels and was saved. But after she went out of Sodom she disobeyed the Lord for she looked behind and she became a pillar of salt. Therefore the wife of Lot also is an example of disobedience we must not follow.

Replies to some objections

All those who teach that a believer can by no means fall away from grace, when they have to explain some of the passages I have mentioned above, affirm several absurdities. I am going to examine what they affirm in the light of the Scriptures to show you that they are wrong.

Some say that the expressions, "if they fall away" (Hebrews 6:6 - NKJV) and, "If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth" (Hebrews 10:26 - NKJV) don't mean that such a thing can happen or has ever happened. For instance, Charles Spurgeon, in his sermon
titled ‘Final Perseverance’ says ‘But some one says, “What is falling away?” Well, there never has been a case of it yet, and therefore I cannot describe it from observation; but I will tell you what I suppose it is’, and when he explains why the writer put that ‘if’ in Hebrews 6:6 he says: ‘If Christians can fall away, and cease to be Christians, they cannot be renewed again to repentance. “But,” says one, “You say they cannot fall away.” What is the use of putting this “if” in, like a bugbear to frighten children, or like a ghost that can have no existence? My learned friend, “Who art thou that repliest against God?” If God has put it in, he has put it in for wise reasons and for excellent purposes. Let me show you why. First, O Christian, it is put in to keep thee from falling away. …..’ and secondly ‘It is to excite our gratitude’. With regard to Hebrews 6:4-6, however, it must be said that Spurgeon, unlike almost all Calvinistic preachers, admitted that those people spoken of in Hebrews 6:4-6 were Christians, that is to say, true believers.

Let me tell you something. Why should we believe that such a thing cannot happen? Why should we affirm that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, by saying that if Christians fall away it is impossible for them to be brought back to repentance, just formulated a hypothesis but he did not speak of something which can actually happen or that has ever happened? Then, if we say such a thing about the ‘if’ of Hebrews 6:6, it follows that we should say the same thing about the other ‘ifs’ which we read in the Scriptures. Let us look at some of them. Paul says to the Corinthians: ‘But if any man thinks that he is acting unbecomingly toward his virgin daughter, if she is past her youth, and if it must be so, let him do what he wishes, he does not sin; let her marry (1 Corinthians 7:36 - NASB) What does Paul mean by these words? Does he mean that such a thing cannot happen or has never happened? It doesn’t seem to me that Paul meant such a thing, for there are men who think that if they don’t allow their daughters to marry they will behave improperly toward them and therefore they permit them to get married. And what shall we say about the following words of James: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20)? Shall we say that such a thing cannot happen or that has never happened? As far as I know, there are some Christians who wandered from the truth for a while and then someone converted them. And what shall we say about the following words of John: “If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death” (1 John 5:16 – NKJV)? Should we say that such a thing cannot happen or that has never happened? How could we affirm such a thing when we have seen several brothers sinning a sin which does not lead to death? And I could mention many more ‘ifs’ written in the New Testament to show you that the expression ‘if they fall away’ means not only that such a thing may happen but also that sometimes it has happened. We know several cases of children of God who have fallen away.

Another subterfuge used by ‘Calvinistic preachers and writers’ to support the doctrine ‘once saved always saved’ is this: they affirm that these warnings are for those who have never been born again, that is, sinners. Matthew Henry, for instance, says the following things about those who may fall away (chapter 6 of Hebrews): ‘Now hence observe, [1.] These great things are spoken here of those who may fall away; yet it is not here said of them that they were truly converted, or that they were justified; there is more in true saving grace than in all that is here said of apostates. [2.] This therefore is no proof of the final apostasy of true saints. These indeed may fall frequently and foully, but yet they will not totally nor finally from God; the purpose and the power of God, the purchase and the prayer of Christ, the promise of the gospel, the everlasting covenant that God has made with them, ordered in all things and sure, the indwelling of the Spirit, and the immortal seed of the word, these are their security. But the tree that has not these roots will not stand.’ As you can see, the writer to the Hebrews is not speaking of people who were truly converted. A similar thing he says about those who may sin wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth (chapter 10 of Hebrews); here are his words: ‘The sin here mentioned is a total and final apostasy, when men with a full and fixed will and resolution despise and reject Christ, the only Saviour,—despise and resist the Spirit, the only sanctifier,—and despise and renounce the gospel, the only way of salvation, and the words of eternal life;
and all this after they have known, owned, and professed, the Christian religion, and continue to do so obstinately and maliciously. This is the great transgression: the apostle seems to refer to the law concerning presumptuous sinners, Num. xv. 30, 31. They were to be cut off. 2. From the dreadful doom of such apostates. (1.) There remains no more sacrifice for such sins, no other Christ to come to save such sinners; they sin against the last resort and remedy. There were some sins under the law for which no sacrifices were provided; but yet if those who committed them did truly repent, though they might not escape temporal death, they might escape eternal destruction; for Christ would come, and make atonement. But now those under the gospel who will not accept of Christ, that they may be saved by him, have no other refuge left them. (2.) There remains for them only a certain fearful looking for of judgment, v. 27'. Therefore, according to Matthew Henry, the author of that epistle is speaking of sinners in both places, he is not speaking of true believers because true believers can't fall away nor sin wilfully. I have already showed from the Scripture that these passages refer to believers and not to unbelievers. However, let me say something else about this argument of theirs because it is one of their ‘warhorses’, however it is a losing and not a winning warhorse because they interpret the Scripture wrongly. Now, how can they affirm that those who have tasted the heavenly gift are not sons of God? Then, when the apostle Peter in his first epistle says: “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:1-3 – NKJV) who did he refer to? Did he refer to believers or unbelievers since he says ‘if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious’? You will say to me: ‘To believers, because he says also that they have believed in God (cf. 1 Peter 1:21), and that they are like newborn babes’. Well said, therefore they are believers who tasted the goodness of the Lord; how did they taste it? By receiving the remission of sins because Paul says to the saints in Ephesus: “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love where with he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-7). Why then in those passages to the Hebrews the fact that those people tasted the heavenly gift does not mean that they obtained eternal life, when we know that the gift of God, in Christ Jesus, is eternal life? Perhaps you will say that it is not written that they ate the heavenly gift but that they have tasted the heavenly gift! Let me tell you that this is a sophism for I have already demonstrated that those believers to whom Peter wrote had tasted the goodness of the Lord. However, I cannot understand how unbelievers can taste the heavenly gift; as far as I know if one has tasted the heavenly gift he is saved, while if one has not yet tasted the heavenly gift is still lost. Therefore, the fact that the writer says that they have tasted the heavenly gift indicates that they have tasted the gift of eternal life just as each one of us. Have we not tasted the heavenly gift? As for me, I have tasted it. Furthermore, how can one affirm that these people are not true believers when the Scripture says that they have become partakers of the Holy Spirit? Listen, in the New Testament there are some passages which state that some people have become partakers of someone or something. For instance, Peter says: “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity” (2 Peter 1:3-7). What does it mean to have become partakers of the divine nature? Does it not mean that now in Christ we are partakers of the nature of God, in that we became or were made sons of God? Another example: the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says: “For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (Hebrews 3:14 – NKJV); what does it mean to have become partakers of Christ? Does it not mean that through faith we allowed Christ to come to us and to make His
home with us (cf. Colossians 1:27; Ephesians 3:17) and that our members became members of Christ, as it is written: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!” (1 Corinthians 6:15 - NKJV)? Therefore, when we read in the epistle to the Hebrews that these people have become partakers of the Holy Spirit that means that they have received the Holy Spirit and thus they are sons of God because the Spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are sons of God, as it is written: “For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself (Himself) beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Romans 8:15-17), and thus their body is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Therefore it is absurd to affirm that some people who have never been regenerated can become partakers of the Holy Spirit: to affirm such a thing means to openly contradict the Scripture and also not to know one’s language.

Let us come now to the words written in the tenth chapter of the epistle to the Hebrews; we can’t affirm that those to whom the writer refer are people who have never been converted or have never been regenerated because first of all the writer says “if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth” which means that he is speaking of a sin which can be committed after one has known the truth. Does an unregenerate person know the truth? No, he doesn’t. If the answer were ‘yes’ that would mean that a person can be lost and at the same time know God. Now, if Jesus Christ is the truth, and to know the truth is to know Jesus Christ, how can we say that an unregenerate person knows the truth? As far as I know, one cannot know Christ unless he is born again. One may have heard of Christ, he may have heard of the truth, but to know Christ and to know the truth is a different thing. In order to know Christ, that is, the truth, a man must be born again, because if anyone is in Christ, that is, in the truth, he is a new creation, he is no longer the same person. Therefore, those who have received the knowledge of the truth have truly believed and are truly saved. For instance, when Paul says that God “desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4 – NKJV), he associates salvation with the knowledge of the truth, thus when one is saved he knows the truth. And again when he says that some forbid to marry and command to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving “by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:3 – NKJV), he associates faith with the knowledge of the truth. This confirms what I said before. I would like to say something also about the passage which says that he who sins wilfully after he has received the knowledge of the truth “counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing” (Hebrews 10:29 – NKJV). Now, inasmuch as it is written that if this person commits this kind of sin (that is, the sin unto death) he counts the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, that means that he was once sanctified by the blood of Christ, because the blood of the covenant is the blood of Christ, for on the night He was betrayed Jesus said to His disciples: “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28 – NKJV). And if he was sanctified by that blood, that means that he was saved. Why do I say this? Because Paul wrote to the saints in Corinth: “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), and the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says: “By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them: And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:10-17). As you can see, when one was sanctified he was made new in Christ, he was made perfect in regard to the conscience, for by faith in the blood of Christ he was sanctified by that precious blood. Therefore the Bible verse ‘if we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth’ refers to people who have truly believed.

Conclusion

Brothers, the Word of God does not deceive us; it does not encourage us to think that even if we neglect such a great salvation God will finally have mercy on us, for it says: “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him” (Hebrews 2:1-3) and again: “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Hebrews 12:25).

The Scripture exhorts us to see that no one misses the grace of God and that no one is “godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son” (Hebrews 12:16 - NIV), and “when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears” (Hebrews 12:17 – NIV). As you know, Esau sold his birthright to Jacob for a stew of lentils. Under the Old Testament the birthright allowed the firstborn to inherit a double portion of all that his father had, therefore the birthright was an important thing. However, what did Esau do? He despised his birthright selling it to Jacob for a stew of lentils. The Scripture is right in saying that “a man will do wrong for a piece of bread” Proverbs 28:21 - NIV), for Jacob gave Esau “bread and stew of lentils” (Genesis 25:34 – NKJV) for his birthright, therefore Esau did wrong for a piece of bread.

Brothers, let us not despise the right to be called children of God in order to return to the pleasures of sin which the devil offers to us continually through this wicked world (he wants to make us believe that it is worth turning one’s back to the Lord and neglecting such a great salvation for the things of this world), because if we despise it we will become godless like Esau and we will by no means inherit the kingdom of God nor the blessing of God, because we will be cast into the unquenchable fire, that is, into the fire which awaits all the wicked, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (cf. Matthew 25:30). To cast away the most precious thing we have which was bought by the Son of God with His blood, that is to say, the eternal salvation, is a foolish act and those believers who have cast it away are reaping the awful consequences of their foolish decision, for they are weeping and gnashing their teeth in Hades, they are without water in that horrible place of torment and no one can wipe away their tears nor alleviate their torment. Their tears can be compared to the tears of Esau when he sought to inherit the blessing; those tears were not tears of repentance and did not move Isaac nor did they induce Isaac to bless Esau. So in like manner those who have despised the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and have counted the blood of Christ by which they were once washed a common thing, are in the fire of Hades where they weep for pain and they will by no means obtain mercy and inherit eternal salvation.

Therefore, brothers, let us stand firm in the faith, let us not draw back when our faith is tested, knowing that we have in heaven a city which has been prepared by God, who is the architect and builder of this city. It is the hope of the saints, but in order to enter that city made of gold, whose gates are pearls, and in the midst of which is the river of the water of life, which is clear as crystal, we must stand firm in the faith and keep the works of Christ to the end. Yes, to the end and not just for a while, then on that day our eyes will behold the beauty of the King of glory; then we will enter the everlasting kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ and we will sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of heaven. Beloved, it is worth
suffering for the Lord on earth. So, knowing that one day we will taste and see the glory of God, we say to you: ‘Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, let us fight zealously for the cause of the Gospel, let us not turn aside to the right hand or to the left, but let us look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2 – NKJV). A great joy also was set before us, so let us also despise the shame that we may inherit that joy and hear the Lord say to us: ‘Enter into the joy of your Lord, you faithful servants of the Lord’. To God who called us to His Kingdom and to His glory, be the glory forever. Amen.

**A Christian who commits suicide will go to heaven**

John F. MacArthur (the pastor teacher of Grace Community Church, Sun Valley, California), has written: ‘Suicide is a grave sin equivalent to murder (Exodus 20:13; 21:23), but it can be forgiven like any other sin. And Scripture says clearly that those redeemed by God have been forgiven for all their sins – past, present, and future (Colossians 2:13-14). Paul says in Romans 8:38-39 that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. So if a true Christian would commit suicide in a time of extreme weakness, he or she would be received into heaven’ (http://www.gty.org).

Chuck Smith has written: ‘I believe that a person who is driven to the point of committing suicide no longer has full responsibility for the things he’s doing. Driven to a point of such mental extremes, he isn’t necessarily responsible for the action of taking his own life (Chuck Smith, Answers For Today, pages 88-89; revised edition page 116) and again: ‘Certainly, Scripture doesn’t indicate anywhere that this suicide is an unpardonable sin. The only sin for which there is no forgiveness is that of rejecting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour’ (page 89),

Larry Taylor has written a booklet entitled Suicide And The Church (dated 1994). In it he states: ‘So then, we see that a born again Christian could commit suicide, and if he did, he would go to heaven’ (under #V., sixth to last paragraph).

Dr. Charles Stanley (pastor of the 14,000 member First Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia) also teaches the same thing, for he says: ‘….. Suicide is an act of rebellion against God. Fortunately for all of us, however, God’s grace is without prejudice. Whoever believes will be saved. Nowhere in the Bible does God compartmentalize sin and reserve grace only for those who commit ‘acceptable’ sins. There is no such thing. Does God forgive suicide? Yes, He does. If the person who committed suicide at some time accepted Jesus’ death on the cross as payment for his sin debt and asked Him into his life, he is forgiven. Absolute assurance of forgiveness is found in Romans 8:1: “There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.” If a person has ever taken that step and received Christ as Savior, nothing can alter the truth that, as children of God, we are forgiven. Even when we rebel against God’ (Handbook for Christian living, page 49).

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that a person who has committed suicide can repent of his sin after death: ‘We should not despair of the eternal salvation of persons who have taken their own lives. By ways known to him alone, God can provide the opportunity for salutary repentance. The Church prays for persons who have taken their own lives’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 2283)

**Confutation**

The Scripture says: “Thou shall not kill” (Exodus 20:13). Therefore, all those who commit suicide have broken this commandment for they have killed themselves. They are murderers in the sight of God, and thus they are in hell, and on the day of judgement, when they are raised from the dead, they will be cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, as it is written: “But the
fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Revelation 21:8). “Murders” are mentioned by Paul among the works of the flesh in the epistle to the Galatians, and as you know those who practice the works of the flesh “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21).

Now let me refute some of the arguments I quoted before.

1. **The Scripture says clearly that those redeemed by God have been forgiven for all their sins – past, present, and future.**

   The Scripture teaches that the redeemed have been forgiven for all their past sins, but it teaches also that our present and future sins, that is, the sins we commit after our conversion, will be forgiven us if we repent of them and confess them to God. For the apostle John says: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Therefore, if we sin, we must repent of our sins and confess them to God, so that He may forgive us our sins. As for those who commit suicide, however, they can’t repent of their sin nor can they confess it to God, for they are dead. As a result they are lost forever. They have not died in Christ but in their sin.

2. **Scripture doesn’t indicate anywhere that this suicide is an unpardonable sin. The only sin for which there is no forgiveness is that of rejecting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Saviour.**

   All those Christians who have committed suicide have rejected Christ as their Lord and Saviour, for they have not kept the faith till the end. In other words, they have not held the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end. They have decided to draw back to perdition.

3. **A person who is driven to the point of committing suicide no longer has full responsibility for the things he’s doing. Driven to a point of such mental extremes, he isn’t necessarily responsible for the action of taking his own life.**

   Man is held responsible for all his actions and he will be judged according to them. For instance, Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus Christ, is responsible for his action, even though it was Satan who put it into his heart to betray Jesus. For on the night Jesus was betrayed, He said: “The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matthew 26:24). As for Judas, remember that after he betrayed Jesus into the hands of the chief priests he committed suicide (cf. Matthew 27:1-5).

   To conclude, let me say a few words about the Roman Catholic teaching on the possibility of salutary repentance. God can provide after death: it is a false teaching for after death a person has no possibility of repenting of his sins.

---

**The blood of Jesus alone can’t cleanse a Christian from certain sins**

Mormons teach that in the case of grievous sins, a Christian must add his own blood to the blood of Christ to atone for his transgressions. Joseph Fielding Smith said: ‘Joseph Smith taught that there were certain sins so grievous that man may commit, that they will place the transgressors beyond the power of the atonement of Christ. If these offenses are committed, then the blood of Christ will not cleanse them from their sins even though they repent. Therefore their only hope is to have their own blood shed to atone, as far as possible, in their behalf. ….

Man may commit certain grievous sins – according to his light and knowledge – that will place him beyond the reach of the atoning blood of Christ. If then he would be saved he must make sacrifice of his own life to atone – so far as in his power lies – for that sin, for the blood of Christ alone under certain circumstances will not avail’ (Doctrines of Salvation, I, 135,134). Bruce McConkie wrote in Mormon Doctrine: ‘… under certain circumstances there are some serious sins for which the cleansing of Christ does not operate, and the law of God is that men must
have their own blood shed to atone for theirs sins ...’ (Mormon Doctrine, 1958, page 87). The Encyclopedia of Mormonism confirms this doctrine somehow; listen to what it affirms: ‘However, if a person thereafter commits a grievous sin such as the shedding of innocent blood, the Saviour’s sacrifice alone will not absolve the person of the consequences of the sin. Only by voluntarily submitting to whatever penalty the Lord may require can that person benefit from the atonement of Christ’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 1, page 131).

As you can see, the penalty is not specified but it is very easy to suppose it in the light of what Joseph Smith affirmed, as he said: ‘And now, behold, I speak unto the church. Thou shalt not kill; and he that kills shall not have forgiveness in this world, nor in the world to come. And again I say, thou shalt not kill; but he that killeth shall die’ (Doctrine and Covenants 42:18-19).

This doctrine called ‘blood atonement’ was practiced in the past by Mormons (according to John D. Lee ‘the most deadly sin among the people was adultery, and many men were killed in Utah for that crime’, Confessions of John D. Lee, 1880, page 282) however it is not practiced by faithful Mormons today. The principle on which it is based, however, has not yet been denied by the Mormon church. Some of the polygamous cults which have broken off from the Mormon church still strongly advocate the doctrine of blood atonement.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture says: “If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7) and also: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9). Christ atoned for all our sins, there are no sins for which we must shed our own blood, Jesus Christ “is the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 2:1), in Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of His grace (cf. Ephesians 1:7).

The doctrine of blood atonement was absolutely foreign to the early Church, for James, the Lord’s brother, in his epistle wrote to those saints who had become enemies of God through their sins and among the sins they committed there was even murder (as it is written: “You murder and covet and cannot obtain” James 4:2 – NKJV), the following words: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up” (James 4:7-10).

All those who teach and advocate the doctrine of blood of atonement are of the devil, because they advocate murder and we know that the devil “was a murderer from the beginning” (John 8:44 – NKJV). Beware of them for they are merciless people.

Regeneration is a gradual process taking many years, involving effort, love, good works

In his book What the Bible Actually Teaches, John Odhner, who is a follower of spiritist Emmanuel Swedenborg, states: ‘Changes in our spiritual life are also gradual. They take place one step at a time, and spiritual growth will be easier if we know that it does not take place in a moment. It is an ongoing process. Jesus said, “Unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (John 3:3) Many passages in the Bible indicate that being born again spiritually will be just as much a step by step process as physical conception, gestation, birth, growth, and development. For example, Peter describes it in seven distinct steps: “Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control
perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." Only by completing this process can we be sure to enter the Kingdom of God. (2 Peter 1:5) One reason why being born again must be a gradual process is that it involves a complete change of character. "If any one be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5:5) Rebirth involves new knowledge, new habits, new activities, new loves, and new awareness of the Lord. ... We cannot expect to be born again in a single moment. Again and again, the Bible advises steadfastness and endurance if we wish to gain the promise of heaven. "It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord." (Lamentations 3:26,27) For although it takes time, if we do our part, the Lord will certainly make it happen. "Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass." (Psalm 37:5,7) References from Swedenborg: Arcana Coelestia (The Secrets of Heaven) 4063, True Christian Religion 601-614.

Confutation

First of all, I want to tell you what regeneration is according to the Bible. Regeneration or the new birth is a spiritual experience through which a man is resurrected spiritually, that is, through which a man is made alive for the Holy Spirit comes into his heart. The new birth is necessary in order to enter the Kingdom of God, for Jesus said that unless one is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God (cf. John 3:3). The reason why a man must be born again in order to enter the Kingdom of God is that he is spiritually dead, that is, he is dead in trespasses and sins, in him there is no life, and so he is not worthy to enter the Kingdom of God, so he needs to experience a spiritual birth in order to enter the Kingdom of God. Just as a man must be born physically to enter this world, so likewise a man must be born spiritually to enter the kingdom of God.

When does the new birth take place in a man? How long does it take to be born again? The Scripture teaches that a man is regenerated or born again when he believes in Jesus Christ, for it is when he believes that he receives the remission of sins. The apostle John wrote: "Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ...." (1 John 5:1 – NKJV). You may say, 'John does not refer to the time when a person is born of God, but he refers just to the spiritual condition of a man who believes that Jesus is the Christ!' You are wrong, because it is evident that if a person who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, that means that when he believes that Jesus is the Christ he experiences the new birth. In other words, if a person who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, that means that a person who does not believe that Jesus is the Christ is not born of God, so it is evident that this person becomes a child of God – or is born of God - when he believes. So the new birth is a spiritual experience that takes place in a single moment. The apostle John confirms this important concept in the Gospel when he says: "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:11-13 – NKJV). As you can see, John says that all those who have received Jesus, that is to say, who have believed in His name, have been born of God, so one is born again when he believes in Jesus.

Anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ can say, 'I am born again!' No matter how long he has been a believer, he is born again, he is a child of God, for he is in the faith, he has the Spirit of God in his heart who bears witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. All over the world there are millions of people who have experienced the new birth, and all of them confirm what I have just said, that is, what the Bible teaches about regeneration.

As we have seen, however, John Odhner affirms that the new birth is a step by step process that involves a complete change of character and that Peter describes it in seven distinct steps: "Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge self-control, and to self-control perseverance, and to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love." (2 Peter 1:5-7) Did Peter mean by those words that regeneration is a gradual
process taking many years, involving effort, love, and good works? Not at all, for he wrote in his first epistle: “Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:22-23 – NIV). Note that Peter commanded the saints to love one another for they had been born again, and not in order to be born again. Peter confirmed that concept in his second epistle too, for before saying to the saints: “Add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Peter 1:5-7 – NKJV), he said to them: “As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust …” (2 Peter 1:3-4 – NKJV). As you can see, the recipients of that letter had been given all things that pertained to life and godliness, in that they had been made partakers of the divine nature, thus they were already born again. On the other hand, since Peter told them to add to their faith virtue and so on, that means that those people had faith, therefore they had been already born again for - as we saw before – whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.

If regeneration were a gradual process taking many years, which involves effort, love and good works, an unbelieving person who is about to breathe his last – like the thief on the cross - could not have the possibility of entering the kingdom of God, for he could not be born again. That would be a great injustice toward those who are about to breathe their last. But thanks be to God for the new birth takes place in a single moment, so we are sure that if a sinner who is about to breathe his last believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he will be born again, and thus after his death he will enter the kingdom of God.

**Christians will be born again at the time of the resurrection of those who are Christ’s**

The followers of Herbert W. Armstrong teach that Christians are not yet born again, for they will experience the new birth at the resurrection of those who are Christ’s. Here is what Herbert Armstrong wrote: ‘ …the Kingdom of God is something that can be seen – but not until or UNLESS one is ‘born again’. Not during his physical lifetime! … the Kingdom of God is something a man may enter into – but not until after he is born AGAIN – another and entirely different birth. ….. The Kingdom of God will be composed of SPIRIT BEINGS – not of humans! At birth of human flesh, one is delivered from his mother’s womb into this world. When born of the Spirit, one will be delivered from the CHURCH of God (physical) – the mother of begotten Christians – into the KINGDOM of God (a Kingdom of SPIRIT BEINGS). Man is now composed of flesh – material substance – matter. When BORN AGAIN he will be Spirit – a SPIRIT BEING, no longer human. He will be COMPOSED of Spirit – of Spirit composition – with life inherent – with self-containing life – not then existing by the breath of air and the circulation of blood. ….. As we are now flesh, we shall be SPIRIT – at the resurrection, that is, when we shall be ‘BORN AGAIN’ – when we shall see, enter into, the Kingdom of God – when we are Spirit – at the resurrection! ….. In human physical reproduction, there is a TIME ELEMENT. From impregnation – begettoal on the part of the father – having conceived on the part of the mother – to BIRTH, or parturition, or being delivered from the mother’s womb is a TIME ELEMENT of nine months. That nine-month period is called gestation. Upon conception, the now fertilized ovum is called an embryo. A few months later, it is called a fetus. But during this nine-month period of gestation, we do not speak of the embryo-fetus as having been born. It is in the PROCESS toward birth. It is the child of its parents. But it is then the unborn child of its parents. The father
has already begotten it – sired it. But the mother has not yet given birth to it. Yet it is, during the gestation period, the unborn child of its parents. Now in being ‘born again’, the PROCESS of this birth begins when God’s Divine Spirit-life is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit, from His very PERSON, entering to dwell within us .... .... But as the human embryo must GROW till it becomes a fetus, which must GROW to the point of being born into the human family, so the Christian in whom divine life has been started by the gift of God’s incorruptible Spirit must GROW toward perfection to be born into the God Family. ..... The resurrection – the time when we are changed to BE Spirit and to INHERIT the Kingdom will be a time of DELIVERY FROM the bondage of corruptible flesh and from this world of SIN – A REAL BIRTH! ..... Jesus was, in the human flesh – His first birth – a descendant of David. But, by the resurrection from the dead (born AGAIN), Jesus became the born Son of God, now no longer human, but composed of SPIRIT – a Spirit Being. He thus became the FIRST SO BORN of many brethren who shall be BORN AGAIN at the time of the resurrection of those who are Christ’s’ (Herbert W. Armstrong, The Incredible Human Potential, Pasadena, California, 1978, pages 169, 170, 171, 173, 175, 176).

To sum up the teaching of Armstrong about the new birth we say the following things: Christians are in the process toward the birth, the process of this birth began when God’s Divine Spirit-life was imparted to them (Armstrong calls this phase ‘begetting’) and will be completed at the resurrection, for then they will be born again and they will enter the Kingdom of God. Then they will become pure spirit (for Armstrong denies the physical resurrection of the dead) and they will become part of God’s Family. Yes, for according to Armstrong, God is a Family (composed at the moment by the Father and the Son): ‘God is, actually, a Divine FAMILY. One Family. God IS a Family. That Family is ONE GOD’ (Ibid., page 61), and at the resurrection all those who will be born again will become members of this Family, that is to say, they will become God, for that’s the plan God conceived, to reproduce Himself: ‘God made man of PHYSICAL substance, formed and shaped like God so that man could be converted – changed from matter into Spirit composition at a resurrection – a Spirit-composed member of the GOD FAMILY’ (Ibid., page 67); ‘The purpose of your being alive is that finally you will be born into the kingdom of God when you will actually be God even as Jesus was and is God and His Father a different person also is God! You are setting out on a training to become Creator, to become God’ (Just What Do You Mean Born Again?, pages 19,20)

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that the new birth is an instantaneous experience of spiritual cleansing and re-creation which takes place in man when he repents of his sins and believes in the Gospel of the grace of God. And through the new birth he becomes a son of God, and his sonship is attested by the Holy Spirit sent by God into his heart (who is God and not an impersonal ‘it’), who bears witness with his spirit that he is a son of God. Therefore, all those who have repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ are born again.

Let us see some Bible verses which attest that Christians are already born again. Peter says: “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you ...” (1 Peter 1:3-4 – NIV. The NKJV reads: “ .... has begotten us again to a living hope ...”), and also: “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23 – NIV), and again: “Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk ....” (1 Peter 2:2 – NIV). I would like you to note that according to Peter those Christians to whom he wrote were babes in Christ, Peter did not regard them as people who still needed to be born again. Therefore Christians are not people who are living in period of gestation but people who have been born again, that is to say, people who were brought forth through the word of truth (cf. James 1:18). Did Paul not say: “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that
travail not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free" (Galatians 4:26-31)? And did not the prophet Isaiah say: "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth in one day? or shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travaileth, she brought forth her children" (Isaiah 66:8)?

There are other biblical passages which confirm that the new birth is an experience which has already taken place in those who have believed. The apostle John says: "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him" (1 John 5:1); note that those who are begotten of God are born of God. John says also: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29), and again: "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God" (1 John 4:7) and: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God" (John 1:12-13)

In the light of all these Scriptures we affirm that the New Birth taught by Herbert Armstrong has nothing to do with the new birth of which the Holy Scriptures speak. Beware of all those who follow the teaching of this man, they want to deceive you.

With regard to the teaching of Armstrong on the new birth, I would like to say very briefly some other things to refute some other errors of Mr Armstrong: first of all, when Christians are raised from the dead they will obtain a physical body (like the body of Jesus), yet immortal and glorious, therefore they will not be pure spirit-beings; secondly, at the resurrection Christians will not become God nor part of the Godhead because the Godhead consists of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and is unchanging. Let all the followers of Armstrong know, therefore, that God has never planned to reproduce Himself.

Forgiveness is not always immediate

Mormons teach that forgiveness of sins is not always immediate. Here is what we read in A Study of the Articles of Faith: ‘On account of the magnitude of sins committed, repentance is not always followed by forgiveness and restoration. For instance, when Peter was preaching to the Jews who had slain Jesus and taken His blood on themselves and their children he did not say, Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins; but, Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord. And [when] he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you; Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things’ (Acts 3:19-21). That is, repent now, and believe in Jesus Christ, that you may be forgiven when He whom you have slain shall come again in the days of the restitution of all things, and prescribe to you the terms on which you may be saved’ (James E. Talmage, A Study of the Articles of Faith, Salt Lake City, Utah, (U.S.A.), 42nd edition, 1968, page 481).

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that forgiveness of sins is always immediate, no matter what kind of sins or how many sins a person may have committed. Peter did not believe nor did he preach that sometimes forgiveness of sins is not immediate, for when he preached the Gospel to Cornelius
and his household he said: “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43 – NIV). Note that Peter said ‘everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins’, therefore, even the Jews who had slain Jesus, to whom Peter preached the Gospel, had the possibility to obtain forgiveness of sins immediately through faith in Jesus Christ. The following words of Peter “everyone who believes in Him” don’t permit us to believe that those Jews could not receive forgiveness of sins immediately.

As for the words of Peter quoted by Mormons, they were mistranslated by the translators of the King James Version, for the Greek text does not say ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you’ but ‘Repent therefore and be converted [or turn to God], that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before’ (Acts 3:19-20 – NKJV). Therefore, the above mentioned false doctrine taught by Mormons is supported by a mistranslation.

The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary

The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, which involves a work of judgement called investigative judgement, is the cornerstone of the creed of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church. Adventists are very proud of this doctrine, for they say that today their preaching of the doctrine of the sanctuary is the preaching of the most timely truth that could be presented to men. Now, first of all, let me tell you the origin of this doctrine.

The origin of this doctrine

In 1818, a Baptist minister named William Miller (1782-1849), after he had studied the Scriptures for two years, came to the conclusion that in about twenty-five years from that time (1818) all the affairs of our present state would be wound up. Involved in the ‘winding up’ of the affairs of the world was the expected return of the Lord Jesus Christ. At first Miller did not set an exact date for Christ’s return, but affirmed that this event would occur ‘about 1843.’ However, later he specified that the return of Jesus would take place some time during the Jewish year running from March 21, 1843 to March 21, 1844. He wrote: ‘I believe the time can be known by all who desire to understand and to be ready for His coming. I am fully convinced that some time between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844, according to the Jewish mode of computation of time, Christ will come and bring all His saints with Him; and that then He will reward every man as His work shall be’ (Signs of the Times, January 25, 1843)

How did Miller arrive at this date? In Daniel 9:24-27 he found the prophecy of the ‘seventy weeks’ which are there predicted as extending from the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem (v. 25) to the time when the anointed one will be cut off (v. 26). According to Miller, the starting point for these seventy weeks was the decree of Artaxerxes spoken of in Ezra 7:11-26 which permitted Ezra to go back to Jerusalem. This decree was dated in his Bible (according to the Ussher chronology) as having been issued in 457 before Christ. He assumed that in prophetic writings of this sort a day stood for a year. On this basis seventy weeks, which would be equivalent to 490 days, would represent 490 years. And 490 years after 457 before Christ brings to 33 A.D., the year when, according to Ussher, Christ was crucified. In Daniel 8:14 there is a reference to 2300 evenings and mornings which must elapsed before the sanctuary will be cleansed. Miller assumed that the cleansing of the sanctuary alluded to in this prophecy meant Christ’s return to earth. In agreement with the above mentioned principle, he took the 2300 evenings and mornings as standing for 2300 years. He also assumed that the 2300 years
started at the same time as the 70 weeks. And 2300 years after 457 before Christ brings us to 1843 A.D., the year when, according to Miller, Christ would return.

When the year arrived, however, the Lord did not return, and there was much disappointment among the so called ‘Millerites.’ Miller acknowledged his error, yet He still believed that the day of the Lord was near, even at the door, and he exhorted the brethren to be watchful, and not let that day come upon them unawares.

In August of 1844, Samuel S. Snow, one of the Millerite leaders, predicted that Christ would return on October 22, 1844 (which would be our calendar equivalent of the Jewish Day of Atonement for that year), that is, seven months later. According to Ellen G. White ‘that which led to this movement was the discovery that the decree of Artaxerxes for the restoration of Jerusalem, which formed the starting point for the period of the 2300 days, went into effect in the autumn of the year 457 B.C., and not at the beginning of the year, as had been formerly believed. Reckoning from the autumn of 457, the 2300 years terminate in the autumn of 1844’ (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation, [Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950. Revised edition first published, 1911.], pages 398-399). All the followers of Miller and Miller himself accepted this prediction. So they began to expect the Lord to return some time that day. On October 22, however, the Lord did not return. The disappointment of the Millerites was intense. This day is usually referred to in the history of the Adventist Church as the day of ‘The Great Disappointment.’

One of the ‘Millerites’ who expected the Lord to return on October 22, 1844, was a certain Hiram Edson of Port Gibson, New York. On the following morning most of the believers who had met at Edson’s house to wait for Christ’s return returned to their homes. However, Edson went to his barn to pray with those who remained. After breakfast Edson decided to go out to comfort the other Adventists. As Edson and a companion walked across the corn field adjoining the farm on their way to their first destination, Edson had a ‘vision’. Here is what Edson himself wrote: ‘We started, and while passing through a large field I was stopped about midway of the field. Heaven seemed open to my view, and I saw distinctly and clearly that instead of our High Priest coming out of the Most Holy of the heavenly sanctuary to come to this earth on the tenth day of the seventh month, at the end of the 2300 days, He for the first time entered on that day the second apartment of that sanctuary; and that He had a work to perform in the most holy before coming to this earth’ (From a fragment of a manuscript on his life and experiences, by Hiram Edson; quoted by Francis D. Nichol, The Midnight Cry, Washington: Review and Herald, 1945, page 458). In the light of this ‘vision’, Edson now realized that there was a heavenly sanctuary corresponding to the Old Testament earthly sanctuary which had been patterned after it, and that there were two phases in Christ heavenly ministry, just as there had been two phases in the sanctuary ministry of the Old Testament priests. In other words, according to Edson, Christ did not come out of the Holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary to this earth at the end of the 2300 days, but he had simply for the first time passed from the holy place of the heavenly sanctuary into the heavenly holy of holies. So Miller had not been wrong in his calculations, but simply in thinking that the sanctuary which was to be cleansed at the end of the 2300 days was a sanctuary on earth - or, perhaps, the earth itself. For the sanctuary which had to be cleansed was located in heaven.

During the next several months Edson and two men who were closely associated with him at that time, that is, Franklin B. Hahn and O. R. L. Crosier, began to study the Bible earnestly, particularly with regard to the sanctuary ministry as described both in the Old Testament and in the book of Hebrews. Crosier wrote down his conclusions on the subject in an article which appeared in the Cincinnati Day-Star, an Adventist publication, under date of February 7, 1846. Here are the conclusions to which he came. Crosier explained that we must see in the work of Christ a fulfilment of the work of the Old Testament priests. In the daily work of these priests, when they presented the daily offerings to God and brought the blood of these offerings into the holy place, sprinkling it before the veil or applying it to the horns of the altar of incense, they were only transferring iniquity from the people to the sanctuary. On the Great Day of Atonement,
however, the sanctuary was cleansed. This happened when the high priest entered the holy of holies and sprinkled the blood of the slain goat upon the mercy seat. After the sanctuary had been cleansed, the sins of the people were then put on the head of the scapegoat which was sent away into the wilderness. There were thus two phases in the ministry of the Old Testament priests: the first (the daily ministry, which had to do with the holy place) led to the forgiveness of sins; the second, however (the yearly ministry, which had to do with the holy of holies), led to the blotting out of sins. These two phases of priestly ministry are also to be seen in the work of Christ. Throughout the centuries of the Christian era Christ had been doing a work comparable to the daily ministry of the priests, which work resulted in the forgiveness of sin but not in the blotting out of sin. The process of blotting out sin began on October 22, 1844, when Christ entered the holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary, an action which was comparable to the work of the high priest on the Day of Atonement. However, since the cleansing of the sanctuary was not complete until the sins of the people had been laid on the scapegoat – who typified Satan – the last act of Christ’s priestly ministry will be to take the sins from the heavenly sanctuary and to place them on Satan. Only after this has happened will Christ return. This article was endorsed by such prominent Adventist leaders as Joseph Bates and Ellen G. White. As for William Miller, it must be said that he never accepted Crosier's teachings about Christ's sanctuary ministry.

This teaching about Christ's sanctuary ministry was confirmed by Ellen G. White, the so called prophetess of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, who – in February of 1845 – had a 'vision' of Jesus entering into the holy of holies of the heavenly sanctuary.

The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary and the investigative judgement

Now let me expound in detail the doctrine of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, which involves the so called investigative judgement, as it is taught by the Adventist Church. The earthly sanctuary which was built by Moses in obedience to the commandment of God was the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as it is written that God said to him: “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain” (Hebrews 8:5 - NKJV). That sanctuary consisted of two places: the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. The priests would enter the Holy Place daily with the blood of some animal sacrifices prescribed by God to make atonement for the sins of the people or for their own sins. Instead, the high priest would enter the Most Holy Place only once a year, that is, on the Day of Atonement, which was the tenth day of the seventh month, to make atonement for himself, for his household, and for all the children of Israel, and for the sanctuary. Therefore on that day the high priest, his household, the children of Israel and the sanctuary were cleansed from all sins. Here is what the High Priest had to do on that day according to the law of Moses: “And the LORD said unto Moses, Speak unto Aaron thy brother, that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail before the mercy seat, which is upon the ark; that he die not: for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat. Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a young bullock for a sin offering, and a ram for a burnt offering. He shall put on the holy linen coat, and he shall have the linen breeches upon his flesh, and shall be girded with a linen girdle, and with the linen mitre shall he be attired: these are holy garments; therefore shall he wash his flesh in water, and so put them on. And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two kids of the goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering. And Aaron shall offer his bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and make an atonement for himself, and for his house. And he shall take the two goats, and present them before the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats; one lot for the LORD, and the other lot for the scapegoat [Hebrew: Azazel]. And Aaron shall bring the goat upon which the LORD’s lot fell, and offer him for a sin offering. But the goat, on which the lot fell to be the scapegoat, shall be presented alive before the LORD, to make an atonement with him, and to let him go for a scapegoat into the wilderness [Hebrew /la'aza'zeel which means 'to or for Azazel']. And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his
house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself: And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the LORD, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail: And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the LORD, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not: And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin offering, that is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy seat, and before the mercy seat: And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remaineth among them in the midst of their uncleanness. And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel. And he shall go out unto the altar that is before the LORD, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel.

And when he hath made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar, he shall bring the live goat: And Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: And the goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities unto a land not inhabited: and he shall let go the goat in the wilderness. And Aaron shall come into the tabernacle of the congregation, and shall put off the linen garments, which he put on when he went into the holy place, and shall leave them there: And he shall wash his flesh with water in the holy place, and put on his garments, and come forth, and offer his burnt offering, and the burnt offering of the people, and make an atonement for himself, and for the people. And the fat of the sin offering shall he burn upon the altar. And he that let go the goat for the scapegoat shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward come into the camp. And the bullock for the sin offering, and the goat for the sin offering, whose blood was brought in to make atonement in the holy place, shall one carry forth without the camp; and they shall burn in the fire their skins, and their flesh, and their dung. And he that burneth them shall wash his clothes, and bathe his flesh in water, and afterward he shall come into the camp. And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: For on that day shall the priest make an atonement, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever. And the priest, whom he shall anoint, and whom he shall consecrate to minister in the priest's office in his father's stead, shall make the atonement, and shall put on the linen garments: And he shall make an atonement for the holy sanctuary, and he shall make an atonement for the tabernacle of the congregation, and for the altar, and he shall make an atonement for the priests, and for all the people of the congregation. And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you, to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year.” (Leviticus 16:1-34), As you can see, on that particular day, the priests and the people were cleansed from their sins through the blood of some animal sacrifices. The sanctuary also was cleansed through the blood of the sin offering which the high priest had to bring into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain. Another thing which can be seen is this: on that day two goats had to be offered to make atonement for the sins of the children of Israel: one had to be offered as a sin offering, while the other had to be presented alive before the Lord, to make atonement upon it, and be sent to or for Azazel. According to the Adventist Church, Azazel does mean Satan, so it follows that the second goat stood for Satan.
Now, as we have seen, on the Day of Atonement the earthly sanctuary was to be cleansed; therefore, since that sanctuary was the copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, the heavenly sanctuary too had to be cleansed or purified. However, it had to be cleansed or purified with better sacrifices, as it is written: "Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these" (Hebrews 9:23 – NKJV). And the sacrifice with which the heavenly sanctuary was purified is the sacrifice of Christ.

When was it purified? To this question Adventists answer, 'It was purified on October 22, 1844 (or rather the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary began on that day, and – as we will see later – this cleansing is an investigative judgment which is still going on), because 2300 years (the 2300 evenings and mornings mentioned in Daniel 8:14 stand for 2300 years because in prophetic writings of this sort a day stood for a year, according to the Adventists) after 457 B.C. (the year in which king Artaxerxes issued the decree spoken of in Ezra 7:11-26 according to which Jerusalem had to be restored) brings us to A.D. 1844 (more precisely to October 22, 1844: 'The tenth day of the seventh month, the great Day of Atonement, the time of the cleansing of the sanctuary, which in the year 1844 fell upon the twenty-second of October…' Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy, page 400). For they say, Daniel stated that the sanctuary would be cleansed after two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings, as it is written: "Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days [Lit. evening-mornings]; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed" (Daniel 8:13-14 – Ellen G. White said: 'The prophecy, "Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed," unquestionably points to the sanctuary in heaven' - The Great Controversy, page 417).

At this point, I have to explain to you in detail how Adventists come to this conclusion. The prophet Daniel wrote: “And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great. And as I was considering, behold, an he goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had there seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power. And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered" (Daniel 8:2-12). Now Adventists ‘believe that the ‘little horn’ of Daniel 8:9 represents both pagan and papal Rome’ (Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions On Doctrine, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C. 1957, page 255) and ‘that the sanctuary’ of Daniel 8:11-14 must involve both the earthly and the heavenly sanctuaries’ (Ibid., page 255), and furthermore they believe that the daily sacrifice represents ‘the daily regular, or ‘continual,’ services of both sanctuaries where involved’ (Ibid, page 256).
The daily sacrifice which was offered in the earthly sanctuary was commanded by God in the law in these terms: “Now this is that which thou shalt offer upon the altar; two lambs of the first year day by day continually. The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning; and the other lamb thou shalt offer at even: And with the one lamb a tenth deal of flour mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil; and the fourth part of an hin of wine for a drink offering. And the other lamb thou shalt offer at even, and shall do thereto according to the meat offering of the morning, and according to the drink offering thereof, for a sweet savour, an offering made by fire unto the LORD. This shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD: where I will meet you, to speak there unto thee” (Exodus 29:38-42), and again: “And thou shalt say unto them, This is the offering made by fire which ye shall offer unto the LORD; two lambs of the first year without spot day by day, for a continual burnt offering. The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at even; And a tenth part of an ephah of flour for a meat offering, mingled with the fourth part of an hin of beaten oil. It is a continual burnt offering, which was ordained in mount Sinai for a sweet savour, a sacrifice made by fire unto the LORD. And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the LORD for a drink offering. And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the LORD” (Numbers 28:3-8). This daily sacrifice foreshadowed ‘the work of Christ, upon His ascension and inauguration as our heavenly high priest’ (Questions on Doctrine, page 263), that is, ‘the first phase of His heavenly ministry, mediating and applying the atoning sacrifice He had completed on the cross’ (Ibid., page 264).

At this point, Adventists tell us that ‘it is obvious that the activities of pagan Rome were concerned primarily with the earthly sanctuary, or Jewish temple, while those of papal Rome must concern the heavenly sanctuary’ (Ibid., page 256). Therefore, they believe, ‘first, that the taking away of the ‘daily’ by pagan Rome represents the desolation of the Temple in A.D. 70, with the permanent cessation of its services … And second, that the taking away of the ‘daily’ by papal Rome represents the introduction of such papal innovations as a mediating priesthood, the sacrifice of the mass, the confessional, and the worship of Mary, by which it has successfully taken away knowledge of, and reliance upon, the continual ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, and rendered that ministry inoperative in the lives of millions of professed Christians’ (Ibid., pages 256-257). That’s how “the place of his sanctuary was cast down” (Daniel 8:11).

Now God predicted through the prophet Daniel that the daily service in the heavenly sanctuary would be ‘taken away’, but He also predicted that after 2300 evenings and mornings the sanctuary would be cleansed. However, the 2300 evenings and mornings are not days but years, for God said to Ezekiel: “I have appointed thee each day for a year” (Ezekiel 4:6). The starting point for the 2300 evenings and mornings is 457 B.C. for in Daniel it is written: “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince ….” (Daniel 9:25), and the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem was issued in 457 B.C.: in that year (in autumn, according to Adventists), for king Artaxerxes issued a decree according to which he permitted Ezra to go back to Jerusalem. So 2300 years after 457 B.C. brings us to A.D. 1844. In that year, that is, 1844, the words of Daniel were fulfilled. In other words, it came to pass that the sanctuary was cleansed because Christ entered the Most Holy Place (or the Holy of Holies) of the heavenly sanctuary to cleanse the sanctuary: this cleansing was foreshadowed by the service of the high priest on the Day of Atonement (Hebrew: Yom Kippur).

Where was Jesus before October 22, 1844, then? What kind of ministry did He fulfill before that date on behalf of those who believed on Him? According to the Adventist Church, Jesus was in the Holy Place, not yet in the Most Holy Place, because as I have just said, Jesus entered the Most Holy Place in 1844. Here is what Ellen G. White wrote about these two phases of the intercession of Christ in heaven: “The ministration of the priest throughout the year in the first apartment of the sanctuary, "within the veil" which formed the door and separated the holy place from the outer court, represents the work of ministration upon which Christ entered at His
ascension. It was the work of the priest in the daily ministration to present before God the blood of the sin offering, also the incense which ascended with the prayers of Israel. So did Christ plead His blood before the Father in behalf of sinners, and present before Him also, with the precious fragrance of His own righteousness, the prayers of penitent believers. Such was the work of ministration in the first apartment of the sanctuary in heaven. …. For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record. As in the typical service there was a work of atonement at the close of the year, so before Christ's work for the redemption of men is completed there is a work of atonement for the removal of sin from the sanctuary. This is the service which began when the 2300 days ended. At that time, as foretold by Daniel the prophet, our High Priest entered the most holy, to perform the last division of His solemn work -- to cleanse the sanctuary' (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 420-421).

You may ask now, 'Why was the heavenly sanctuary to be cleansed? Because – according to the Adventists – 'as anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary. And as the typical cleansing of the earthly was accomplished by the removal of the sins by which it had been polluted, so the actual cleansing of the heavenly is to be accomplished by age the removal, or blotting out, of the sins which are there recorded. But before this can be accomplished, there must be an examination of the books of record to determine who, through repentance of sin and faith in Christ, are entitled to the benefits of His atonement. The cleansing of the sanctuary therefore involves a work of investigation -- a work of judgment. This work must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people; for when He comes, His reward is with Him to give to every man according to his works. Revelation 22:12' (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 421-422). In other words, the heavenly sanctuary had to be cleansed because it had been polluted by the sins of all those who had believed in the Lord till October 22, 1844; and it still needs to be cleansed because the sins of the repentant are transferred to the heavenly sanctuary.

As we have seen, the cleansing of the sanctuary involves a work of investigation, that is, a work of judgement; this work is called 'investigative judgement,' and it is one of the key doctrines of the Seventh-Day Adventism. Here is what Ellen G. White wrote about this judgement which began on October 22, 1844, and is still going on: "As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected. When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance. The Lord declared to Moses: "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." Exodus 32:33. And says the prophet Ezekiel: "When the righteous tumeth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, . . . all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned." Ezekiel 18:24. All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life' (The Great Controversy, page 483). The 23rd article of the *Fundamental Beliefs* of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church says about this investigative judgement: 'In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin, typified by the cleansing of the ancient Hebrew sanctuary on the Day of Atonement. .... The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first
resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom. This judgment vindicates the justice of God in saving those who believe in Jesus. It declares that those who have remained loyal to God shall receive the kingdom. The completion of this ministry of Christ will mark the close of human probation before the Second Advent. ... Adventists quote the following biblical passages to confirm that there will be a judgement according to works before the return of Christ: 1 Peter 4:17-18; Daniel 7:9-10; Revelation 14:6-7; Matthew 18:23-25. They quote also what the Jewish Tradition says about the Days of Awe (Yamim Noraim), which are the days (ten days) starting with Rosh Hashanah (the Jewish New Year which occurs on the first and second days of the seventh month) and ending with Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement). For according to the Jews, this is a time for serious introspection, a time to consider the sins of the previous year and repent before Yom Kippur. God has "books" that he writes the names of the Jews in, writing down who will live and who will die, who will have a good life and who will have a bad life, for the next year. These books are written in on Rosh Hashanah, but the actions committed by the Jews during the Days of Awe can alter God's decree. The actions that change the decree are "teshuvah, tefilah and tzedakah," repentance, prayer, good deeds (usually, charity). These "books" are sealed on Yom Kippur, that is to say, the judgment entered in these books is sealed on Yom Kippur. According to the Adventist Church, this time for serious introspection — which goes from the first day of the seventh month to the Day of Atonement — is, in a certain sense, an investigative judgement! So, in the light of what Adventists teach about the investigative judgement, if a believer is acquitted his sins will be blotted out from the heavenly records and his name will remain on the book of life and when Jesus comes he will take part in the resurrection of the just (if he remains till the coming of the Lord he will be changed and caught up together with the resurrected saints); but if the believer is condemned his sins will not be blotted out and his name will be blotted out of the book of life, and he will take part in the resurrection of the unjust (if he remains till the coming of the Lord, he will be destroyed). According to the teaching of the investigative judgement, therefore, when a person repents and believes in Jesus, his sins are forgiven, but not yet blotted out. We read in Questions on Doctrine: "The actual blotting out of sin, therefore, could not take place the moment when a sin is forgiven, because subsequent deeds and attitudes may affect the final decision. Instead, the sin remains on the record until the life is complete — in fact, the Scriptures indicate it remains until the judgement" (Questions on Doctrine, page 441). When are his sins blotted out, then? Well, on the one hand it is clear that the sins of believers will not be blotted out until their names have come up in the investigative judgement. This will not happen until after they have lived their lives, so that all their deeds may be taken into consideration. Thus the investigative judgement will take place after their death. However, the investigative judgement of those believers who will be still living when Christ returns will have been completed before the Second Coming, so that they may be translated to glory when the millennium begins. It must be said, however, that according to Ellen G. White, no one can say that the sins of those believers who have been accepted in the investigative judgement have been blotted out, for they still have some sort of existence. In fact, they will not really be blotted out until the time of the ‘final eradication’ or ‘final blotting out’ of sin, which will occur just before Christ's return, and will consist in the placing of the sins of all men, both righteous and wicked, on the head of Azazel which stands for Satan. Here is what Ellen White wrote: 'In the typical service the high priest, having made the atonement for Israel, came forth and blessed the congregation. So Christ, at the close of His work as mediator, will appear, "without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28), to bless His waiting people with eternal life. As the priest, in removing the sins from the sanctuary, confessed them upon the head of the scapegoat, so Christ will place all these sins upon Satan, the originator and instigator of sin. The scapegoat, bearing the sins of Israel, was sent away "unto a land not inhabited" (Leviticus 16:22); so Satan, bearing the guilt of all the sins which he has caused God's people to commit, will be for a thousand years confined to the earth, which will then be desolate, without inhabitant, and he will at last suffer the full penalty of sin in the fires that shall destroy all the wicked. Thus the great plan of redemption
will reach its accomplishment in the final eradication of sin and the deliverance of all who have been willing to renounce evil" (Ellen White, *The Great Controversy*, pages 485-486). According to *Questions on Doctrine* Satan will have to bear even the sins committed by the wicked: ‘The other goat, in antithesis, symbolized Satan, who must bear the responsibility not only for his own sins but for his part in all the sins he has caused others, both righteous and wicked, to commit’ (*Questions on Doctrine*, page 397). Therefore – the Adventist Church says – just as the so-called scapegoat was sent away into an uninhabited wilderness after the sins of the people had been confessed over his head, so Satan, after the sins of the world have been placed upon him, will be banished to the desolate earth, which during the millennium will be a dreary, uninhabited wilderness (Adventists do not believe that during the Millennium Christ will reign with His saints on the earth)

Confutation

Christ cleansed the heavenly things immediately after His ascension to heaven

The earthly sanctuary (or tabernacle), which was built by Moses, symbolized the heavenly sanctuary, as it is written that it was “a copy and shadow of what is in heaven. This is why Moses was warned when he was about to build the tabernacle: ‘See to it that you make everything according to the pattern shown you on the mountain” (Hebrews 8:5 – NIV). In its first room were the lampstand, the table and the consecrated bread; this was called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden censer and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s rod that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant. Above the ark were the cherubim of the glory, overshadowing the mercy seat (cf. Hebrews 9:1-5). The priests entered regularly into the first part of the sanctuary to carry on their ministry. But only the high priest entered the second part, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance (cf. Hebrews 9:6-7).

That earthly sanctuary, after it was set up, was cleansed with the blood of calves and goats, as it is written: “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, ‘This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.’ Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:19-22 – NKJV). Therefore – the Scripture continues – it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these sacrifices, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these (cf. Hebrews 9:23). And the sacrifice with which the heavenly things had to be purified is the sacrifice of Christ. Can we say that the cleansing of the heavenly things began in 1844 because in that year, precisely on October 22, Jesus passed from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place to perform the second phase of His heavenly ministry (that it might be fulfilled what is written in Daniel 8:14)? Not at all. For the Scripture teaches us that the cleansing of the heavenly things was performed by Christ on the same day He ascended to heaven (after He had by Himself purged our sins). The following passages of the Scripture confirm what I have just said: “When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here [or the good things to come], he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:11-12 – NIV); “For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God’s presence. Nor did he enter heaven to offer himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own” (Hebrews 9:24-25 – NIV).
That the cleansing or purification of the heavenly things took place when Jesus ascended to heaven is confirmed by the fact that the cleansing of the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, which was performed by Moses in the wilderness, took place immediately after the animal, whose blood had to be used to cleanse the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, was killed (cf. Leviticus 8:15). Therefore, if the earthly sanctuary – which was a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary - was purified immediately after the slaughtering of the animal prescribed by the law, the heavenly sanctuary too – which is the true sanctuary, not a man-made sanctuary – had to be purified immediately after the killing of the One who is the Minister of the heavenly sanctuary (having been made High Priest forever) and the Lamb of God who had to be offered to cleanse us from our sins and to cleanse the heavenly sanctuary. You must keep in mind, however, that when Jesus ascended to heaven, He not only cleansed the heavenly things with His own blood, dedicating in this way the heavenly sanctuary and the vessels which are in it, but also entered the Most Holy Place with His own blood to purchase eternal redemption for us. In other words, when Christ ascended to heaven, He not only did toward the heavenly sanctuary and its vessels what Moses (and not the high priest) had done toward the earthly sanctuary and all the vessels of the ministry (that is, the sprinkling of the earthly sanctuary and its vessels) – however, Jesus sprinkled the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood and not with the blood of goats and calves – so that the New Covenant also might be dedicated with blood, as the Old Covenant had been dedicated; but He also entered the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood to purchase eternal redemption for us, that is to say, He also did what was done every year by the high priest when he entered the Most Holy Place of the earthly sanctuary with the blood of the animal sacrifices prescribed by the law in order to make atonement for himself and for the sins of the people (however, Jesus entered the Most Holy Place with His own blood He shed for the remission of our sins, for He was without sin).

That's something, brothers, you must keep in mind from now on to understand all the other confutations I am going to write. For in these confutations I will make many references to the cleansing of the sanctuary performed by Moses and to the atonement that was made every year by the high priest by entering the Most Holy Place with the blood of some animal sacrifices.

Explanation of the cleansing of the sanctuary predicted in Daniel 8:14

The cleansing of which Daniel spoke, was the cleansing of an earthly sanctuary, that is, the temple of Jerusalem. That temple – God foretold the prophet Daniel – would be profaned first and then cleansed, that is, it would be cast down first and then would be restored to proper use. That's what we clearly deduce from all the context in which the Scripture says that the sanctuary would be trampled underfoot for 2300 evenings and mornings: “Therefore the he goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven. And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them. Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered. Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot? And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Daniel 8:8-14). Now I will explain the above mentioned words written in the book of Daniel. The he goat which waxed very great stands for the kingdom of Greece which – under the rule of Alexander the Great, the great horn – defeated the Medo-Persian empire (that is, the ram which had two horns, seen by Daniel in the same vision a short time before – cf. Daniel 8:3-4) in 331 B.C. This is confirmed by the
following words spoken a little later by the angel Gabriel to Daniel to make him understand the vision: “The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king” (Daniel 8:20-21). After the death of Alexander the Great, that is, when the great horn was broken, the kingdom of Greece was divided into four kingdoms (that is, Greece, Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt) which are the four horns which came up in place of the great horn. Here is what Gabriel said to Daniel: “Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power” (Daniel 8:22). Out of one of those little horns (that is, out of the kingdom of Syria) came Antiochus Epiphanes (ruler of Syria from 175 B.C. to 164 B.C.), who is the “little horn which waxed exceeding great” who invaded the land of Israel, killed thousands of Jews and cast down the temple of Jerusalem by profaning it (he offered a sow to his gods and placed a statue of Jupiter in the temple), and who did take away the regular burnt offering which according to the law had to be offered in the morning as well as in the evening (cf. Numbers 28:3-8; Exodus 29:38-42). Gabriel foretold Daniel the coming of this wicked man and his devastating work in these terms: “And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand” (Daniel 8:23-25). The sanctuary of Jerusalem was trampled underfoot for 2300 days (that is, six years and three months and eighteen days): from 171 B.C (when Antiochus began to ‘trample underfoot’ the sanctuary of Jerusalem by substituting the high priest with Menelaus) to 165 B.C., the year Judas Maccabaeus together with a certain number of Jews conquered Jerusalem and cleansed the temple and restored it to its right and proper use (therefore he restored the regular burnt offering as well). The cleansing and the dedication of the temple gave rise to the Feast of Dedication (cf. John 10:22) which is still celebrated by the Jews (the Jews call it Chanukkah or Feast of the lights, it begins on the 25th of December and lasts 8 days) The cleansing and the dedication of the temple were recorded in the first book of Maccabees, one of the apocryphal books the Roman Catholic Church has added to the Canon of the Bible (therefore it is not divinely inspired; yet in it are recorded some events which really happened). Here is what we read in the first book of the Maccabees about those events: “Then Judas and his brothers said, "Now that our enemies have been crushed, let us go up to purify the sanctuary and rededicate it." So the whole army assembled, and went up to Mount Zion. They found the sanctuary desolate, the altar desecrated, the gates burnt, weeds growing in the courts as in a forest or on some mountain, and the priests’ chambers demolished. Then they tore their clothes and made great lamentation; they sprinkled their heads with ashes and fell with their faces to the ground. And when the signal was given with trumpets, they cried out to Heaven. Judas appointed men to attack those in the citadel, while he purified the sanctuary. He chose blameless priests, devoted to the law; these purified the sanctuary and carried away the stones of the Abomination to an unclean place. They deliberated what ought to be done with the altar of holocausts that had been desecrated. The happy thought came to them to tear it down, lest it be a lasting shame to them that the Gentiles had defiled it; so they tore down the altar. They stored the stones in a suitable place on the temple hill, until a prophet should come and decide what to do with them. Then they took uncut stones, according to the law, and built a new altar like the former one. They also repaired the sanctuary and the interior of the temple and purified the courts. They made new sacred vessels and brought the lampstand, the altar of incense, and the table into the temple. Then they burned incense on the altar and lighted the lamps on the lampstand, and these illuminated the temple. They also put loaves on the table and hung up curtains. Thus they finished all the work they had undertaken. Early in the morning on the twenty-fifth day of the ninth month, that is, the month of Chislev, in the year one hundred and forty-eight [that is, in the year 165 B.C.], they arose and offered sacrifice according to the law on the new altar of holocausts that they had made. On the
anniversary of the day on which the Gentiles had defiled it, on that very day it was reconsecrated with songs, harps, flutes, and cymbals. All the people prostrated themselves and adored and praised Heaven, who had given them success. For eight days they celebrated the dedication of the altar and joyfully offered holocausts and sacrifices of deliverance and praise. They ornamented the facade of the temple with gold crowns and shields; they repaired the gates and the priests' chambers and furnished them with doors. There was great joy among the people now that the disgrace of the Gentiles was removed. Then Judas and his brothers and the entire congregation of Israel decreed that the days of the dedication of the altar should be observed with joy and gladness on the anniversary every year for eight days, from the twenty-fifth day of the month Chislev' (1 Maccabees 4:36-59 – NAB)

As you can see, the cleansing which took place at the end of the 2300 evenings and mornings was not the same cleansing which would take place every year on the Day of Atonement according to the law of Moses, because it was the restoration of the temple to its rightful and proper use after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes. So the priests were able to carry on their ministry again. Obviously, before they could carry on their ministry, the temple was cleansed for the temple had been polluted by the Gentiles.

As we saw before, God had foretold Daniel the cleansing of the temple in a vision centuries before, for the Scripture says that the little horn would take away the daily sacrifice, that is, the sacrifice which had to be offered in the temple daily in the morning as well as in the evening; and it says also that one saint asked another how long it would take for the vision to be fulfilled – the vision concerning the daily sacrifice – and it was said to him: “Unto two thousand and three hundred evenings and mornings; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed” (Daniel 8:14 – ASV), that is, after that time the sanctuary would be restored. We can say that it was both a cleansing and a restoration, for the Hebrew word translated cleansed is actually the Niphal form of the verb tsadaq, which in the Qal means to be right or righteous; in the Niphal the verb therefore means to be put right. The Revised Standard Version renders: ‘Then the sanctuary shall be restored to its rightful state”, while the New International Version renders: ‘Then the sanctuary will be reconsecrated,” and the New American Standard Bible reads, “Then the holy place will be properly restored!”

In the light of what I have said above, Adventists are wrong in asserting these things: 1) the little horn which came out of one of the four horns is papal Rome, 2) the sanctuary which had to be trampled underfoot was the heavenly sanctuary, 3) the heavenly sanctuary had to be trampled from 457 B.C. to 1844 A.D. (that is, for 2300 years, in that the 2300 evenings and mornings in Daniel 8:14 stand for 2300 years according to the Adventist Church). They are wrong also when they say that the following words spoken by God to Ezekiel: “I have appointed thee each day for a year” (Ezekiel 4:6), must be applied to the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14, because these words spoken to Ezekiel are a particular order God gave to the prophet Ezekiel; if you read carefully the context in which these words are, you will realize this.

Adventists contradict themselves several times in upholding their doctrine about the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary.

I want to point out to you that the doctrine of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary taught by the Adventist Church contains several contradictions. Let us look at them closely.

First of all, if according to Adventists, the sanctuary which had to be trampled by the little horn is the heavenly sanctuary which had to be trampled by papal Rome, and the starting point for this trampling is 457 B.C., we do not understand how the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary could be obscured since the year 457 B.C.; for we know that the death of Christ, His resurrection and His ascension to heaven took place about 490 years later!! Furthermore, if the taking away of the daily sacrifice represents the introduction of the papal impostures which obscured the ministry of Christ, and we know that the papacy began to develop during the centuries which followed the coming of Christ on the earth, Adventists – to be consistent – should take as the starting point for this trampling a year either in the forth or fifth or sixth century after Christ! But
Adventists are not consistent at all, because they use the year 457 B.C., in which Artaxerses issued the decree of which Ezra speaks in Ezra 7:11-26, as the starting point for the trampling of the heavenly sanctuary!!! In addition, the decree issued by Artaxerses in 457 B.C. had nothing to do with the rebuilding of Jerusalem. King Artaxerses issued a decree through which he permitted Jerusalem to be rebuilt in the year 444 B.C. (that is, thirteen years after 457 B.C.): it is the decree which permitted Nehemiah to go back to Jerusalem so that he might rebuild the wall of the holy city. Therefore, the starting point for the seventy weeks as well as for the 2300 evenings and mornings used by the Adventist Church is not the one of which Daniel spoke when he said: “… from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince …. “ (Daniel 9:25 – NKJV).

Here is another contradiction. Adventist say: ‘We understand that the work of Christ, upon His ascension and inauguration as our heavenly high priest, was foreshadowed by the daily service in the earthly type. This was the first phase of His heavenly ministry, mediating and applying the atoning sacrifice He had completed on the cross’ (Questions on Doctrine, pages 263-264). So we say, if according to the prophet Daniel the daily service would be restored after 2300 years, this means that in 1844 Christ would have to continue His ministry in the Holy Place because there He was performing the first phase of His ministry. How is it then that according to the Adventist Church in that year Jesus passed from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place, that is, He finished to perform the ‘daily’ service and began to perform the ‘annual’ service? In other words, if papal Rome obscured the ministry of Christ in the Holy Place (that is, it took away the daily service), the ministry of Christ in the Holy Place should have been enlightened, and not abolished by the annual service of the high priest in heaven. So, Daniel was implicitly told in the vision that the daily sacrifice would be restored, while the Adventist Church have ‘taken away’ the daily service of Christ, I mean they have abolished it once for all! Reflect upon what I say, and you will realize that Adventists are inconsistent. In addition to this, we could say also this: if in the vision that Daniel had it is written that the little horn took away the daily sacrifice, and the little horn represents papal Rome and the daily sacrifice represents the first phase of the ministry of Christ performed in the Holy Place, this means that papal Rome – even if we grant for the sake of argument that Christ at the time was in the Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary – would have to take away from Christ the ministry in the Holy Place, that is, it would have to sweep it away (even if just for a period of time). On the other hand, this would be logical from the Adventist point of view, because Adventists say that papal Rome took away the daily sacrifice from the earthly sanctuary, for they say that when the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 A.C. all the temple services ceased permanently (“the taking away of the ‘daily’ by pagan Rome represents the desolation of the Temple in A.D. 70, with the permanent cessation of its services” - Questions on Doctrine, page 256). How is it then that Adventists do not say that the Papacy took away (in the real sense of the word) from Christ the so called ministry He was carrying on in the Holy Place? They say that the Papacy through its diabolical innovations took away knowledge of the continual ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary and rendered that ministry inoperative in the lives of millions of Christians (cf. Questions on Doctrine, page 257). However, Daniel did not say that the little horn would take away knowledge of the daily sacrifice, but he said that the little horn would take away the continual sacrifice; thus, the continual sacrifice prescribed by the law would disappear. Let me explain to you this concept with other words; Daniel did not say that the little horn would take away knowledge of the daily sacrifice, as if the daily sacrifice would continue to be offered in the temple but the Jews would not know that the daily sacrifice was still being offered in the temple, but Daniel said that the daily sacrifice would be literally taken away by the little horn. Therefore, if we follow the Adventist allegories, it is logical to think that Christ should have been literally deprived of his ministry in the Holy Place; while according to the Adventist Church the daily service performed by Christ in the Holy Place was not really taken away from Him, but it was just obscured. Therefore, what they say is not right. On the other hand, Adventists could not say that the Papacy took away from Christ His heavenly ministry, because in this case they would have considered the pope stronger than
Christ, for they would have said that the pope was able to prevent Jesus from carrying on His ministry in heaven!

I want you to notice another contradiction. When Adventists speak of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, they always speak of the Day of Atonement, for on that day the high priest made atonement for the sanctuary through the blood; so they say that the cleansing of the sanctuary which took place on the Day of Atonement represents the cleansing of the sanctuary which began on October 22, 1844. As for the cleansing which took place on the Day of Atonement, they quote the following words written in the epistle to the Hebrews: “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (Hebrews 9:23). However, they forget that in the epistle to the Hebrews these words: “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” are written immediately after these other words: “For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Hebrews 9:19-22). What do I mean by that? I mean that the cleansing of the copies of the heavenly things the author is speaking about is not the cleansing which took place every year on the Day of Atonement, but it is the cleansing which took place when the first Day of atonement had not yet been celebrated, that is to say, it is the cleansing of the sanctuary which took place immediately after it was set up. For the Scripture states that Moses (and not Aaron the high priest) “sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry” (Hebrews 9:21), and thus he cleansed those things. As for the time when Moses sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, the Scripture says that the sprinkling took place on the first day of the first month in the second year because the tabernacle was set up at God’s command “on the first day of the first month” (Exodus 40:1 – NKJV) in the second year, and on that day were anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, the altar of the burnt offering and all its utensils, the laver and its base (cf. Exodus 40:9-11). On that day Aaron and his sons were anointed so that they might serve God as priests (cf. Exodus 40:13-15). According to what is written in the book of Leviticus, on that day Moses killed the bull for the sin offering; “then he took the blood, and put some on the horns of the altar all around with his finger, and purified the altar. And he poured the blood at the base of the altar, and consecrated it, to make atonement for it” (Leviticus 8:15 - NKJV). I have pointed out to you this so that you may understand that the cleansing of the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry which is mentioned in the epistle to the Hebrews and taken as a type of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary is not the cleansing of the sanctuary which was performed by the high priest every year, but is the cleansing which was performed by Moses even before the first day of atonement. All this, of course, nullifies the great emphasis the Adventist Church puts on the cleansing of the sanctuary which took place on the day of atonement (however, it does not nullify the fact that the heavenly things themselves were cleansed with better sacrifices than these). Once again, therefore, Adventists contradict themselves greatly because the words of the epistle to the Hebrews, concerning the cleansing of the copies of the heavenly things, refer to the cleansing of the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry which was done by Moses, and not by Aaron the high priest; and that cleansing took place in the first month of the second year, thus prior to the first day of atonement (which was on the tenth day of the seventh month). However, there is something else to be said about the cleansing of the heavenly things, so that you may understand that Adventists are greatly mistaken and contradict themselves when they affirm that the heavenly things began to be cleansed in 1844. If the Old Covenant was dedicated when Moses sprinkled with the blood of calves and goats the people and both the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry, the New Covenant also was dedicated when Christ sprinkled with His own blood the believers in Christ. And if the New Covenant was dedicated by Christ
with the shedding of His blood, surely the heavenly sanctuary was cleansed a short time after He shed His own blood. Why do I say this? Because when the Old Covenant was dedicated, both the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry were sprinkled with blood after a short time the people were sprinkled with blood. Bear in mind that Moses sprinkled with blood both the book itself and all the people in the first days of the third month in the first year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt (cf. Exodus 19:1,16; 24:1-8), while he sprinkled the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry on the first day of the first month in the second year (cf. Exodus 40:1-2; Leviticus 8:15). Therefore, even if Christ had sprinkled with His own blood His disciples first, and then the heavenly sanctuary, the period of time between the two sprinklings would have been short: in this case it would have been a period of some weeks, that is, the time between His death and His ascension to heaven. We say all this because when the author of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks of the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary first, and then of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary, he refers to the dedication of the two covenants, for a short time before he says: “For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood” (Hebrews 9:16-18 - NKJV). Now consider carefully these words because they help us to understand the words which follow. For the writer says that a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives (as for the testament of Christ, if Christ had not died the testament would have had no power. Therefore, since Christ died, His Testament is in force: that is, since Christ shed His own blood for us His Testament is in force). At this point, the writer says: “Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood” (Hebrews 9:18 - NKJV), that is, both the second and the first covenant were dedicated with blood (the second with the blood of Christ, while the first with the blood of calves and goats). And he goes on saying that the first covenant was dedicated when Moses took the blood of calves and goats and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, and then likewise both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And then he says that “according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22 – NKJV). Therefore, when the author – a short time later – says: “Therefore it was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these” (Hebrews 9:23 – NKJV), he means: “For this reason it was necessary that the copies of the heavenly things should be purified with the blood of animal sacrifices, because according to the law almost all things are purified with blood (and the purification of the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry took place after the purification of the people). However, since those earthly things represented the heavenly things, the heavenly things themselves (being better than the earthly things because they are true and eternal) had to be purified with a better blood, that is, the blood of Christ. And in fact, Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood and not with blood of calves and goats.’ Therefore, if we read the above mentioned words in their context and we link them to one another well, we can see that the cleansing performed by Moses was not the annual cleansing performed by the high priest when he entered the Most Holy Place with blood that was not his own, but the cleansing he performed to dedicate the first covenant; and we can also see that the cleansing of the heavenly things was performed by Christ with His own blood a short time after His death, that is, when He ascended to heaven, so that He might dedicate the second Covenant, which is better and eternal. Instead, according to the Adventist Church, the cleansing of the copies of the heavenly things, of which the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks, is the cleansing that took place every year on the Day of atonement; but that’s not true because, as we have seen, the cleansing of the copies of the heavenly things is the cleansing that took place ‘once for all’ (I use this expression so that you may understand well) when the first Covenant was dedicated, for the earthly sanctuary (where the services of the first Covenant had to be performed) - in order that it might be used - had to be cleansed. And – still according to the Adventist Church – the cleansing of the heavenly things was performed by Christ (or rather was began by Christ) in 1844, while this is not true because if it were as they say we
should say that the New Covenant was fully dedicated by Christ in 1844 through the cleansing of the heavenly tabernacle (rather we should say that not even in 1844 the dedication of the New Covenant took place, for it will be fulfilled just before Christ's return) Therefore, if Adventists recognize that Christ dedicated the New Covenant with His own blood, they must recognize that the second Covenant was fully dedicated when Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary to cleanse it, that is, when He ascended to heaven, and not about eighteen centuries later! Otherwise they will contradict themselves because they will not be able to demonstrate that before 1844 the New Covenant had been already dedicated with the blood of Christ, for as it was necessary for the earthly tabernacle to be cleansed in order that the first covenant might be fully dedicated, so it was necessary for the heavenly tabernacle to be cleansed with the blood of Christ in order that the second covenant might be fully dedicated; but according to the Adventist Church the cleansing of the heavenly tabernacle took place in 1844!!

Let us now speak of another contradiction. Adventists say that the little horn represents also pagan Rome, and the trampling of the sanctuary represents the desolation of the temple of Jerusalem which was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the roman army, whose commander was Titus. Now, in order to be consistent with the explanation they give to the 2300 evenings and mornings of Daniel 8:14 (I remind you that Adventists use as a starting point for these evenings and mornings the year 457 B.C.), Adventists should say that in 1844 the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary in Jerusalem took place, thus the daily sacrifice was restored in that year. But – as you know – the temple of Jerusalem has not been rebuilt since 70 A.D: in that year pagan Rome took away from the Jews the continual sacrifice, which has not been restored ever since, for it is necessary for the temple to be rebuilt in order that the continual sacrifice might be restored. So we say, how can one say that the taking away of the daily service represents the destruction of the temple in 70 A.D., and at the same time that in 1844 that daily service was not restored because the temple of Jerusalem was not rebuilt? How is it that the heavenly sanctuary was 'cleansed' in 1844, while the earthly sanctuary was not cleansed?!!

Now let us examine another contradiction. Adventists use the year 457 B.C. as the starting point for both the 70 weeks and the 2300 years. Now, here is what Gabriel said to Daniel about the 70 weeks: “Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate” (Daniel 9:24-27). What do Adventists say about these words? They say that they clearly foretell the coming of the ‘Anointed One’, that is, Jesus Christ, and His atonement. So, since to them a day stands for a year, they come to the conclusion that 483 years (that is, the 7 weeks of Daniel 9:25 + the 62 weeks of Daniel 9:26) after 457 B.C. brings us to 27 A.D. which is the year in which Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit at the Jordan River. Then they say that the expression “in the midst of the week” indicates the time when Jesus would die for our sins, thus by adding about three years and a half we arrive at the spring of 31 A.D. (they say that even if A.D. 30 be taken as the crucifixion date, it is still in the middle of this last week of years). Now, even if we grant for the sake of argument that what they say is right, we would like to point out that according to the words of Daniel seventy weeks are determined to anoint the Most Holy (verse 24); therefore if Christ at the end of the seventy weeks (precisely in the midst of the last week) made a reconciliation for iniquity and brought in everlasting righteousness, He surely anointed the Most Holy, that is, the Most Holy Place which is in the heavenly sanctuary. Therefore the anointing of
the Most Holy Place took place in 30 or 31 A.D., that is, when Christ ascended to heaven. And if He anointed the Most Holy Place in the heavens, that means that He entered the Most Holy Place at that time, and thus it cannot be true that He entered the Most Holy Place in 1844 A.D. All this is confirmed also by the law, for it says that Moses anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it on the day it was set up, thus on the same day Moses cleansed the tabernacle with blood (cf. Exodus 40:1-12; Leviticus 8:1-36). Therefore, we infer that Christ entered the Most Holy Place to anoint it and cleanse it in 30 or 31 A.D. even from what Adventists say. However, what do Adventists make people believe? They make them believe that the anointing of the Most Holy Place took place immediately after the ascension of Christ to heaven (cf. Questions on Doctrine, page 287), while the cleansing of the Most Holy Place began in 1844. In other words, the anointing or consecration of the heavenly sanctuary took place in 30 or 31 A.D., while its cleansing began in 1844! They contradict themselves because, I say it again, the earthly tabernacle, which was a copy and shadow of the heavenly tabernacle, was anointed and cleansed on the same day it was set up, thus the heavenly tabernacle also had to be anointed and cleansed on the same day.

All these contradictions are nothing but the fruit of various wrong interpretations given by Adventists to several things, that is, the little horn, the sanctuary, the 2300 evenings and mornings, and the cleansing of the sanctuary, which according to them is the cleansing of the sanctuary spoken of in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Leviticus, while as a matter of fact it was a completely different cleansing, it was a cleansing very similar to the cleansing which took place in the days of king Hezekiah (726 B.C.). Here are the biblical words about the cleansing of the temple which took place centuries before the cleansing which took place in the second century B.C.: “He in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them. And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, And said unto them, Hear me, ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD God of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our God, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place unto the God of Israel. Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes. For, lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons and our daughters and our wives are in captivity for this. Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD God of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, be not now negligent: for the LORD hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense. Then the Levites arose, Mahath the son of Amasai, and Joel the son of Azariah, of the sons of Kohathites: and of the sons of Merari, Kish the son of Abdi, and Azariah the son of Jehalelel: and of the Gershonites; Joah the son of Zimmah, and Eden the son of Kish, and for the sons of Elizaphan; Shimri, and Jeiel: and of the sons of Asaph; Zechariah, and Mattaniah: And of the sons of Heman; Jehiel, and Shimei: and of the sons of Jeduthun; Shemaiah, and Uzziel. And they gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and came, according to the commandment of the king, by the words of the LORD, to cleanse the house of the LORD. And the priests went into the inner part of the house of the LORD, to cleanse it, and brought out all the uncleanliness that they found in the temple of the LORD into the court of the house of the LORD. And the Levites took it, to carry it out abroad into the brook Kidron. Now they began on the first day of the first month to sanctify, and on the eighth day of the month came they to the porch of the LORD: so they sanctified the house of the LORD in eight days; and in the sixteenth day of the first month they made an end. Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shewbread table, with all the vessels thereof. Moreover all the vessels, which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and, behold, they are before the altar of the LORD. Then Hezekiah the king rose
early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD. And they brought seven bullocks, and seven rams, and seven lambs, and seven he goats, for a sin offering for the kingdom, and for the sanctuary, and for Judah. And he commanded the priests the sons of Aaron to offer them on the altar of the LORD. So they killed the bullocks, and the priests received the blood, and sprinkled it on the altar: likewise, when they had killed the rams, they sprinkled the blood upon the altar: they killed also the lambs, and they sprinkled the blood upon the altar. And they brought forth the he goats for the sin offering before the king and the congregation; and they laid their hands upon them: And the priests killed them, and they made reconciliation with their blood upon the altar, to make an atonement for all Israel: for the king commanded that the burnt offering and the sin offering should be made for all Israel. And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet: for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets. And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets. And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel. And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped. Moreover Hezekiah the king and the princes commanded the Levites to sing praise unto the LORD with the words of David, and of Asaph the seer. And they sang praises with gladness, and they bowed their heads and worshipped. Then Hezekiah answered and said, Now ye have consecrated yourselves unto the LORD, come near and bring sacrifices and thank offerings into the house of the LORD. And the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings; and as many as were of a free heart burnt offerings. And the number of the burnt offerings, which the congregation brought, was threescore and ten bullocks, an hundred rams, and two hundred lambs: all these were for a burnt offering to the LORD. And the consecrated things were six hundred oxen and three thousand sheep. But the priests were too few, so that they could not flay all the burnt offerings: wherefore their brethren the Levites did help them, till the work was ended, and until the other priests had sanctified themselves: for the Levites were more upright in heart to sanctify themselves than the priests. And also the burnt offerings were in abundance, with the fat of the peace offerings, and the drink offerings for every burnt offering. So the service of the house of the LORD was set in order. And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people, that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly” (2 Chronicles 29:3-36).

After reading these words, we cannot but find a close resemblance between them and the words of the first book of Maccabees I quoted before. Please note that the cleansing which took place in the days of Hezekiah took place in the first month; therefore even in that case it was not the cleansing of the temple which had to take place on the Day of atonement, for the Day of atonement was on the tenth day of the seventh month.

The Scripture does not authorize us to talk about two phases of the ministry of Jesus in the heavenly sanctuary

The heavenly sanctuary, which was shown to Moses on Mount Sinai, consisted of the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place. I have to admit this because – as I said before – when Moses was about to make the tabernacle God said to him: “See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain” (Hebrews 8:5 - NKJV), and we know that the earthly tabernacle had two rooms, that is, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, and a veil separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place, as it is written: “And thou shalt make a vail of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen of cunning work: with cherubims shall it be made: And thou shalt hang it upon four pillars of shittim wood overlaid with gold: their hooks shall be of gold, upon the four sockets of silver. And thou shalt hang up the vail under the taches, that thou mayest bring in thither within the vail the ark of the testimony: and the vail shall divide unto you
between the holy place and the most holy. And thou shalt put the mercy seat upon the ark of the testimony in the most holy place. And thou shalt set the table without the vail, and the candlestick over against the table on the side of the tabernacle toward the south: and thou shalt put the table on the north side” (Exodus 26:31-35). However, when we talk about the heavenly sanctuary we must bear in mind that the Scripture calls it “the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation” (Hebrews 9:11 – NKJV). Someone may say that in the heavenly sanctuary which was shown to Moses by God there was not such a division, for the sanctuary was a heavenly one; we do not feel like denying such a division for God commanded Moses to make all things according to the pattern shown him on the mountain. The words that God spoke to Moses make us understand that in heaven the sanctuary and all that is in it look like the earthly sanctuary and all that was in it. This is confirmed by the book of Revelation where we read that John saw “the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven” (Revelation 15:5 – NKJV), which “was filled with smoke from the glory of God and from His power” (Revelation 15:8 – NKJV). In this book we read also that John saw the golden altar which was before the throne of God (cf. Revelation 8:3-4), and the ark of His covenant in His temple (cf. Revelation 11:19). Therefore, since John saw in heaven the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony, the ark of God’s covenant, the golden altar, we admit that the heavenly sanctuary consisted of two rooms, that is, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, just as the earthly sanctuary. However, even though the Scripture admits implicitly that in the heavenly sanctuary there was a Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, the Scripture does not speak of two phases of the work of intercession of Jesus in heaven. In other words, the Scripture does not say that Jesus, after He ascended to heaven, had to remain in the Holy Place for a long time (about eighteen centuries) before entering the Most Holy Place (bear in mind that the canon of the Scriptures was completed in the first century after Christ, therefore if at that time Christ was still in the Holy Place the apostles would have written to the saints that He would enter the Most Holy Place in the future). Rather the Scripture says several times that when Jesus ascended to heaven He sat down at the right of God, that is, by God. For instance Mark says: “So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19), and the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says: “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:24), and also: “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope offered to us” (Hebrews 6:17-20 – The New International Version reads: “Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath, God did this so that, by two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled to take hold of the hope offered to us may be greatly encouraged. We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf. He has become a high priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek”), and again: “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:11-12). Jesus Himself said to John: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21), and bear in mind that the golden altar seen by John – in the earthly sanctuary the copy and shadow of the heavenly golden altar was put in the Holy Place before the veil, which separated the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place – was before the throne of God in heaven. Furthermore, if Adventists were right that would mean that in the days of the apostles Jesus was in the Holy Place rather than in the Most Holy Place; so His work of intercession was not perfect because it was completed in 1844, the year when He
passed from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place!! But that cannot be true, for the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, who lived more than one thousand and seven hundred years before 1844, when Ellen G. White and many others did not exist, affirmed: “But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:24-25). And where did Jesus live at that time to make intercession for those who believed on Him and to save them to the uttermost? In the heavenly sanctuary, in the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. In other words, Jesus was in the ‘Most Holy Place’, that is: “behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered [I add between brackets: on the same day He ascended to heaven] on our behalf” (Hebrews 6:19-20 – NIV). Is this not confirmed by the law of Moses in that according to the law of Moses, the same law that Adventists quote to support the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary which began in 1844 (according to them, in that year the Day of Atonement began), on the day of atonement the High Priest, after he had killed the animal which had to be offered as a sin offering, had to enter the Most Holy Place behind the veil at once, with the blood of that animal sacrifice, to sprinkle that blood with his finger on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat? Note that he did not have to remain for some hours in the Holy Place before entering the Most Holy Place, but he had to enter the Most Holy Place at once (cf. Leviticus 16:3-15). Is Jesus not the High Priest, the Mediator of the New Covenant, who, after He had made atonement for our sins, entered the tabernacle which is not of this creation? Why then did the true High Priest, after He offered Himself and entered the heavenly sanctuary, need to remain with His own blood in the Holy Place for eighteen centuries? Why could He not enter the Most Holy Place on the same day He ascended to heaven? Is this not another proof that Adventists are mistaken when they affirm that Jesus, after He ascended to heaven, performed His work of atonement in the Holy Place for eighteen centuries, and after that period of time He entered the Most Holy Place? As you can see, the very same law of Moses used by Adventists nullify this teaching of theirs. 

I say also this: if Jesus, as Adventists say, after His ascension to heaven had remained inside the Holy Place till 1844, how could the author of the epistle to the Hebrews say: “Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19-22 – NIV)? I say, “How could the believers who lived at that time have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place if Jesus was still in the Holy Place? I am sure that if Jesus at that time had been in the Holy Place they could not have had confidence to enter the Most Holy Place. That’s why we reject this doctrine taught by the Adventist Church, which affirms that Jesus passed from the Holy Place to the Most Holy Place in 1844; because it contradicts the truth. 

Let me tell you something else. When Jesus died on the cross “the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom” (Matthew 27:51 – NKJV), that is, the veil of the temple in Jerusalem, which was a copy and shadow of the heavenly temple was torn in two. That means that Christ, through His flesh (for the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says “through the veil, that is, His flesh” Hebrews 10:20 – NKJV), made manifest the way into the Most Holy Place; thus all those who believe in Him have confidence to draw near to the throne of God (before which there is the golden altar). Now, if when Jesus ascended to heaven He entered the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary, and not the Most Holy Place, that means that the above mentioned sign God gave at the death of Christ did not have any meaning, because our High Priest, once ascended to heaven, was not able to minister in the Most Holy Place at once, for He had to wait for eighteen centuries, since it was in 1844 that – according to the Adventist Church – He entered the Most Holy Place? Is not all this diabolical? Of course, it is; because if it were as Adventists claim, the New Covenant dedicated by Jesus would not be better than the Old Covenant; for the High Priest of the New Covenant would have had some limitations in heaven, just as the high priest of the Old Covenant had some limitations on the earth, in that he could not
enter the Most Holy Place at just any time but only once a year, that is, on the day of atonement, as God said to Moses: “Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die” (Leviticus 16:2 – NIV). How is it that the Son of God, the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, could not enter the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary at once, when He Himself, after His resurrection, said: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18 – NKJV)? Did He have really all authority even in heaven, after He rose from the dead? Yes, He did, therefore He had also power to enter the Most Holy Place at once. In addition to this, if it were as Adventists say, those who did put their faith in Jesus before the year 1844, would have had some limitations too. Why? Because He was in the Holy Place, and He had not yet made manifest the way into the Most Holy Place. In other words, the disciples of Jesus would have been (till 1844) in a position similar to that of the sons of Aaron the high priest, who could enter the Holy Place but they could not enter the Most Holy Place. The disciples of Jesus would not have had confidence to enter the Most Holy Place before 1844, even though the High Priest of their faith had shed His own blood to consecrate the way into the Most Holy Place. On the other hand, the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says that the way into the Most Holy Place “was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing” (Hebrews 9:8 – NKJV). The first tabernacle is the first part of the earthly tabernacle, that is, the Holy Place (cf. Hebrews 9:2). The Holy Place, according to the Scripture, “was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation” (Hebrews 9:9-10). We should pay much attention to these words because when they were written the temple of Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed (therefore at that time the priests entered the Holy Place to accomplish the service of God, and the high priest entered the Most Holy Place once a year); and also because they affirm that the Holy Place or first tabernacle is symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot take away sins from the conscience of the worshipers (bear in mind that to the author of that epistle the present time was the time in which he lived). In other words, the Scripture says, ‘The first tabernacle represents the period of time during which gifts and sacrifices are offered, which cannot blot out sins. However, even though the first tabernacle still exists, and sacrifices are being offered which cannot take away sins, we have now the realities themselves because Christ came as high priest and He has entered the heavenly sanctuary with His own blood which cleanses us from all sins. All those atoning sacrifices were just fleshly ordinances imposed till the time of reformation which was fulfilled when Christ entered the heavenly sanctuary. Therefore the reformation or change has taken place, for Christ entered the Most Holy Place in heaven with His own blood, once for all. He does not accomplish the service of God in the Most Holy Place only once a year (otherwise He would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world), for He offered Himself once for all and by the sacrifice of Himself He put away sin, enabling thus all those who rely upon His intercession to enter the Most Holy Place.’ As things are, if even after the death of Jesus and His resurrection and ascension to heaven the disciples of Jesus could not enter the Most Holy Place, that would have meant that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed, and that the shadow had not yet been replaced with the reality itself. All these things would have nullified in a certain measure the perfect work done by Christ for the remission of our sins. And this is what Adventists have done, for they claim that Christ, before the year 1844, forgave sins but He did not blot them out! In other words, they say that Christ died on the cross both to forgive sins and to blot them out, but He has been able to blot them out only since 1844 (as we saw before, He will blot out all the sins just before His return from heaven). But I will come back to this heresy later.

In the light of all these reasonings of mine, which are based on the Holy Scripture, therefore, the teaching of Ellen G. White according to which our High Priest performed till 1844 a work of atonement similar to the work which was performed by every priest in the Holy Place daily (without entering the Most Holy Place), while in 1844 He entered the Most Holy Place for that
year began the true day of atonement, is a false teaching for it contradicts the Word of God. The Scripture teaches that Jesus, after He offered Himself, entered the Most Holy Place with His own blood to purchase with it eternal redemption and to enable us to enter the Most Holy Place. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

The sins of those who believe in Jesus have been already blotted out

As we saw before, Ellen G. White not only affirmed that Jesus remained in the Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary till 1844 but also affirmed that “For eighteen centuries this work of ministration continued in the first apartment of the sanctuary. The blood of Christ, pleaded in behalf of penitent believers, secured their pardon and acceptance with the Father, yet their sins still remained upon the books of record”. In other words, before October 22, 1844, Jesus forgave the sins of those who believed on Him but He could not blot them out, for the blotting of their sins will take place at the end of the great day of atonement which began in 1844 (through the investigative judgement). Ellen White said also: “The blood of Christ, while it was to release the repentant sinner from the condemnation of the law, was not to cancel the sin; it would stand on record in the sanctuary until the final atonement ...” (Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, Mountain View: Pacific Press, 1913, page 357).

This doctrine is false because it diminishes the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ, which He shed on the cross of Golgotha. Let no one deceive you, brethren; when Jesus Christ forgave those who repented and believed in Him, their sins were blotted out from their conscience as well as from the heavenly books. Therefore, the believers who lived before 1844, when they believed, received the blotting out of their sins from the books in which they had been recorded. If Jesus had not been able to blot out the sins of His disciples before 1844, the following promises made by God would have been nullified: “And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Hebrews 10:17); “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you” (Ezekiel 36:25); “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee” (Isaiah 44:22). Furthermore, how could Paul say to the saints of Colosse: “And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:13-14)? And how could John say to the saints: “The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7)?

Someone may ask, ‘Is Jesus unable to blot out the sins of those who believe in Him even after October 22, 1844, according to the Adventist Church?’ Yes, He is still unable to do such a thing, for according to Ellen G. White the sins of those who have repented are placed by faith on Jesus and transferred to the heavenly sanctuary: ‘As anciently the sins of the people were by faith placed upon the sin offering and through its blood transferred, in figure, to the earthly sanctuary, so in the new covenant the sins of the repentant are by faith placed upon Christ and transferred, in fact, to the heavenly sanctuary’ (*The Great Controversy*, page 421). This is confirmed by *Questions on Doctrine*: “The actual blotting out of sin, therefore, could not take place the moment when a sin is forgiven, because subsequent deeds and attitudes may affect the final decision. Instead, the sin remains on the record until the life is complete – in fact, the Scriptures indicate it remains until the judgement” (*Questions on Doctrine*, page 441). So when are the sins of the believers blotted out? As I said before, when they are acquitted in the investigative judgement, for this is what we read in *Questions on Doctrine*: ‘When Christ takes a case in the heavenly court, there is not the slightest possibility of His losing, for He knows all the facts, and He is able to apply the remedy. When He confesses before God and the holy angels that the repentant sinner is clothed in the robe of His own spotless character (this is the white robe that will be given him), no one in the universe can deny to that saved man an entrance into the eternal kingdom of righteousness. Then, of course, is the time for his sins to be blotted out forever, for Christ has claimed him for His own’ (*Questions on Doctrine*, page 442). Ellen White
said that the blotting out of sins will take place at the end of the day of Atonement (which began in 1844).

This is untrue for the Scripture states that when we believed in Christ, Christ not only forgave us our sins, but also blotted out our sins by His blood, for the Scripture says: “I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee” (Isaiah 44:22), and again: “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:12). In the light of the above mentioned passages of the Scripture, therefore, the doctrine of the Adventist Church according to which there is a difference between the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of sins, for forgiveness is obtained by faith when one believes while the blotting out of sins is obtained when the investigative judgement is over, is FALSE. The reason is – I say it again – that both forgiveness and the blotting out of sins are received when one repents and turns to Christ, for one day Peter said to the Jews: “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out ….” (Acts 3:19 - NKJV). These words clearly nullify the doctrine of the investigative judgement taught by Adventists, for Peter did not say ‘that your sins may be blotted out later’ but ‘that your sins may be blotted out’, which means that when one repents and turns to Christ, He blots out all his sins at once. However, there are still some Adventists who quote the above mentioned words as they are translated in the King James Version: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”. But this translation is wrong, because the Greek does not say ‘when the times of refreshing shall come …’ but ‘so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord’ (NKJV).

Take heed to yourselves, brothers, because this so called distinction between forgiveness and the blotting out of sins tends to make believers doubt about their salvation. Let no one deceive you.

Christ is conducting no investigative judgement in heaven

The Scripture does not teach that Christ is conducting an investigative judgement in heaven about the saints who lived in the past and the saints who are still alive.

As for the saints who lived in the past and died in Christ, they are in the presence of the Lord in heaven and there they are waiting for the resurrection. At the resurrection they will obtain an immortal body and will appear before the judgement seat of Christ so that they may be rewarded.

As for those who will remain till the coming of the Lord, after the dead in Christ are raised from the dead, they will be changed and will appear together with the resurrected saints before the judgement seat of Christ.

On that day all of them will receive the things done in the body, according to what they have done, whether good or bad. When Paul said to the Corinthians: “For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10 – NKJV), he referred to this event which is still to take place in the heavenly places at the time appointed by God. On that occasion all the resurrected saints and all those who will be changed will receive their reward according to their labor in the Lord, according to how much they perfected holiness on the earth. Therefore those who are dead in Christ, being in glory, have their names written in the book of life and will never be blotted out of that book; they are waiting for their reward which they have earned through their good works done on earth after their new birth. Someone may ask: ‘What about those sins of theirs which are hidden or were unconfessed to God?’ My answer is this, ‘God will certainly judge them rightly, He knows everything and He commits no injustice’.

As for us who are still alive on earth, it must be said that our name will remain in the book of life till the end if we continue in the faith and good works (for it is evident that he who continues in the faith continues in the good works as well for he has a true faith). “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels” (Revelations 3:5), says the Lord.
Jesus to each one of us. But if we cease to believe in the name of the Son of God — that is, if we lose — our name will be blotted out of the book of life and when we die we will go to hell. Therefore, if we die in Christ we will meet our brothers who have preceded us in heaven and with them we will wait for the resurrection; but if we die in our sins we will go to perdition and we will wait for the eternal condemnation.

In other words - I insist so that the concept might be as clear as possible – all those who have died in Christ will certainly counted worthy to take part in the resurrection of the just for their names have remained in the book of life; and when that glorious day comes they will be rewarded according to their works which God knows perfectly. As for us also who remain till the coming of the Lord there will be no investigative judgement (as it is understood by Adventists); first of all because Christ knows us fully, and secondly because we know that our names are written in the book of life and will remain there forever (if we continue in the faith till the end); so, by the grace of God, we feel worthy — for we have become worthy — to take part in the future translation, and we can say that when Christ returns we will certainly be changed and we will meet the Lord in the air. The saints of old also, who waited for the coming of Christ, had this confidence, for Paul said to the Thessalonians: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:17), and to the Corinthians: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51).

Therefore, the name of a believer can be blotted out of the book of life, for — as we saw before — the Scripture admits such a possibility, but this can happen only while he is still alive on the earth if he commits the sin which leads to death (which consist in forsaking and denying the Lord). This was confirmed by God when He said to Moses: “Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book” (Exodus 32:33). The author of the epistle to the Hebrews also confirms this in these terms: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Hebrews 6:4-8), and in these terms also: “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” (Hebrews 10:26-29). But the blotting out of the name of a believer can by no means take place after a believer has died in Christ, for he is in the presence of the Lord in heaven. It should be noted, therefore, that Adventists can say that at the moment in heaven there is an investigative judgement of all the believers who are dead because they deny that those who died in Christ are already in heaven in the presence of the Lord; for according to them the dead in Christ do not exist because men don’t have an immortal soul. They exist only God’s memory. This is something which should not be overlooked, for if Adventists affirmed that when believers die they go to be with the Lord in heaven there would be no need of this investigative judgement to determine whether they are worthy of eternal life or not. Therefore, this false doctrine about the investigative judgement is strictly linked with another false doctrine taught by the Adventist Church, which says that man does not possess a soul in his body. Therefore, when we talk with Adventists we need to insist on the existence of an immortal soul in the body, and on the fact that when a believer dies he goes to heaven at once. For if they acknowledge that a believer has an immortal soul which continues to live after death, they will forsake the doctrine of the investigative judgement for it will prove to be a false doctrine.
It is, of course, true that God tests us, and He judges us as well; but this judgement of which Peter speaks in his first epistle is not the investigative judgement taught by the Adventists for Jesus said: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24 – NKJV), so we know that we will not come into judgement. At this point you may ask, ‘What is the judgement Peter speaks of in his first epistle when he says: “For the time has come for judgement to begin at the house of God ….”’ (1 Peter 4:17 – NKJV)? It is a correction or punishment which God inflicts upon us, who are His children, so that we may be partakers of His holiness. This is confirmed by Paul when he says to the Corinthians: “For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:31-32 – NKJV).

Therefore, the doctrine of the investigative judgement must be rejected for the following reasons: 1) because it makes people believe that the dead in Christ are being judged and the name of some of them is retained in the book of life while the name of some others is blotted out of the book of life, which is something that cannot happen because the dead in Christ are in heaven and are waiting for the resurrection to be rewarded for their good deeds and their names cannot be blotted out of the book of life; 2) because according to this doctrine the name of a disciple of Christ can be blotted out of the book of life very easily, for, as we saw before, Ellen White said: ‘When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life, and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God’s remembrance’ (The Great Controversy, page 483). In other words, if you have made just one mistake and you forgot to confess it to God in order to be forgiven, your name will be blotted out of the book of life! These words of Ellen White are really disgusting, they make people believe that our God is merciless rather than merciful; in addition to this, these disgusting words make people believe that our Advocate, that is, Jesus Christ, is unable to make intercession for us. Furthermore, these words of Ellen White make Adventists forget that God not only forgive our debts but also make us pay for our debts sometimes. Listen to these words spoken by Jesus: “Therefore if your bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny” (Matthew 5:23-26 - NKJV).

There are some other reasons why the doctrine of the investigative judgement must be rejected. The 23rd article of the Fundamental Beliefs says among other things: ‘The investigative judgment reveals to heavenly intelligences who among the dead are asleep in Christ and therefore, in Him, are deemed worthy to have part in the first resurrection. It also makes manifest who among the living are abiding in Christ, keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, and in Him, therefore, are ready for translation into His everlasting kingdom.’ Such a statement nullify the biblical passage which says that “The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Timothy 2:19 – NKJV), and the following words spoken by Jesus: “I know My sheep” (John 10:14 – NKJV). I mean that, as for the dead in Christ, Christ knows those He has to raise from the dead on the last day and He does not need to conduct an investigative judgement about them to determine whether they are worthy to take part in the first resurrection or not. Did Jesus not say one day: “And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:40 – NKJV). Why then should Christ conduct an investigative judgement about the dead in Christ to determine which of the dead in Christ will take part in the first resurrection, when the Scripture clearly says that Christ will raise them up and they all will take part in the resurrection of life? As for the saints who are still alive, they are sure that when Jesus comes they will be changed, that is, they will
be translated into His kingdom, for the Scripture says: “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51 – NKJV). In this case also, therefore, there is no need of an investigative judgement conducted by Christ to determine which of the believers will be changed at the coming of Christ. Someone may ask, ‘What about those who believe for a while and then they draw back to perdition, and at the coming of Christ they will not be changed and will not go to be with the Lord?’ In this case also there is no need of an investigative judgement – as it is understood by the Adventist Church – for the Lord knows those who are His (2 Timothy 2:19), and He knows very well who they are who draw back, without the help of an investigative judgement.

The investigative judgement must be rejected because it attacks the Biblical teaching on salvation by grace alone.

The investigative judgement attacks and affects the Biblical teaching on salvation by grace alone and the assurance of salvation the believer has. Here are two statements made by two Adventists which confirm what I have just said.

Ellen G. White said: “All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life’ (The Great Controversy, page 483). This means that the blotting out of the sins of the believers will take place at the end of the investigative judgement, if they are faithful to the law of God (bear in mind that the commandment of the Sabbath day is part of this law).

William Henry Branson (who was President of the General Conference of the Adventist Church from 1950 to 1954) said: ‘A Christian who through faith in Jesus Christ has faithfully kept the law’s requirements will be acquitted [in the investigative judgement]; there is no condemnation, for the law finds no fault in him. If, on the other hand, it is found that one has broken even a single precept, and this transgression is unconfessed, he will be dealt with just as if he had broken all ten’ (Drama of the Ages, page 351).

As you can see, according to Adventists, the sins of a believer will be blotted out if he has faithfully kept the law, that is, the ten commandments (and I remind you that among these commandments there is also the commandment about the Sabbath day). If he breaks even a single precept and this transgression is unconfessed, he will by no means be acquitted! Adventists are indeed like the Galatians who, having begun in the Spirit, attempted to be made perfect by the flesh keeping the law. What did Paul write to them? He wrote: ‘O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? … You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace” (Galatians 3:1; 5:4 - NKJV). Have you Adventists never read that by the deeds of the law – and I put much emphasis on the keeping of the Sabbath, that is, the fourth commandment - no flesh will be justified in the sight of God? Don’t you Adventists know that “there is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1 – NKJV)? In other words, don’t you know that salvation is by grace alone, and to think that after one has believed he can be justified by keeping the law is an insult to the work of atonement made by Christ once for all so that faith alone might be accounted to us for righteousness?

Be careful, therefore, when you hear Adventists speak of salvation; for if on the one hand they teach that salvation is by grace, on the other hand they postpone the cleansing of the sins of a believer until the end of the investigative judgement, and this cleansing will take place if the believer has kept faithfully all the law. In other words, Adventists say to those who have believed in Christ, ‘Of course, you are forgiven, however your sins will be blotted out in the future if you keep the Sabbath, etc.’ Particularly the precept of the Sabbath day, for Ellen White ‘saw’ a halo of glory around the fourth commandment. The names of those who do not keep it and do not confess their sin will be blotted out of the book of life!
At this point, we wonder, ‘How can a believer be of good cheer? How can a believer be sure he has been saved and his sins have been forgotten by God?’ The answer is, ‘He can’t.’ Therefore, the doctrine of the investigative judgement is very dangerous. Abhor it, for it tends to make us think that our sins have not yet been blotted out, and that they will be blotted out when the investigative judgement about us is finished, if we have kept all the law and I remind you that the law includes the commandment of the Sabbath day (which is highly exalted by Adventists). Let no one deceive you, brothers; by faith you have received the remission of sin, therefore all your sins have been blotted out by the blood of Jesus Christ. Be of good cheer; see that you please God in all things and confess to Him all your sins so that He might cleanse you.

The interpretation given by Adventists to the passages of the book of Leviticus which speak of the atoning sacrifices which were offered daily and on the day of atonement is wrong

The doctrine of the investigative judgement is based on the doctrine according to which when a man repents and believes his sins are forgiven, but not yet blotted out, for they are transferred to the heavenly sanctuary where they will stand till the end of the investigative judgement. Adventists come to this conclusion for they interpret in a peculiar way some passages of the book of Leviticus which speak of the atonement of sins which God commanded to do. Now according to the levitical law, when the congregation of Israel or a ruler or anyone of the common people had sinned they had to offer some atoning sacrifices for their sin. By these sacrifices their sins were forgiven, for at the end of the description of each sacrifice that had to be offered and of the atonement that had to be made by the priest we read the following words: “So the priest shall make atonement for them [the children of Israel], and it shall be forgiven them” (Leviticus 4:20 – NKJV; “So the priest shall make atonement for him [one of the rulers] concerning his sin, and it shall be forgiven him” (Leviticus 4:26 – NKJV); “So the priest shall make atonement for him [anyone of the common people], and it shall be forgiven him” (Leviticus 4:31 – NKJV). As you can see, in all the above mentioned cases it is written that the sin was forgiven him who offered the sacrifice prescribed by the law for his sin. We should bear in mind that this atonement could be made by a priest because the blood of the animal sacrifice, which was offered for the sin, was not to be brought behind the veil, that is, inside the Most Holy Place. That's what happened every day. However, there was a day on which the High Priest had to offer some animal sacrifices for his own sins, and for the sins of the people, and had to bring the blood of those animals inside the Most Holy Place to sprinkle it on the mercy seat and before the mercy seat. On that day, which was the tenth day of the seventh month, the High Priest made atonement not only for the sins of the people, but also for the sanctuary, for the tabernacle of meeting and for the altar (cf. Leviticus 16:33). What do Adventists say about the blood which was offered daily and the blood which was offered on the day of atonement? They say: ‘When the blood was sprinkled, the sin was recorded in the sanctuary. … The sins of the Israelites, recorded in the sanctuary by the shed blood of the sacrificial victims, were removed and totally disposed of on the Day of Atonement’ (Questions on Doctrine, page 432). In other words, they say that through the blood of the sacrificial victims which were offered daily the sins were forgiven and also recorded in the earthly sanctuary; while by the blood which was shed on the day of atonement those sins were not only forgiven but also blotted out. And inasmuch as Adventists affirm that the daily service performed by the priests represents the heavenly ministry which Christ performed from His ascension to 1844, and the day of atonement represents the true day of atonement which began in 1844, they reach the conclusion that prior to 1844 sins were forgiven but not yet blotted out for they were recorded in the heavenly sanctuary which was represented by the man-made sanctuary, while from 1844 on Christ, the High Priest, having entered the Most Holy Place, is able to blot out the sins of those who believed on Him prior to that date as well as of the sins of those who have believed in Him since the year 1844. However, as we saw before, their sins have not yet been blotted out for the blotting out of all the sins will be completed at the end of the investigative judgement.
Let me tell you first of all that the above mentioned interpretation according to which by the blood which was offered for the sins daily or occasionally sins were forgiven and at the same time recorded in the sanctuary, while by the blood which was offered on the day of atonement sins were blotted out, is not supported by the law. In other words, nowhere does the law say or teach that the effect of the atonement made on the day of atonement was different from the effect of the atonement made on the other days of the year. Both atonements were efficacious toward those who offered the sin offering. There is no indication whatever that the atonement for the souls of those who offered the sin offering happened only on the Day of Atonement. Otherwise God would not have said about the atonement which was made daily or occasionally for the congregation of Israel: “So the priest shall make atonement for them [the children of Israel], and it shall be forgiven them” (Leviticus 4:20 – NKJV). We really do not understand why the sprinkling of the blood of the daily or occasional sacrifices, which were offered by the priests for the sins of the people, transferred the sins to the sanctuary, whereas the sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifices which were offered by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement took away those sins and blotted them out. If things were as Adventists teach, then, we should come to the conclusion that neither the animal which was offered as a sin offering daily nor the animal which was offered as a sin offering on the day of atonement foreshadowed the perfect sacrifice of Christ, for only the blood of those animals which were offered as sin offering on the day of atonement could blot out the sins of the people whereas the blood sprinkled daily could not blot out the sins of the worshipers. However, if we reached this conclusion, we would be wrong. Instead, we say that the atoning sacrifices spoken of in the book of Leviticus are a shadow of the perfect sacrifice of Christ which had to be offered in the fullness of the time: no matter if they were offered daily or occasionally or on the day of atonement, they were all a shadow of the sacrifice of Christ. For we should never forget that all the atoning sacrifices which were offered under the law could not blot out the sins of the people, for “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4 – NKJV). When the Scripture says ‘the blood of bulls and goats’ it refers also to the blood which was offered for the sins of the people on the Day of Atonement. If, then, not even the blood which was shed on the Day of Atonement could take away sins, why did God appoint that day? He certainly appointed that day for a purpose: according to what is written in the epistle to the Hebrews we believe that the distinction between the sprinkling of the blood before the veil (that is, in the Holy Place) and the sprinkling of the blood within the veil (that is, in the Most Holy Place), was made by God under the law to show this, that the way into the Most Holy Place “was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing” (Hebrews 9:8 – NKJV), and that one day Christ, the future High Priest, instead of entering the Most Holy Place of an earthly sanctuary with blood of animal sacrifices, would enter heaven itself with His own blood, and there would be no more need to offer sin offerings.

As you can see, the investigative judgement is based on a mistaken application of the Old Testament sacrificial system to the work of intercession of Christ.

Let me explain some passages of the Scripture quoted by Adventists to support the investigative judgement

In the Holy Scriptures there are several passages which speak of judgement, but no one of them refers to the investigative judgement which — according to Adventists — Christ has been conducting since 1844. I say it again, no one of them refers to the investigative judgement. However, as it happens in such cases, Adventists take some of them and give them wrong interpretations to make them say what actually they do not say. In other words, instead of taking captive their thoughts to make them obedient to the Word of God, they take captive the Word of God to make it obedient to their strange thoughts.

Let us now consider some of the passages of the Scripture which are taken by Adventists to support the investigative judgement.
Peter says: “For the time has come for judgement to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17 – NKJV).

Adventists see in these words of Peter the investigative judgement; as far as we are concerned, we do not see the investigative judgement in the words of Peter, and we are sure that all those who see spiritually don’t see the investigative judgement in the above mentioned words either. The judgement of which Peter speaks is mentioned by Peter a short time before when he says: “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Peter 4:12 – NKJV). The judgement of God consisted in trials that the saints had to face because of their faith. Those trials were judgements of God whose purpose was to make the saints partakers of the holiness of God, that is to say, they were corrections inflicted by God upon His elect. To confirm this I remind you of the following words Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ““For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:31-32 – NKJV).

Daniel says: “I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened” (Daniel 7:9-10).

These words do not refer to any investigative judgement, but rather they refer to the judgement which will take place on that day.

John says in the book of Revelation: “And I saw an other angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters” (Revelation 14:6-7).

These words have nothing to do with the investigative judgement taught by the Adventist Church, for they refer to the judgement to come which is to take place on that day. These words follow these other words which John heard from the twenty four elders when the seventh angel sounded: “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldst give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldst destroy them which destroy the earth” (Revelation 11:18). Has the wrath of God come? No, it hasn’t, therefore the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that God should reward His servants the prophets and the saints, and should destroy those who destroy the earth, hasn’t come either.

Jesus said: “Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses” (Matthew 18:23-35).
Adventists quote this parable of Jesus to show from the Scripture that there is a difference between the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of sins. Here is what they say in *Questions on Doctrine*: ‘Scripture clearly illustrates the difference between forgiveness and the blotting out of sin. Take, for example, Matthew 18:23-35. Here reference is made to a servant who owed his king ten thousand talents. Having nothing wherewith to pay, he begs for mercy, the king forgives him the debt, and he goes off greatly relieved. However, he finds a fellow servant who owes him a mere hundred pence. This second man likewise has nothing with which to pay, and begs for mercy and for time to pay what is owed. But although the first servant has been forgiven, he now acts in unkindly and brutal fashion toward his fellow servant, shows him no mercy, and casts him into prison. When the king hears this, he is wroth, and casts the servant whom he has forgiven into prison till he shall pay all his debt. Here is a case where forgiveness granted was withdrawn’ (*Questions on Doctrine*, pages 439-440). However, Adventists wilfully forget that Jesus did not tell this parable to explain that there is a difference between the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of sins – for such a difference does not exist – but to explain that if we refuse to forgive men their sins, neither will our heavenly Father forgive our sins. Did Jesus not say: “But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:15 – NKJV)? How can one deduce from this parable that there is a difference between the forgiveness of sins and the blotting out of sins, for the former takes place when one repents and believes while the latter will take place after an investigative judgement? I think that anyone who doesn’t understand the meaning of this parable is blind.

The live goat for Azazel

Adventists say that when the investigative judgement closes, the Lord will come out of the Most Holy Place, where He is at the moment, and will place the sins of all men upon the head of Satan, and then He will return to earth, and His reward will be with Him to give to every man as his work shall be. They apply to Christ what the high priest did on the Day of Atonement, for they say that just as Aaron, after he had made atonement for the sins, came out of the Most Holy Place and placed his hands on the head of the live goat and confessed over it all the iniquities of the children of Israel, putting all their sins upon the head of the goat, and then he sent it away into the wilderness (cf. Leviticus 16:20-21), so when Christ comes out of the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary He will put the sins of all men upon Satan (for the live goat for Azazel stands for Satan) who will have to bear them for a thousand years upon the earth. This is the last phase of the investigative judgement.

First of all it must said that no one knows exactly the meaning of the word Azazel mentioned in the book of Leviticus. Some say that Azazel refers to Satan, and others suggest that it designates a wilderness demon. Now Adventists are sure that Azazel means Satan; however, as we have seen, they also affirm that the live goat for Azazel is Satan. I would like to ask them the following questions, then, ‘If Azazel is Satan and the live goat for Azazel, which had to be sent away into the wilderness with the sins of all children of Israel upon its head, stands for Satan, what is the point of saying that the second goat was Satan and was sent to or for Satan?’ If you read carefully the words concerning the goat for Azazel, you will see that it is written: “But the goat chosen by lot as the scapegoat shall be presented alive before the Lord to be used for making atonement by sending it into the desert as a scapegoat” (Leviticus 16:10 – NIV), which means that the live goat, which was not to be killed and which was for Azazel, also was to be used for making atonement for the sins of the children of Israel. And bear in mind that this goat had to be without defect like the male goat which was offered on the other days to make atonement for the sin of a ruler (cf. Leviticus 4:22-24). As things are, therefore, how can you say that the male goat without defect for Azazel is Satan? I say to you: Do you not realize that by saying that the live goat for Azazel is Satan you make people believe that Satan in some way makes atonement for our sins (for you implicitly affirm that Satan plays an indispensable part in the blotting out of sins) in that Satan must bear all our sins in order that the atonement of our sins might be accomplished?’ Yes, it is true that you say: ‘Satan makes no atonement for our
sins. But Satan will ultimately have to bear the retributive punishment for his responsibility in the sins of all men, both righteous and wicked. Seventh-day Adventists therefore repudiate in toto any idea, suggestion, or implication that Satan is in any sense or degree our sin bearer. The thought is abhorrent to us, and appallingly sacrilegious. Such a concept is a dreadful disparagement of the efficacy of Christ and His salvation, and vitiates the whole glorious provision of salvation solely through our Saviour (Questions on Doctrine, page 400), and we do not doubt what you say. However, it is also true that by saying that one day Christ will put all sins upon the head of Satan, you make people believe that Satan in some way will make atonement for our sins, for according to the law the live goat for Azazel was used for making atonement for the sins of the children of Israel! I ask you the following questions: Is it not written in the book of Isaiah: “The LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. ….. he shall bear their iniquities….. he bare the sin of many …” (Isaiah 53:6,11,12)? Is it not written in one of the epistles of Peter that Jesus Christ Himself “bore our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24 – NKJV). Why then should Satan bear all the sins he caused us and all the others to commit? We believe that Christ bore all our sins once for all, therefore there is no need for Him to place our sins on the head of Satan. How can you affirm then that Satan will bear the sins we have committed? The Scripture says that Satan will be punished and bear his rebellion forever, but it does not say that Christ will put upon the head of Satan all the sins he has caused both the righteous and the wicked to commit. Why don’t Adventists learn to keep silent when the Scripture keeps silent, instead of producing all these allegories which contradict the truth? As you can see, the teaching that Satan will bear the sins of all men is based on a wrong interpretation given to the goat for Azazel spoken of in the book of Leviticus. We believe that since the law has a shadow of the things to come, the goat for Azazel, even though it was not killed as the goat which was for the Lord for it had to bear all the sins of the children of Israel, represented the atoning work of Christ, who, by His own blood, has removed our sins from us. However, we don’t teach that the goat for Azazel was Satan; for the Scripture does not authorize us to state such a thing. Furthermore, you must bear in mind that according to the law, on the Day of Atonement, when the high priest came out of the Most Holy Place, he had to confess over the goat for Azazel “all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions, concerning all their sins” (Leviticus 16:21 – NKJV) before sending it away into the wilderness with all the iniquities upon its head. Therefore, when Jesus comes out of the heavenly sanctuary (at the close of the investigative judgement), He will begin to confess all the sins the believers have committed prior to and after their conversion!!! Then I would like to ask, ‘How can the divine promise “their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12 – NKJV) agree with all this?’ Don’t you think that if Jesus, just before His return, confessed all the sins of His disciples He would set aside the promise made by God?’ But He is the Faithful, and He will keep the Word of God; therefore we believe that He will not confess the sins He has forgiven us. To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen.

There are two kinds of eternal life; one is eternal life and the other is everlasting life

On numerous occasions, Jack Hyles, the late pastor of First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana (FBCH), taught that there are two gifts of life in salvation, one is eternal life and the other is everlasting life. The distinction being that one in qualitative and the other quantitative. A 4/28/85 sermon, “The Gifts of God Are Everlasting Life & Eternal Life,” started by misquoting Romans 6:23 as “the gifts of God” (plural) instead of “the gift of God” (singular): “When a person receives Christ as his Savior … God gives him immediately—and he is an immediate possessor of—everlasting life. Though he has a gift of everlasting life, he does not necessarily possess eternal life. For everlasting life is a quantity of life and eternal is a quality of life. … The gift of
everlasting life is taken once and for all when you receive Christ as Savior, and the gift of eternal life is made available. ...Eternal life is a gift, but is only made available at the acceptance of everlasting life. ... Eternal life is a life that must be received every day. Every time you get out of bed at the sunrise in the morning, God looks at you and says, ‘I have another gift for you today. I have the gift of eternal life. You can accept that gift and live like the base animals of the world live.’” Hyles also said there were hundreds of members of the FBCH who “have everlasting life, but you are not a possessor this morning of eternal life. You are living like the animals of the field live.”

Confutation

The Scripture says that “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 6:23) and one receives this gift when he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ because Jesus Christ said: “He that believeth on me hath everlasting life” (John 6:47), and John says: “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36 - NKJV). There is no distinction between everlasting life and eternal life. To have the gift of everlasting life is to possess the gift of eternal life, and vice versa.

Therefore, eternal life is something that a believer received when he believed and that a believer continues to keep every day through faith in the Lord. For instance John says: “He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God” (1 John 5:10-13). Therefore, the gift of eternal life is not something that we must receive every day but something that we have in us. Of course, this gift can be lost; this will happen if we give place to unbelief. As the Israelites could not enter the promised land because of their unbelief, so we will not enter the Kingdom of God if our heart becomes an unbelieving heart. However, anyone who perseveres in the faith till the end will by no means lose eternal life.

There is another thing that must be said: since we still live in this tent we are mortal beings, thus even though we have the gift of eternal life, we will see the fulfilment of the promise of eternal life at the resurrection of the just, yes, because eternal life is the promise God has promised us through Jesus Christ, as it is written: “And this is the promise that He has promised us – eternal life” (1 John 2:25 – NKJV). In other words, eternal life is something that God has promised us. Let me explain this concept; our body is mortal, therefore we can’t affirm that we are immortal beings. Our soul is immortal, because it can’t be killed, and thus continues to live after death, while our body returns to the dust and begins to decompose. Therefore, when we die we will go to be with the Lord in heaven: but it is our soul that will go to heaven because our body will remain on earth to decompose. For this reason we need to wait for the resurrection of our body, for when God raises our body it will become immortal. In that day, therefore, our soul will return to our new body (which will be glorious, immortal and incorruptible) and with that body we will live forever with the Lord. We can say, therefore, that on that day the promise that God has promised us – even eternal life – will be fulfilled. But till that day our body will remain slave of corruption. Then in that day our body will be redeemed, that is to say, it will be fulfilled what Paul calls “the redemption of the purchased possession” (Ephesians 1:14 – NKJV). It is evident, therefore, that when I say that in that day the promise of eternal life will be fulfilled, I mean not only that our body will be made immortal, incorruptible and mighty, but also that this transformation will be performed by the power of God so that we may live forever with the Lord on the new earth which God will create in His time. So eternal life is a glorious life, a life full of joy and peace which will endure forever. On the contrary, when the wicked die their soul go to a place of torment called Hades, and they will receive the fullness of their punishment when they are raised on the judgment day, for only in that day they will take back their body with which they
gave themselves over to the lusts of the flesh while on earth, they will be judged according to
their works and with that body they will be cast into the everlasting fire where they will be
tormented forever and ever. This means that their body also will become immortal (otherwise we
could not say that they will rise again, but their resurrection is a resurrection of condemnation
and not a resurrection of life). Unlike the saints, the wicked don’t have eternal life in them
because they refuse to believe in the Son of God, the wrath of God is upon them and they will
never see life.
Therefore, let no one deceive you with empty words, for you have eternal life.

We should store up merits to offset times of demerits

Jack Hyles, the late pastor of First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana (FBCH), taught that one
should store up merits (works) to offset times of demerits (sins). If you have enough in reserve,
God will forgive your sin and put you back in business.

Confutation

We Christians must do good works because Paul says to the Ephesians: “We are his
workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we
should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10); we must do them so that men may see them and glorify
our Father in heaven (cf. Matthew 5:16). Of course good works are merits that a Christian stores
up before God, this is why the Scripture says that in that day each one of us will receive his own
reward according to his good works. However, far be it from us to think that we need to store up
merits to offset times of demerits. In other words, far be it from us to think that we need to do
good works so that when we sin the Lord will forgive our sins because of our good works we
have done, because such a thought would lead us to believe that somehow we can merit the
forgiveness of sins through our good works, which is not true because we sons of God receive
the forgiveness of our sins by the grace of God through our faith in Christ when we confess them
to God. Jesus said that we must say to God, “Forgive us our debts” (Matthew 6:12 – NKJV), and
John says: “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us
from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9) and again: “My little children, these things write I unto
you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the
righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the
whole world” (1 John 2:1-2). Therefore, no matter how many good works we may have done, if
we confess our sins we are sure God will forgive us our sins because He is faithful and just. He
will forgive us by His grace, and not because of some merits we have stored up. If forgiveness of
sins were by works it would no longer be by grace, and we would attach more importance to our
merits and sacrifices than to the sacrifice of Christ and His merits, and in this way we would
nullify His sacrifice and the efficacy of His atoning death. Therefore, be careful brothers, for this
teaching is a diabolical teaching, it is a teaching similar to the teaching of the Roman Catholic
Church which affirms that the forgiveness of mortal sins committed after baptism is obtained not
only by faith but also by works (actually it is obtained only by works), that’s why after the priest
absolves the penitent he tells him to do some good works, because in that way the penitent can
merit the forgiveness of his sins, he can be fully forgiven, even though the forgiveness is never
complete because there are always some debts of temporal punishment to be discharged in
purgatory. Brothers, be zealous for good works, but do not do them in order to offset times of
demerits. If you sin, confess your sins to God and forsake them, and the Lord will have mercy on
you and will forgive you.
**Let us not cut out the tares which are in us**

Jack Hyles, the late pastor of First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana (FBCH), in his sermon, “Don’t Cut the Grass,” taught that all of us have “wheat and tares” in us, but we should let both grow side by side and not cut anything, lest we cut out the wheat (good) in us by mistake.

**Confutation**

What Jack Hyles taught is false for it is a misinterpretation given to the parable of the tares of the field. So let us first look at the parable of the tares spoken by Jesus: “The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. Another parable spake he unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened. All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. …. He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Matthew 13:24-30, 37-43)

Now, as you can see, the good seeds are the sons of God, while the tares are the sons of the devil. Therefore we can’t give to the good seeds nor to the tares the meaning given to them by Jack Hyles. If things were as Jack Hyles affirmed, that would mean that we must not cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, which is the opposite of what the Scripture commands, as it is written: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, which is the opposite of what the Scripture commands, as it is written: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Corinthians 7:1). In other words, if we interpreted those words of Jesus in that way, that would mean that we sons of God must not lay aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, and envy, while the Scripture commands us as follows: “Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:1). To give such an interpretation to the parable of the tares means to discourage the saints from perfecting holiness, that is to say, from putting off all the things which God dislikes, when the Scripture says: “That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:22-24).
Let no one deceive you with empty words. We must strive against the evil which is still in us. Do not worry, because in striving against the evil which is in you and in trying to take it away, you don’t run the risk of taking away the good which is in you, for the Holy Spirit who is in you will guide you so that you may avoid doing such a thing. The Spirit will help you to reject the evil only, to hold fast what is good, be sure of this. Of course, the fact that we strive against the evil which is in us does not mean that the hour is coming when we will cease to make mistakes in this life; however it is something we must do. Surely when we appear before the judgement seat of Christ each of us will be rewarded rightly by God for every good work he has done, while he will suffer loss for every evil thing he has done; however, as long as we are in this tent we must do our best to strive against every form of evil and to cling to what is good.
William Marrion Branham taught that God wrote three Bibles. Here are some of his words he spoke about this subject: ‘God wrote three Bibles. One of them was the Zodiac in the skies. That's the first Bible. Man was to look up to realize that God is from above. Follow the Zodiac; did you ever study it? It even gives every age, even the cancer age. It gives the beginning, the birth—the birth of Christ. What is the first figure in the Zodiac? The virgin. What's the last figure? Leo the lion. The first coming and the second coming of Christ, all of it is written in there. Then the next Bible was written, was in stone, called pyramid. God wrote in the pyramids. If you study them, watch the ancient histories and wars, how they were built before the antediluvian destruction. The third was wrote on paper, the Bible, for the great, smart intellectual world to come. Now, as God has moved down through the age, we're at Leo the lion. We're at the capping of the pyramid. We're in the Book of the Revelations at the last chapter. Science says we're three minutes before midnight. Oh, think of where we're at’ (Excerpted from his sermon Adoption, which he delivered on Sunday evening, 22nd May 1960 at the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana, U.S.A.); “Now, I want to draw just a small picture to you, talking now. Let's all of us take a little trip tonight, on a little ship, and let's... a little spaceship, or airship. Let's go back a hundred million years before there was a world, before there even was a star or anything, and there you can see nothing but space. And all that space was God. In the beginning was God. And now, we'll watch coming into existence a little white Light. We'll call it, like, a Halo. And that was the Son of God, the Logos that went out of God in the beginning. And then that how that He was standing there; and He, in His mind He begin to think of what the world would be and drew all these pictures in His mind. And He said, "Let there be light." And a atom split and begin to break forward, and a atomic went off, the first atomic explosion. And then them atoms begin to accumulate till it made into cinders, as the moisture, ever what it was, begin to break, and the atoms split. And after while, there came a star, or a piece of the--a missile that flew off and went sailing through the air. He watched it maybe for a few million years, and then stopped it. He had no hurry. He was--had plenty of time, forever. He was from the beginning to the end. There was no--no time with Him. And then another one flies off, and He stops it over this a way. What's He doing? He's writing His first Bible. The first Bible was ever written, was written in the skies, the zodiac. It starts out with the virgin; that's how He come first. It ends up with Leo the lion, the second coming. And He's writing His first Bible. The second Bible was written, was written by Enoch, and put in the pyramid. The third Bible was written, and the last one, is this One. God always does things in threes. God is perfect in three. He's perfect. Pardon me. He's perfect in Father, Son, Holy Spirit. He's perfect in justification, sanctification, baptism of the Holy Spirit. He's perfected in His threes. We are in His making, so we are perfected in three: soul, body, and spirit. And our body's controlled of--of nerves, of blood, and of cells (flesh): three. All perfected in three...’ (Excerpted from his sermon The Cruelty Of Sin, And The Penalty That It Cost To Rid Sin From Our Lives, which Branham delivered on Friday, 3rd April, 1953 at the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana, U.S.A.)

So, according to Branham, God wrote the history of mankind in the Bible, in the sky and in the pyramids (Branham said that the Great Pyramid in Egypt was designed by the Great Architect of the Universe and it was built by Enoch). As things are, therefore, a disciple of Christ should study not only the Bible, but also astrology and pyramidology. Branham interpreted the total eclipse of the moon which took place on December 30, 1963, as the falling away which is to occur before the second coming of Christ, for he said that when pope Paul VI went to Jerusalem (January 4-6, 1964), the moon or the church went into total darkness.
Here are his words: ‘Matthew 24, mentions signs in the heavens concerning this last day just before Jesus comes. I wonder if you noticed such a sign recently fulfilled as to portray the very truth we have been discussing. That truth is that Jesus has been steadily pushed aside until in the last age He is pushed outside the church. Recall that in the first age it was almost a full orb ed church of truth. Yet there was a little error called the deeds of the Nicolaitanes that kept the circle from being full. Then in the next age more darkness crept in until the ball of light glowed less, and darkness covered more of the circle. In the third age it was eclipsed still more, and in the fourth age which was the Dark Ages, the light had all but gone. Now think on this. The church shines in the reflected light of Christ. He is the SUN. The church is the MOON. Thus this orb of light is the moon. It had decreased from almost a full moon in the first age, to a sliver in the fourth age. But in the fifth age it began to grow. In the sixth it took a great step of growth forward. In part of the seventh age it was still growing, when suddenly it stopped short, and waned to almost a nothingness, so that instead of light it was the blackness of apostasy, and at the end of the age it had ceased to shine for darkness had taken over. Christ was now outside the church. Here is the sign in the sky. The last eclipse of the moon was a total eclipse. It waned to a total darkness in seven stages. In the seventh stage, the total darkness came as the Pope of Rome (Paul the Sixth) went to Palestine to make a holy tour of Jerusalem. He was the first pope to ever go to Jerusalem. The pope is named Paul the Sixth. Paul was the first messenger and this man goes by that name. Notice it is the sixth, or the number of man. This is more than a coincidence. And when he went to Jerusalem, the moon or the church went into total darkness. This is it. This is the end. This generation shall not pass away until all be fulfilled. Even so Lord Jesus, come quickly!’ (William Marrion Branham, An Exposition Of The Seven Church Ages, page 357).

Confutation

The teaching of Branham according to which God wrote three Bibles is false. For there is but one Bible, the one which is written on paper. Now I will show you that neither the Zodiac nor the Egyptian pyramids are Bibles written by God.

Let us start with the Zodiac: in the sky we can’t read the story of the nations nor the story of each of us, for the stars, the planets, the sun and the moon and any other star in the sky do not declare these things. The Bible states that “the heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands” (Psalm 19:1 – NIV); but it never states that the heavens and the skies proclaim the ages to come or the events to come, for the belief according to which by observing the position of the celestial bodies at a given time one can foretell future events is part of that occult art called astrology, which is condemned (together with any other occult art) by God. In the book of the prophet Isaiah God rebukes those who observe the sky in order to foretell the future and He affirms that their work is useless. Here is what God says: “Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the stargazers, the monthly prognosticators, stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee. Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame: there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it. Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants, from thy youth: they shall wander every one to his quarter; none shall save thee.” (Isaiah 47:13-15). At this point someone may cite the biblical example of the star which appeared to the wise men in the East in order to support the art of reading the sky; however this example does not support at all the reading of the sky for at that time there was no planet conjuction or anything like that, and furthermore the star which appeared to the wise men in the East went before them and led them to the place where the young Child (Jesus) was, for when the wise men came to Bethlehem the star “stopped over the place where the child was” (Matthew 2:9 – NIV). In other words, that star was a star which went ahead of the wise men and not a star which foretold some future events! The appearing of that star was a wonder worked by God and it had nothing to do with astrology. Branham, therefore, was wrong in saying those things about the zodiac. Those who see in the
signs of the zodiac the first and the second coming of Christ as well as those who see the falling away in an eclipse of the moon are like those who see in the sun the spiritual power of the pope, while in the moon the temporal power of the kings of the earth. The spiritual sight of Branham became blurred; that’s why he began to see in the sky all kinds of events! Yet many people believe his fantasies!

Let us now speak of the Egyptian pyramids. It is beyond doubt that Branham believed pyramidology, which is an occult art which claims that many historically significant biblical events can be found in the Great Pyramid for they were inscribed into it by its builders. By taking measurements of the perimeter, sides, outer courses and masonry, inner chambers, galleries and corridors, by dividing the results by certain numbers held to be significant in the construction of the pyramid, and by relating the results to biblical chronology and to the history of Christianity, exact correspondences were claimed to exist. By the same token, an understanding of the cipher was supposed to permit the making of prophecies up to the Second Coming which, following the pyramid-inch-year theory up the Great Gallery, was clearly close at hand” (Man, Myth and Magic, Vol. 17, p. 2314). Through this process of divination many groups teach a variety of prophetic events based on their own arbitrary calculation. Know this, that no matter how much the dimensions of the Egyptian pyramids may strike you favourably, God wrote nothing in them! The Pharaohs who had the pyramids built were surrounded by people who practiced occult arts; they believed all kinds of lies, how can we believe then that the Egyptian pyramids are ‘scripture of God’? Pyramidology is a ‘science’ widespread in esoteric circles where the strangest doctrines are professed. Many articles on the Egyptian pyramids often appear on esoteric magazines. Pyramidology has nothing to do with the Word of God, just as lies have nothing to do with the truth. Surely the shape, the measures, and other things concerning the Egyptian pyramids have a specific meaning, for the people who built those buildings did not build them in that way accidentally; however, since we know that the Pharaohs were not worshipers of the only true God but of demons, and the pyramids served as tombs for the Pharaohs we may conclude that the Egyptian pyramids have something to do with the occult world. This is confirmed by the fact that many magicians and other ministers of the devil feel attracted by the Egyptian pyramids. So anyone who claims that Enoch built the great pyramid of Egypt is a liar, for we know that Enoch walked with God (cf. Genesis 5:24) and pleased God (cf. Hebrews 11:5).

Brothers, abhor both the Zodiac and pyramidology. They are useless things which are not able to help you; they are things which are not fit for the saints, for the Lord has given these things as a heritage to all those who do not know Him and are darkened in their understanding. Study the Bible, take your delight in the Word of God, meditate on it all day. Search the Scriptures for in them are revealed the secrets of the wisdom of God, of the great and only true God who created all things through His wisdom and who upholds all things by His great power. The Holy Scriptures can make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. On the contrary, if you study the zodiac and pyramidology you will become fool. Take heed to yourselves. Let no one deceive you with his sophisms.

**The Bible contains some mistakes**

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church teaches that the Bible contains some mistakes. Here is what Adventists affirm: ‘In the Biblical record we find instances in which a prophet had to be corrected because of preconceived ideas. The apostles first believed that only the Jews could be saved. The Holy Spirit had to correct that idea if the gospel was to be carried to all the world. A vision in Peter’s case (Acts 10, 11) and special revelations in Paul’s case (Eph. 3:3-6) enlightened the apostles and thereby the whole church. In the Advent movement we also find instances when the prophet had to be corrected because of preconceived ideas. Our pioneers were greatly limited in their comprehension of mission by a theological error carried over from the Millerite
movement--the shut door doctrine, the belief that the door of mercy was closed. Even Ellen White accepted it. In successive visions, the Spirit corrected the idea, first in her mind and then, through her, in the entire movement (Selected Messages, book 1, pp. 63, 64). The fact that the Holy Spirit corrected any mistaken doctrine related to global mission in the minds of Peter, Paul, and Ellen White gives us the assurance that the Spirit is in control of the inspired message. In other instances a prophet had to be corrected because the counsel or suggestion was different from the Lord's plan. Thus we find Nathan the prophet first approving David's plan to build a house for the Lord, but the Lord corrected that idea. We find parallels in Ellen White's ministry. In 1902 the publishing house operated by Seventh-day Adventists in the South of the United States was struggling financially. The leaders of the church sought inspired counsel. After some consideration Ellen White endorsed the decision of the leaders to close the publishing house. But during the following night God corrected His messenger. She had to write a different message (Letter 208, 1902, in Spalding and Magan Collection, p. 282). Again, all the New Testament writers believed Jesus' return was near. Although we cannot follow the exact chronological manner in which the Holy Spirit dealt with this issue, we know the apostles received further information. For instance, in his First Letter to the Thessalonians, Paul gave the impression that he expected to be alive for the Lord's coming (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). However, additional information between the two letters led him to caution the church not to expect the Lord to come immediately (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4). Likewise, John was convinced he was living in "the last hour" (1 John 2:18). Further visions gave him the opportunity to tell the church, surely with sadness, that many things would happen--including fierce persecution--before the coming of the Lord. Undoubtedly, the book of Revelation was the answer of the Spirit to many questions arising in the mind of the beloved apostle. All the believers in the Advent movement, the Lord's special messenger included, shared the conviction that the Lord's coming was near. We do not need to be embarrassed [p. 27] by the fact that Ellen White expressed her expectations, as did Paul, Peter, and John in Biblical times. Once again the Holy Spirit had to correct some ideas and give additional information to guide the church in the right direction. In 1856 Ellen White was shown that some believers attending a meeting would be alive until the coming of Jesus (See Testimonies, vol. 1, pp. 131, 132). In the years that followed, the Lord gave her an extended vision of the great controversy with additional information about the journey that was still ahead. It also was revealed that "we may have to remain here in this world because of insubordination many more years." (Evangelism, p. 696). Seventh-day Adventists do not believe in verbal inspiration (the idea that God dictates the exact wording to the prophet). With the exception of the Ten Commandments, all the inspired writings are the result of the combined efforts of the Holy Spirit, who inspires the prophet with a vision, an impression, a counsel, or a judgment; and the prophet, who begins to look for sentences, literary figures, and expressions to convey God's message accurately. God gives the prophet freedom to select the kind of language he or she wants to use. That accounts for the different styles of the Biblical writers and explains why Ellen White describes the language used by inspired writers as "imperfect" and "human." Because "everything that is human is imperfect," (Selected Messages, book 1, pp. 20, 21) we must accept the idea of imperfections and mistakes in both the Bible and Ellen White's writings. This means at least two things: 1. The prophet uses his or her common, everyday language learned from childhood and improved through study, reading, and travel; there is nothing supernatural or divine in the language used. 2. The prophet can make orthographical or grammatical mistakes, as well as other kinds of language imperfections such as lapsus linguæ (a slip of the tongue) or lapsus memoriae (a slip of the memory), which need to be corrected by an editor before the text is ready for publication. The editor corrects not the inspired message, but rather the noninspired language. We find a lapsus linguæ in Matthew's Gospel, when he quotes Zechariah but mentions Jeremiah in connection with the 30 pieces of silver (Matt. 27:9, 10; Zech. 11:12, 13; Jer. 32:6-9). For a person who believes in verbal inspiration, this raises serious questions; but for those who accept that the Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, this illustrates how the divine message reaches us through an imperfect language. The following statement of Ellen White, when she quotes Paul but
mentions Peter, is similar: “The love of Christ constraineth us,” the apostle Peter declared. This was the motive that impelled the zealous disciple in his arduous labors in the cause of the gospel." (Review and Herald, Oct. 30, 1913; see Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians 5:14.)

Fortunately, we have enough evidence in the Bible, as well as in the history of the Advent movement, to show us that the Holy Spirit always corrected His messengers in matters important to the church (This article appeared in the May 30, 1996, issue of the Adventist Review, pp. 22-28. The article is titled 'The Dynamics of Inspiration A Close Look at the Messages of Ellen White’ and was written by Juan Carlos Viera, Director of the Ellen G. White Estate)

Confutation

All the books of the Bible are inspired by God (when I say that the books of the Bible are inspired, I don’t refer to the translations or copies but to the original books), as it is written: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16. Literally ‘is God-breathed’ or ‘is divinely breathed’ because this is the meaning of the Greek word theopneustos used by Paul), and also: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:19-21).

Someone may say: ‘These words of Paul and Peter refer to the Scriptures of the Old Testament!’ Yes, that’s true, for Paul, before saying to Timothy those words, said to him: “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:14-15). However, that does not mean that the Writings of Paul are not inspired by God and thus they should not be called or considered Holy Scriptures. For the apostle Peter, at the end of his second epistle, in speaking about the epistles of Paul, which contain some things which are hard to understand, says that ignorant and unstable people twist them “as they do the other Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:16 - NIV), that is, the Scriptures of the Old Testament that they had. As you can see, Peter calls the Writings of Paul “Scriptures”, and Paul was a contemporary of Peter. Anyway, even inside the epistles of Paul there are some expressions which attest to the divine origin of his words. For instance, Paul says to the Thessalonians that they had received the message preached by him, Silvanus and Timothy, not as the word of men, but “as it is in truth, the word of God” (1 Thessalonians 2:13), and he says to them also: “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Furthermore, Paul says to the Corinthians: “The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37), and also: “For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:17). As for those words of Peter (those referring to the inspiration of the Scripture, which I mentioned before), it must be said that they also refer to the Writings of the Old Testament, but even in his case it must be said that his Writings are inspired by God and thus are Word of God, for at the end of his first epistle he said that what He wrote to them was “the true grace of God” (1 Peter 5:12) and urged the saints to stand fast in it. Therefore the Writings of Paul and Peter, as well as those of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, James, and Jude, and the epistle to the Hebrews, are the Word of God. The inspiration of all these Writings (that is, those which belong to the Old and New Testaments) is attested to us by the Holy Spirit, whom God has sent into our hearts. For when we read or hear them or meditate on them we feel inside us the approval of the Holy Spirit, who makes us feel peace and joy. Why do we feel peace and joy when we read or hear or meditate on these Writings? Because the Words of God comfort, edify and make glad our inward man. Also when we keep them we feel comforted and happy; we feel indeed a great joy and a great peace when
we keep the commandments of God. Therefore there is no other book like the Bible, for it is composed of writings inspired by God.

The Bible was written over a period of time of approximately 1500 years, because the law (which consists of the first five books of the Bible) was written by Moses around 1400 before Christ and the book of Revelation was written by John around the end of the first century after Christ. Notwithstanding this, the Bible is an extremely cohesive and unified book, and there are no contradictions in it (however, there are some seeming contradictions in it), which facts confirm its inspiration.

The authors of the books of the Bible did hold different social status, for instance Solomon was a king, Amos was a shepherd, Luke was a physician, and so on, yet all of them were moved by the Holy Spirit to write. In other words, they wrote not by their own will but by the will of God. We can affirm that all those who wrote the books of the Bible were specially chosen by God, and perfectly guided by the Spirit to put on paper the very words of God, and to do so without any error. The apostle Peter attests this when he says in his second epistle: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Peter 1:19-21). As I said before, even though these words of Peter refer to the Writings of the Old Testament, they can apply also to the Writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Jude and Peter himself, for their writings also were inspired by God.

What do I mean when I say that all the sixty six books of the Bible are inspired? I will answer this question through the Holy Scriptures. My speech will begin from the assumption that when the writer of one of the inspired books wrote he was moved by the Holy Spirit, that is to say, he was moved just as the prophets and the apostles were moved by the Holy Spirit when they spoke from God. See to it that you do not misunderstand me; I am not saying that the prophets or the apostles were infallible in their acts and in their words; had they been infallible, they would not have made those mistakes. However this cannot be said about all their acts and words; because those men often acted and spoke by the Holy Spirit, thus those acts done in those peculiar circumstances, as well as those words uttered in those circumstances, did not contain any error of any kind. Let me give you two biblical examples of men who spoke and wrote as they were moved by the Spirit: Moses and Paul.

Let’s begin with Moses. After he was on Mount Sinai and God spoke to him, Moses went back to the camp with his face that was radiant (however, he was not aware that his face was radiant) and the Israelites were afraid to come near him. “And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai” (Exodus 34:31-32). Of course, it was by the help of the Holy Spirit that Moses told the Israelites all the words that God had said to him on Mount Sinai, thus it was the Holy Spirit who reminded him of all the words God had told him and it was the Holy Spirit who spoke through Moses. Therefore those words of Moses could not contain any error of
any kind. In other words, to speak in the manner of Adventists so that they may understand what I am saying, there was no *lapsus linguæ* nor *lapsus memoriae* in the words of Moses. Many times Moses spoke from God to the people or to Aaron; thus we have to say that Moses in all those circumstances did not make mistakes because he spoke from God. I say it again, the reason was because he spoke as He was moved and helped by the Holy Spirit. Let’s look now at his writings. How did Moses write? He wrote as he was moved by the Holy Spirit thus when he wrote he did not make any mistakes, for while he was writing the Holy Spirit helped him and guided him preventing him from making mistakes. That is what happened when he had to write down facts which he had eyewitnessed or words he had heard with his own ears (such as the division of the Red sea and the other wonders God wrought in the desert, the words God spoke to him on various occasions, the song the Israelites sang after God hurled the Egyptians into the sea, and the murmurings of the Israelites in the desert), and that is what happened also when he had to write down events which he had not eyewitnessed or words which he had not heard with his own ears (such as the creation of the heavens and of the earth and all the things in them, and the words God spoke to create the light, the sun and the moon, and man). We can’t fully explain this way of writing, for it is a work accomplished by God through a human being and it transcends our understanding. However, since on the earth a supernatural writing phenomenon occurs among the ministers of the devil, who – as you know - tries always to imitate the ways of God, which is called automatic writing and by which some mediums write lies either from dictation of an evil spirit or as they are moved by an evil spirit that takes possession of them (thus they become a sort of passive instruments in the hands of evil spirits), we can say that the Holy Spirit of the Lord, who was upon Moses, took possession of him (this expression must not surprise you because in one place in the Bible it is written that “the Spirit of the LORD took possession of Gideon; and he sounded the trumpet, and the Abiez’rites were called out to follow him” Judges 6:34 - Darby Bible. The IBRV reads: “Ma lo spirito dell’Eterno s’impresse di Gedeone, il quale sonò la tromba, e gli Abiezeriti furono convocati per seguirlo” which has the same meaning) and guided him to write, so the Holy Spirit used Moses as an instrument to write all the things He wanted and He prevented him from making linguistic mistakes and mistakes of memory. – Please note that I have mentioned the diabolical phenomenon called ‘automatic writing’ which occurs in the occult just to explain the mechanism by which divine inspiration took place, for I firmly believe that automatic writing is an imitation of the God-inspired process of the writing of the Holy Writings, and thus by observing what happens to the mediums when they practice automatic writing we may infer what happened to Moses when he wrote by (or under the direct) inspiration of God - Were all his writings perfect then? Yes, they were perfect. And this is confirmed by the fact that Jesus, the Son of God, who came down from heaven, quoted the law written by Moses when He had to answer the tempter in the desert: three times He quoted to Satan some words written in the law of Moses (thus some words which had been manually written by Moses). Jesus quoted the Law of Moses also when He spoke to the Jews. Jesus made it clear that to Him the law was free of error of any kind, for one day He said: “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Matthew 5:18). – The ‘jot’ or ‘iota’ is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew yod', which is the smallest letter of the alphabet, while the ‘tittle’ is the projection of a stroke of the pen that distinguishes one letter from another. - Do you think that Jesus would have said such words about a book (or rather a scroll) written by human hands if He had not considered it free from error? I don’t think so. How would He have been able to declare such words if He did not believe the writings of Moses were without error? Therefore, the above mentioned words of Jesus confirm that all the things Moses wrote are completely free of error of any kind, they are the Word of God, they are very pure. Also on some other occasions, Jesus made it clear that to Him the writings of Moses were the Word of God and thus free from imperfections. For instance, one day a teacher of the law tested Jesus, saying: “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” and Jesus said unto him “What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto
him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (Luke 10:26-28). Please note that Jesus asked that man what was written in the law and that after the answer of that lawyer Jesus told him to do what he had just said. This also proves that Jesus considered the law of Moses the word of God and not the word of a man. Christ showed that He accepted the infallibility of the law of Moses by mentioning also various events from the law, such as the murder of Abel (Matthew 23:35), the flood at the time of Noah (Matthew 24:38-39), the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:28-29), the conversation of Moses with God at the burning bush (Matthew 22:31-32), and the feeding of the Israelites by manna from heaven (John 6:49). Jesus quoted also the words of the Psalms and of the Prophets, for to Him these writings also were the Word of God. Therefore, in conclusion, if Jesus, the One who knew no sin, quoted the law written by Moses (a man who, unlike Jesus, committed some sins) as authoritative, that means that He had a conception of the inspiration of the law which was very different from that which Ellen G. White had, as well as from that which Adventists have today. To us also the law is holy and thus it is free from errors, and we can or rather must use it in order to refute heresies (included those taught by the Adventist Church). Till the end of our life we will say like Jesus: “It is written…” and also: “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” because the words of Moses are the Word of God. The fact that the law was written by a man like us, who had his own defects before God, does not lead us to have doubts about its inspiration (or divine origin) because the words of Moses are the Word of God. Jesus had no doubts about its inspiration, Paul had no doubts about it, the other apostles had no doubts about it. So all arguments whose purpose is to cast a shadow on the divine origin of the law of Moses, as well as on the divine origin of the other writings inspired by God, are not from God. We reject them and we urge the saints to do the same.

Let’s see now the apostle Paul, who is the apostle who wrote more epistles than the other apostles. First of all I want to say that when Paul spoke as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, it was not him who spoke but the Spirit of God, thus his words were free from errors: this happened when he preached to the unbelievers (as he did in the Areopagus at Athens), as well as when he delivered to the saints a teaching taken from the Scriptures, and when he exhorted the saints to conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Lord. Also when he reminded his listeners of some facts which had happened to him, as in the case of his speech delivered to the elders of the Church of Ephesus or in the case of the testimony of his conversion he gave before the Jews at Jerusalem (after he was arrested) or at Caesarea before king Agrippa, it was not him who spoke but the Holy Spirit who spoke in him, so his words were free from errors on those occasions. Therefore we can affirm that when the Holy Spirit spoke through him, his words were free of error of any kind, as in the case of Moses. Let’s now talk about the inspiration of his epistles. Can we put the inspiration of his epistles and the inspiration of the law of Moses on the same level? Of course, we can, for the Spirit who moved Moses to write the law was the same Spirit who moved Paul to write his epistles. As we saw before, Peter in his second epistle calls the epistles of Paul ‘Scriptures’ as it is written: “And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Peter 3:15-16). Therefore, there are no errors in his epistles. What then shall we say about the statements of the Adventists according to which Paul in his writings changed his beliefs regarding the return of the Lord? They are false. Let’s see the reason. The apostle Paul in his second epistle to the Thessalonians says: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped: so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4). According to the Adventists, these words of Paul correct these
other words of Paul written to the Thessalonians in his previous epistle: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). For in his first epistle he taught that the return of the Lord was imminent, while in his second epistle he denied the imminence of the return of the Lord. But that’s untrue, because Paul, just before saying these words I have just quoted, says to the saints of Thessalonica: “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord…” (1 Thessalonians 4:15). Therefore if Paul in his second epistle had changed his previous position on the return of the Lord, that would mean that with the passing of time the Word of the Lord had changed! Listen, the words of Paul concerning the return of Christ were not a personal opinion he had on the return of Christ, just like any personal opinion which a Christian can have about a food or a day, but the Word of God. Therefore when in his first epistle to the Thessalonians he says: “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds” he did not mean that the day of the Lord was imminent, because he wrote those words at God’s command. Paul, even when he wrote those words (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17), knew very well that the day of the Lord will not come until the falling away occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, for when afterward he warned the Thessalonians not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled as though the day of the Lord was imminent and he told them what will happen before that day, he said to them: “Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things?” (2 Thessalonians 2:5). Please note that Paul had already told those things to the Thessalonians when he had been with them. Therefore, the apostle Paul never thought that the day of the Lord was imminent, for he always taught the believers that the day of the Lord will come after the falling away occurs and the man of sin is revealed. (A similar thing must be said also about the apostle John, for he never thought that the day of the Lord was imminent, even though in his first epistle he wrote that it was the last hour).

Furthermore, to say that Ellen G. White made the same eschatological mistake as the apostles did is to put the writings of Ellen White on the same level as the writings of Paul, but above all is to lower, or rather to nullify the inspiration of the writings of Paul. Once again Adventists show that they want to defend at all costs the mistakes which Ellen White made, for they go so far as to affirm that the apostles or the prophets of old made the same mistakes that Ellen White made!! [*] What they say is serious, very serious. I have read the writings of Ellen White, I have read many of the things she said about the return of the Lord, but they can by no means be put on the same level as the words of Paul. In her book The Great Controversy, for instance, when she speaks of the return of the Lord, she tells many lies, she skilfully mixes the truth and the lie, giving the impression that she is inspired by God, while many of the things she wrote were the fruit of her creative imagination. On the contrary the words written by Paul about the return of the Lord are all true, there is no contradiction in them, no lie, no personal opinion. Let me refute now the so called lapsus linguae of Matthew concerning the following quotation: “Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me” (Matthew 27:9-10). Now according to Adventists, the fact that Matthew attributed these words of Zechariah to Jeremiah is a mistake. If it were so, we ought to affirm that the Holy Spirit did not keep Matthew from committing that mistake, thus what we have said so far would be nullified. We believe that Matthew did not make any mistake, for if he says that Jeremiah spoke those words that means that the prophet Jeremiah spoke those words. The fact that in the book of Jeremiah these words are not written should not worry us, for the prophet spoke those words but he did not write them. Just as when Matthew says that Joseph, Mary’s husband, came and dwelt in Nazareth “that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, ‘He shall be called a Nazarene’ ” (Matthew 2:23 – NKJV). For Matthew says that the prophets foretold that thing, however in reading the book of the prophets it is impossible to find that prediction. Anyway the prophets foretold that event. The words of Matthew did not have their origin in his will, but he wrote as he was moved
by the Holy Spirit. Another example is this, which we find in the book of the Acts of the apostles. One day Paul quoted the following words of Jesus: “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35 – NKJV). Even though these words spoken by Jesus were not recorded by Matthew, nor by Mark, nor by Luke, nor by John, we believe that Jesus spoke them. In this case also, therefore, the comparison that Adventists make between the so called lapsus linguae of Matthew and the mistake made by Ellen White when she quotes Paul (2 Corinthians 5:14) but mentions Peter, is wrong for in the case of the words of Matthew it was not a mistake, while in the case of Ellen White it was a real mistake. So we can say that Matthew was inspired by God, while Ellen White was not inspired (not only because of the above mentioned lapsus linguae but also because she wrote many lies).

Therefore, we believe in the plenary and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures in the original languages, and in their consequent inerrancy and infallibility. When we speak about plenary inspiration we mean that the Bible as a whole is inspired (in other words, all of Scripture is inspired – not merely some parts), while when we speak about verbal inspiration we mean that every word of the Bible is inspired. So inspiration extends to the words of the Bible, not only to the ideas. God, by His Spirit, has guaranteed the authenticity and reliability of the very words that were written. However, it must be said that He did not deprive the writers of their individuality, for their full personalities entered into their writing (for instance, their individual writing styles are evident).

[*] As we saw before, Juan Carlos Viera claims that the apostles made another mistake, for they thought for a little while that only the Jews could be saved; and that a similar mistake was made by Ellen G. White when at first she accepted the shut door doctrine (according to which on 22 October, 1844, the door of mercy was forever closed to the world). Now, it is true that Peter and those of the circumcision had been unwilling to evangelize the Gentiles for they had called the Gentiles unclean or common, as Peter said to Cornelius and his household that God had shown him that he should not call “any man common or unclean” (Acts 10:28 – NKJV). But to assert that their mistaken conviction was like the conviction of the shut door doctrine held by Ellen G. White for a certain period of time is to deceive people into believing a lie, for according to the very words of Ellen White the shut door doctrine held by her for a short time after the great delusion, was confirmed to her through a divine vision in December 1844. Hear what she wrote: I saw ‘a straight and narrow path, cast up high above the world. On this path the Advent people were travelling to the City, which was at the farther end of the path. They had a bright light set up behind them at the first end of the path, which an angel told me was the Midnight Cry. This light shone all along the path, and gave light for their feet so they might not stumble. And if they kept their eyes fixed on Jesus, who was just before them, leading them to the City, they were safe. But some grew weary, and they said the City was a great way off, and they expected to have entered it before. Then Jesus would encourage them by raising his glorious right arm, and from his arm came a glorious light which waved over the Advent band, and they shouted Hallelujah! Others rashly denied the light behind them, and said it was not God that had led them out so far. The light behind them went out which left their feet in perfect darkness, and they stumbled and got their eyes off the mark and lost sight of Jesus, and fell off the path down in the dark and wicked world below. It was just as impossible for them to get on the path again & go to the City, as all the wicked world which God had rejected’ (Ellen G. White, ‘RSA,’ [RSA stands for ‘To the Remnant Scattered Abroad], April 6, 1846, page 14). However, afterward, God ‘revealed’ to her that the shut door doctrine was wrong! Can God act in that way? Certainly not! Therefore the mistake committed by Ellen White (even Some Adventists call it mistake, while others don’t call it in this way) cannot be compared with the mistake committed by the apostles about the extension of the preaching of the Gospel, for Ellen White upheld that mistake with a ‘vision’, while the apostles never confirmed their mistake with a divine revelation, for God had always affirmed the opposite, that is, salvation would be preached to the Gentiles as well. God had said that through the prophets of old first and then through His Son. Therefore He could not ‘reveal’
to them the opposite, for He cannot deny Himself. The truth is that Ellen White had a false vision about ‘the shut door,’ that is, she was deceived by the devil, and she seduced others, and she thought that she could confirm that doctrine through a revelation. So her behaviour was wrong, she acted like the false prophets of old who used their tongues and said: ‘God says …;’ but Adventists deceive people into believing that she made a mistake like the one which was made by the apostles at first. Be careful then when you hear Adventists speak of the theological mistake concerning the door of mercy made by Ellen White, for it was not like the mistake made by the apostles.
CREATION

The world was not created out of nothing

Mormons teach that the world was not created out of nothing: what the Bible calls creation was simply a reorganization of matter which had always existed. Here is what Bruce McConkie wrote: ‘To create is to organize. It is an utterly false and uninspired notion to believe that the world or any other thing was created out of nothing ....’ (Bruce McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 1993, page 169). John A. Widtsoe puts it this way: ‘God, the Supreme Power, cannot conceivably originate matter; he can only organize matter’ (A Rational Theology, 6th ed. Salt Lake City, 1952, page 12). Joseph Smith said: ‘Now, I ask all who hear me, why the learned men who are preaching salvation, say that God created the heavens, and the earth our of nothing? The reason is, that they are unlearned in the things of God, and have not the gift of the Holy Ghost .... But I am learned, and know more than all the world put together’ (Sermon 'How God came to be God', preached on March 9, 1844; in Robert L. Millet, Joseph Smith: Selected Sermons and Writings, N.J. 1989, page 135)

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that God created all things out of nothing, as it is written in the epistle to the Hebrews: “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible” (Hebrews 11:3 – NKJV – The NIV reads: “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible”). Therefore, Mormons are wrong in saying that ‘what the Bible calls creation was simply a reorganization of matter for God can’t originate matter’. Our God is an Almighty God: with Him nothing is impossible. The Psalmist wrote: “He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:9 – NKJV). To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen.

God created other worlds

Mormons teach that God ‘created’ other worlds: ‘This earth was not the first of the Lord’s creations. An infinite number of worlds have come rolling into existence at his command. Each is an earth; many are inhabited with his spirit children; each abides the particular law given to it; and each will play its part in the redemption, salvation, and exaltation of that infinite host of the children of an Almighty God’ (Bruce McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 1993, page 169); ‘Mormons therefore accept the existence of other worlds created by God for a divine purpose that is the same as the purpose of earth life, ‘to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of God’s children (Moses 1:39). The inhabitants of these other planets are understood by Latter-day Saints to be children of God and created in his image, though they might differ from the earth’s inhabitants in unspecified ways .... There are now countless planets whose inhabitants – children of God – are progressing, as are human beings on this earth, according to eternal principles towards a Godlike life’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 4, page 1595, 1596)

Seventh-Day Adventists also teach that God created other inhabited worlds. For Ellen G. White wrote: ‘The Lord has given me a view of other worlds. Wings were given me, and an angel
attended me from the city to a place that was bright and glorious. The grass of the place was living green, and the birds there warbled a sweet song. The inhabitants of the place were of all sizes; they were noble, majestic, and lovely. They bore the express image of Jesus, and their countenances beamed with holy joy, expressive of the freedom and happiness of the place. I asked one of them why they were so much more lovely than those on the earth. The reply was, "We have lived in strict obedience to the commandments of God, and have not fallen by disobedience, like those on the earth." Then I saw two trees, one looked much like the tree of life in the city. The fruit of both looked beautiful, but of one they could not eat. They had power to eat of both, but were forbidden to eat of one. Then my attending angel said to me, "None in this place have tasted of the forbidden tree; but if they should eat, they would fall." Then I was taken to a world which had seven moons. There I saw good old Enoch, who had been translated. On his right arm he bore a glorious palm, and on each leaf was written "Victory." Around his head was a dazzling white wreath, and leaves on the wreath, and in the middle of each leaf was written "Purity," and around the wreath were stones of various colours, that shone brighter than the stars, and cast a reflection upon the letters and magnified them. On the back part of his head was a bow that confined the wreath, and upon the bow was written "Holiness." Above the wreath was a lovely crown that shone brighter than the sun. I asked him if this was the place he was taken to from the earth. He said, "It is not; the city is my home, and I have come to visit this place." He moved about the place as if perfectly at home. I begged of my attending angel to let me remain in that place. I could not bear the thought of coming back to this dark world again. Then the angel said, "You must go back, and if you are faithful, you, with the 144,000, shall have the privilege of visiting all the worlds and viewing the handiwork of God." (Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, pages 39-40)

Confutation

According to the Holy Scriptures, the only inhabited planet is this one in which we live. There are no other inhabited worlds. God placed man in this world, and He sent His Son into this world to be the propitiation for our sins.

*Christ was aided in the creation of this earth by many of the noble and great spirit children of the Father*

Mormons say the following thing about the creation of this earth: ‘Christ, acting under the direction of the Father, was and is the Creator of all things .... That he was aided in the creation of this earth by ‘many of the noble and great’ spirit children of the Father is evident from Abraham’s writings...... Michael or Adam was one of these. Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Peter, James, and John, Joseph Smith, and many other ‘noble and great’ ones played a part in the great creative enterprise’ (Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 1993, page 169)

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that God created all things by His Son. Paul says: “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth” (Colossians 1:16 – NKJV); the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says that God has appointed His Son heir of all things “through whom also He made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:2 – NKJV); and John says: “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3 – NKJV). Therefore, the creation of this earth was not a sort of co-operative venture between Jesus Christ (under the direction of His Father) and the spirits of certain pre-existent men, but a work which was made by God the Father through His Son.
Humans, plants and animals were created first as spirits in heaven and then physically on the earth

Mormons teach that all things were ‘created’ spiritually before they were naturally upon the face of the earth. “Like humans and plants, animals were created first as spirits in heaven and then physically on the earth” (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 1, page 42); ‘We were all created untold ages before we were placed on this earth. We discover from Abraham 3:22-28, that it was before the earth was formed that the plan of salvation was presented to the spirits, or ‘intelligences.’ This being true, then man, animals and plants were not created in the spirit at the time of the creation of the earth, but long before’ (Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, I, page 76).

Therefore Mormons teach that before men inhabited this earth, they existed as spirits. However, these spirits did not come into existence by an act of creation, for as I said somewhere else, Mormons reject creation out of nothing. They were begotten by God the eternal Father; however, a divine mother also was involved in the origin of these spirits: ‘…… parenthood requires both father and mother, whether for the creation of spirits in the premortal life or of physical tabernacles on earth. A Heavenly Mother shares parenthood with the Heavenly Father. This concept leads Latter-day Saints to believe that she is like him in glory, perfection, compassion, wisdom, and Holiness’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 2, page, 961). However, it must be said also that according to Mormons, prior to their ‘begetting’, the substance of these spirits was in existence, for they say: ‘Man was also in the beginning with God. Intelligence, or the light of the truth, was not created or made, neither indeed can be’ (Doctrine and Covenants, 93:29), and also: ‘The intelligent part of man was never created but always existed’ (Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, I, 12).

The pre-existent life was an infinitely long period of probation, progression and schooling. All the spirits probably had an equal start, but some outstripped the others in the quality of their pre-existent life. The reason for the discrimination between races is found in the conduct of spirits in the pre-existent state: ‘There is a reason why one man is born black and with other disadvantages, while another is born white with great advantages. The reason is that we once had an estate before we came here, and were obedient, more or less, to the laws that were given us there. Those who were faithful in all things there received greater blessings here, and those who were not faithful received less’ (Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation, I, page 61). In other words, men receive on earth what they have deserved in heaven during their premortal life! This concept is confirmed in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism for we read in it the following words about ‘foreordination’: ‘Foreordination is the premortal selection of individuals to come forth in mortality at specified times, under certain conditions, and to fulfil predesignated responsibilities ….. Foreordination comes as a blessing or reward for premortal righteousness and valiant commitment to Jesus Christ” (Encyclopedia of Mormonism vol. 2, page 522).

Confutation

Man consists of body, soul and spirit (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23). Our soul as well as our spirit did come into existence while we were in the womb of our mother. They were created by God, for God says in the book of Isaiah: “For I will not contend forever, nor will I always be angry; for the spirit would fall before Me, and the souls which I have made” (Isaiah 57:16 – NKJV). Therefore not only our body but also our soul and our spirit were created by God in the womb of our mother. In the light of the Holy Scripture, then, it is not true that before men inhabited this earth, they existed as spirits in heaven. If men were created long before the creation of the earth, how could God put the following question to Job: “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the
earth?” (Job 38:4 – NKJV)? Don’t you think that if Mormons were right Job could have said to God: ‘I was with you in heaven!’ However, Job was not with God in heaven when God laid the foundations of the earth. This is why Job said to God: “Behold, I am vile; What shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth” (Job 40:4 – NKJV), because he did not know what to say to God. He certainly did not believe in the pre-existence of his soul. Yet Mormons claim they know where they were when God laid the foundations of the earth! But their words are a heap of lies! Furthermore, it must be said that if we had lived a premortal life in heaven or somewhere else, we would certainly recall our premortal life. For Jesus in the days of His flesh recalled His pre-existence with God the Father in heaven. Did Jesus not say: “Before Abraham was I AM” (John 8:58 – NKJV)? Did He not say to many of His disciples, who were offended at His words: “Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?” (John 6:61-62 – NKJV)? Therefore, if we had lived with Jesus in heaven before we were born, we should recall something about our previous existence. However, we don’t recall anything about our ‘pre-mortal’ life!

In the light of what I said before, then, it follows that the doctrine of foreordination which is taught by Mormons is false too. To refute it I quote the following words that Paul wrote to the Romans about Esau and Jacob: "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her [Rebekah their mother], The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Romans 9:11-13). Did God say these words to Rebekah because Esau during his pre-existent life had been unfaithful to God, while Jacob had been faithful to God? Certainly not! For the apostle says that Esau and Jacob had not yet done any good or evil. So we conclude that before Esau and Jacob were conceived in the womb of their mother, they had not lived a premortal life. God did not foreordain Esau to serve Jacob, and Jacob to be served by Esau, for Esau had been less obedient than Jacob to the laws that were given them there; but He foreordained Esau to serve Jacob according to the good pleasure of His will, so that the purpose of God according to election might stand.

As for the doctrine which says that ‘plants and animals were created first as spirits in heaven and then physically on the earth’, I say only this: it is a false doctrine, reject it.

The six days of Genesis 1 are long periods of time

There is a widespread belief in many Churches that the ‘days’ of Genesis are not normal 24-hour days, but long periods of time (that is, those days were thousands, millions, or even billions of years in duration).

Confutation

According to the Holy Scriptures, the six days of Genesis chapter 1 were days of 24 hours, for at the end of each day it is written: “And there was evening, and there was morning ....” (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31 – NIV). That is confirmed by what God said to the Israelites when He gave them the commandment concerning the Sabbath day, that is, the seventh day of the week. Here are the words of God: “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:8-11).
The Gap Theory

The gap theory – also called the ‘ruin-and-reconstruction’ theory - is the idea that between the first two verses of the Bible (Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2) there was a gap of time which lasted billions of years during which several important things occurred. Here is what this theory says:
A) God created the universe billions of years ago. The passage of the Scripture “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1 – NKJV) refers to that creation.
B) Then the geological ages proposed by evolutionists took place over billions of years of earth's history. Life-forms arose during that time that are now preserved in the fossil record, and these fossils allegedly verify that the geological ages took place.
C) At the end of the geological ages, Satan rebelled in Heaven and many angels followed him. God then cast Satan down to earth, the earth underwent a huge disaster or cataclysm, and it was left without form and void, with darkness on the face of the deep. The passage of the Scripture: “The earth was without form, and void” (Genesis 1:2 – NKJV), refers to the state of the earth after that great cataclysm, so it should be translated: ‘The earth became without form, and void.’ That God did not create the earth without form and void is evident from Isaiah 45:18 which says that God “did not create it in vain.” At this point, it must be said that some of the adherents of the gap-theory assert that all the plant, animal and human fossils upon the earth today date from this cataclysm; so they do not think that the fossil record formed over billions of years but that it was the outcome of the cataclysm (called ‘Lucifer’s flood’) which occurred because of Satan’s rebellion.
D) God then re-created the earth in the six literal days of creation described in the first chapter of Genesis. Therefore there were two creations: the former took place billions of years ago, while the latter took place after the earth was destroyed by a devastating global cataclysm which occurred as a result of the rebellion of Satan and his angels against God, with God casting them out of heaven to the earth. The six-days of the first chapter of Genesis are actually days of recreation, for God had to re-create all the animals and the plants which had been destroyed by that great cataclysm.

The gap theory was developed by Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), a notable Scottish theologian and first moderator of the Free Church of Scotland. The most notably influential 19th century writer to popularize this view was G.H. Pember, in his book Earth’s Earliest Ages, first published in 1884. The 20th century writer who published the most academic defence of the gap theory was Arthur C. Custance in his work Without Form and Void. This theory is upheld by many evangelical theologians.

The Scofield Study Bible notes on Genesis I include the following: ‘The first act refers to the dateless past, and gives scope for all the geologic ages. . . . The face of the earth bears everywhere the marks of such a catastrophe. There are not wanting intimations which connect it with a previous testing and fall of angels. . . . Relegate fossils to the primitive creation, and no conflict of science with the Genesis cosmogony remains.

The Nelson Study Bible, published in 1997, in its footnotes on Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, says: ‘Here it means that God renewed what was in a chaotic state. God changed chaos into cosmos, disorder into order, emptiness into fullness. . . . The two words, without form and void, express one concept—chaos. The earth had been reduced to this state—it was not the way God had first created it.’

The Italian Assemblies of God (ADI, which stands for Assemblee di Dio in Italia) endorses the gap-theory. In an article written by Francesco Toppi, former president of ADI, which appeared in 1988 on the fortnightly magazine ‘Cristiani Oggi’ [Christians Today], which is one of the official magazines published by the above mentioned denomination, we read as follows: ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters’ (Genesis 1:1-2 - NIV). Genesis 1:1 ‘In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth’ does not describe the first step of the creation, it does not refer to the creation of the formless matter out of nothing but to a perfect creation: “The heavens and the earth” (….). This original
physical creation is complete in itself, like all the things that God creates, even though we don’t
know the details of this first creation (…). Genesis 1:2 would be the result of a destruction, of a
catastrophe and implies a result of an episode of the ‘protohistory’ of the universe. This first
original creation of Genesis 1:1 was followed by an indeterminate period of time, to which can
represent all the geological eras of billions of years nowadays settled through radiometric
instruments (…) the great cataclysm that left the earth “formless and empty and darkness was
over the surface of the deep” must have been an event of cosmic importance and thus it can
refer only to the rebellion of Satan, to his expulsion from heaven and to his fall from heaven to
the earth: (…) therefore Genesis 1:3-31 describes the ‘re-creation’ during which the Creator
reconstructed from the formless matter of the original creation existing before the adamic
creation’ (Cristiani Oggi, 1988, n°4, page 2 – Translated by myself). This interpretation ‘allows
us to state that the Bible does not contradict science’ (Ibid., page 2).

The gap-theory is endorsed also by those who follow Herbert Armstrong’s heretical teachings,
for in his book The Incredible Human Potential he wrote: ‘Now back to Genesis 1:1-2. Verse 1,
as stated above, implies a perfect creation. God is the author of life, of beauty, of perfection.
Satan has brought only darkness, ugliness, imperfection, violence. Verse 1 shows the creation
of a perfect earth, glorious and beautiful. Verse 2 reveals the result of the sin of the angels.
And the earth was [became] without form, and void.’ The words “without form and void” are
translated from the Hebrew tohu and bohu. A better translation is “waste and empty” or “chaotic
and in confusion.” The word “was” is elsewhere in Genesis translated “became,” as in Genesis
19:26. In other words, the earth, originally created perfect and beautiful, had now become
chaotic, waste, and empty, like our moon, except its surface was covered with water. David was
inspired to reveal how God renewed the face of the earth: “Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are
created: and thou renewest the face of the earth” (Ps. 104:30). Now another surprise for most
readers. Here is another bit of the missing dimension in knowledge, actually revealed in the
Bible, but unrecognized by religion, by science, and by higher education. From verse 2 of
Genesis 1 on, the remainder of this first chapter of the Bible is not describing the original
creation of the earth. But it is describing a renewing of the face of the earth, after it had become
waste and empty as a result of the sin of the angels. What is described from verse 2 on, in the
supposed “Creation chapter” of the Bible, did occur, according to the Bible, approximately 6,000
years ago. But that could have been millions or trillions of years after the actual creation of the
earth described in verse 1! I will comment later on the length of time it might have taken before
all earth’s angels turned to rebellion. The earth had become chaotic, waste, and empty. God did not
create it waste and empty, or in confusion. God is not the author of confusion (I Cor. 14:33). This
same Hebrew word -- tohu -- meaning waste and empty, was inspired in Isaiah 45:18, where it is
translated “in vain.” Using the original Hebrew word, as originally inspired, it reads: “For thus
saith the [Eternal] that created the heavens; God himselt that formed the earth and made it; he
hath established it, he created it not in vain [tohu], he formed it to be inhabited.” Continue now
with the remainder of verse 2 (Gen. 1) (the earth had become chaotic, waste, and empty): “And
darkness was upon the face of the deep [the ocean or fluid surface of the earth]. And the Spirit
of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.
And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness” (verses 2-4).
Satan is the author of darkness. The rebellion of the angels had caused the darkness. God is the
author of light and truth. Light displays and enhances beauty, and also exposes evil.
Darkness hides both. The verses which follow in this first chapter of the Bible describe the
renewing of the face of the earth, yielding beautiful lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, vegetation --
then the creation of fish and fowl, animal life, and finally man.’ (Herbert W. Armstrong, The
Incredible Human Potential, Pasadena, California, 1978, pages 41-42). However, it must be said
that the gap theory taught by Armstrong does not include evolution nor the existence of man
before the global cataclysm for he taught that before the great cataclysm the world was under
the authority of angels who were ordained to preserve and prepare it for man. The angels, under
Lucifer, rebelled. The world ended in chaos as a consequence, and in six days it was re-created
for man.
Confutation

The gap-theory is a false doctrine, for it contradicts the Word of God, and thus it must be rejected.

The gap-theory affirms that the things created by God spoken of in the first chapter of the book of Genesis are things which were re-made or reconstructed by God, and therefore we should no longer speak of a creation but of a re-creation or reconstruction. Whereas the Scripture, referring to the events of the first chapter of Genesis, speaks continually of creation. For after God rested from His work on the seventh day, the Scripture says: “This is the history of the heavens and the earth when they were created, in the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens” (Genesis 2:4 – NKJV). God Himself, when He commanded the Israelites to remember the seventh day to keep it holy, said to them: “For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exodus 20:11). Is it not enough clear that there were no other creation-days before the six creation-days? If the first day was not the one described in verse 3 because there had been a first day billions of years before, why does the Scripture say “so the evening and the morning were the first day” (Genesis 1:5), “were the second day” (1:8), “were the third day” (1:13) and so on? What then would these expressions mean? Don’t you think that we would implicitly acknowledge that in the book of Genesis there are some lies, for the first day spoken of in the first chapter of the book of Genesis actually was not the first day, and consequently the second day actually was not the second day, and so on? Don’t you think that if the gap theory were true we should affirm that for many centuries God deceived all Christians into believing a lie, since the creation spoken of in the first chapter of Genesis was a reconstruction and not a creation?

Let us talk about man now. If this theory were true, we should come to the conclusion that Adam was not the first man: why? Because if “in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” meant that God made a perfect creation which afterward was destroyed by the fall of Satan from heaven, that would mean that at that time God had created also man and woman on the earth since that creation would have been imperfect without the creation of the human being. Therefore, before Adam there would have been other human beings on the earth, that is to say, there would have been other human beings before the earth became formless and empty. But this is not possible because the Scripture calls Adam the first man, as Paul says to the Corinthians: “The first man Adam became a living being” (1 Corinthians 15:45 – NKJV).

Furthermore, when Jesus spoke about the creation of man and woman, He said: “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female and said ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’” (Matthew 19:4-5 – NKJV), didn’t He? What does ‘at the beginning’ mean? What creation did He refer to? As far we know, He referred to the only creation of man and woman accomplished by God, that is, the creation described in the book of Genesis. Therefore ‘at the beginning’ must refer to the only beginning the Scripture speaks of, that is, the time in which God created, and not recreated, man and woman. Not only that, but if the gap-theory were true we should also conclude that when Adam gave names to all the animals, it was not the first time that such a thing had occurred, because the first man, who had lived billions of years before Adam, had already given names to the animals, and therefore Adam had to rename them, and at this point we should wonder if Adam gave the same names to the animals.

In other words, if we accepted this theory as a true theory we could eventually affirm many things that are inconsistent with the Scripture. And perhaps somebody might put even the homo erectus and the man of Neanderthal etc. etc. in those billions of years that preceded the re-creation accomplished by God recorded in the first chapter of Genesis, thus we would conclude that the so called evolution of man took place before the re-creation.

How can we explain then the fact that in the book of Genesis it is written that the earth was formless and empty (this passage, according to the proponents of the gap-theory, supports their
thesis)? We explain it in this way: when God created the earth it did not have the form it has now, but it was formless. Therefore the earth did not become formless but at the beginning of the creation it was made formless by God and afterward God formed it. For you should keep in mind that at the beginning the continents were not visible as they are now because they were submerged (underwater) as it is written that on the third day God said: “Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so” (Genesis 1:9). And the words of the Psalmist are in agreement with this, as it is written: “You covered it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At Your rebuke they fled; at the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. They went up over the mountains; they went down into the valleys, to the place which You founded for them” (Psalm 104:6-8 - NKJV). Therefore when we read that at the beginning the earth was formless we have to bear in mind that the earth had not yet risen out of water, in that it rose out of water on the third day as Peter says: “By God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and with water” - 2 Peter 3:5 NIV). Furthermore, the earth was empty because we know that the plants, the animals and man, were made by God on the third day (plants) and on the sixth day (animals and man). That’s why the Scripture states that the earth was empty and not only formless. Therefore we must not be surprised to read that the earth was empty.

We can say a similar thing also about man, because man did not take immediately the form he has now because the Scripture says that “the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground” (Genesis 2:7). The expression ‘the Lord God formed man’ implies that at the beginning he was formless and afterward he took the form that God had determined (we don’t know how long the formation of man lasted, anyway it took place during a day of 24 hours, I mean it might have lasted 5 seconds or 5 minutes or 15 minutes or 1 hour or 2 hours, etc.; we can say that the formation of man took place between the morning and the evening of the sixth day). That’s not a strange thing because even the baby who is going to be born, before taking the form he will have when his mother gives birth to him, at the beginning was formless and has undergone a process of formation which in this case lasted several months. When David said: “Your eyes saw my unformed body” (Psalm 139:16 - NIV) did he not mean that at the beginning his body was unformed (or shapeless)? Please note that everything is the work of God because David said to God: “For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13 – NIV) and Job said: “Your hands shaped me and made me” (Job 10:8 – NIV). However, when the hands of God began to form man he was not only shapeless but also empty because there was no life in him. It was when God finished forming his body that He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). Therefore, that’s the way God worked, but unfortunately His way of working things, so clearly described in the Scripture, has been darkened by the above theory, which is nothing but an idea that sprang from a wrong interpretation given to the words “was formless and empty”. However, it is an idea that not only contradicts the teaching of the Scripture concerning the creation, but also builds a sort of bridge between science and the book of Genesis because somehow it confirms that the geological eras of the scientists – which we don’t accept at all – actually can be placed in the book of Genesis. In other words, this theory sprang from the need to reconcile science and Scripture. And the damage caused by it is evident. Know this, brothers, that many believers, wanting to reconcile the untrue theories of science with the truth of the Scripture, have wandered from the truth!

Last of all, let me say a few words about fossils. How do we explain the presence of so many animal fossils in the earth’s crust? Well, their presence can be best explained as one of the results of the worldwide flood which occurred in the days of Noah, for according to the Bible when God brought the flood upon the earth to punish the world for its iniquity He put to death all animals and men (except Noah, his family, and all the animals that were with him in the ark), as it is written: “All flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died” (Genesis 7:21-22 - NKJV). That’s why we are not surprised at hearing that there are many dead animals buried in rock layers laid down by water all over the earth. This is the only global and devastating cataclysm which the earth has
experienced, which can be proved through the Holy Scripture. But as for the cataclysm (or 'Lucifer’s flood') of which the adherents of the gap theory speak, it must be said that the Scripture does not mention it at all, so we do not believe it ever occurred. You may say, 'Not all events which occurred in ancient times are recorded in the Bible!' That’s true, but I firmly believe that if a global and devastating cataclysm had occurred before the flood of Noah, which destroyed a creation previous to the one recorded in the Bible, certainly God would have moved Moses or someone else to write about it so that the account of that cataclysm might be recorded in the Bible. So the fact that the account of that supposed cataclysm is missing in the Bible, shows that it is a godless myth, and we are commanded not to give heed to godless myths. That this cataclysm is a godless myth is evident from the fact that it is inconsistent with the Holy Scripture.
THE FLOOD

We don’t know how much of the world was covered by the waters

In one of his messages at his evangelistic crusade in Minneapolis, Minnesota, in 1996, Billy Graham said that he wasn’t sure if the flood of Noah's day were worldwide, or if it were only regional. He said that we don’t know how much of the world was covered by the waters. The New Bible Commentary, published by InterVarsity Press, takes a similar position with this comment on Genesis 6: “The narrative does not directly affirm a universal flood ... deductions drawn from the assumption that all mankind was destroyed are precarious” (page 88).

Confutation

According to the Holy Scriptures, the flood which occurred in the days of Noah was universal and not local, for it is written: “Now the flood was on the earth forty days. The waters increased and lifted up the ark, and it rose high above the earth. The waters prevailed and greatly increased on the earth, and the ark moved about on the surface of the waters. And the waters prevailed exceedingly on the earth, and all the high hills under the whole heaven were covered. The waters prevailed fifteen cubits upward, and the mountains were covered. And all flesh died that moved on the earth: birds and cattle and beasts and every creeping thing that creeps on the earth, and every man. All in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, all that was on the dry land, died. So He destroyed all living things which were on the face of the ground: both man and cattle, creeping thing and bird of the air. They were destroyed from the earth. Only Noah and those who were with him in the ark remained alive” (Genesis 7:17-23 – NKJV). As you can see, all the high mountains under the entire heavens were covered by the waters of the flood, and the waters rose and covered the mountains to a depth of more than fifteen cubits (about 6.9 meters). As a consequence of that great flood, every living thing that moved on the earth perished.

Furthermore, we deduce that the flood was universal from the fact that God said to Noah: “And of every living thing of all flesh you shall bring two of every sort into the ark, to keep them alive with you; they shall be male and female. Of the birds after their kind, of animals after their kind, and of every creeping thing of the earth after its kind, two of every kind will come to you to keep them alive” (Genesis 6:19-20 – NKJV). If the flood were local, God would not have spoken to Noah those words, for animals would have survived outside of the flood area.

In addition to this, we deduce that the flood of Noah’s days was a worldwide flood from the fact that Jesus likened the day on which the Son of Man will be revealed to the day on which Noah entered the ark and the flood came. Listen to His words: “And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: they ate, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all …. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed” (Luke 17:26-27, 30 – NKJV). In other words, just as the flood in the days of Noah came on the whole world unexpectedly, so the day of the Lord will come unexpectedly on all those who live on earth, as it is written that that Day “will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth” (Luke 21:35 – NKJV).
ANGEOLOGY

Angels are people who have died and gone to heaven

In his book *What the Bible Actually Teaches*, John Odhner, who is a follower of spiritist Emmanuel Swedenborg, states: ‘…. angels are simply people who have died and gone to heaven …. people become angels after death’

Confutation

Angels are heavenly beings that were created by God before man was created. For when God laid the foundations of the earth, the angels of God were already in existence. That’s what we learn from the following words God said to Job: “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God [that is, the angels of God] shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4-7 – NKJV). So angels cannot be people who have died and gone to heaven, for they came into being before man was created.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. We will not become angels when we die and go to be with the Lord. We will continue to be what we are on earth, that is, human beings. In other words, when our soul leaves our body, it won’t undergo any change, it will not become an angel! As we have seen, the angels of God are heavenly creatures, therefore they can’t be people who have died in the Lord. That’s what we learn from what John wrote in the book of Revelation. For the apostle wrote that he saw “the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” (Revelation 6:9 – NKJV) – those souls were under the altar which is before God -, and he saw also the angels, who stood around the throne, and the elders and the four living creatures (cf. Revelation 7:11). Furthermore, you must bear in mind that the angels are ministering spirits sent by God to serve those who will inherit salvation (cf. Hebrews 1:14), therefore they are heavenly beings whom God sends to fulfil certain tasks on behalf of the believers who are on earth (the Holy Scripture confirms this many times), while those who have died in the Lord are not sent by God to serve the saints who are on earth, but they remain in heaven.

In addition to this, the dead who die in the Lord cannot become angels because they are waiting for the resurrection of their bodies and when they are raised from the dead their soul will return to their body (that is, their soul will be reunited with their body), which will be a body transformed by the power of God into a glorious, immortal and incorruptible body (that is, a resurrected body). While the angels of God are immortal spirits, thus they don’t need to nor can be raised from the dead to attain immortality

Neither will they become angels when they rise; however they will be like angels because they will not die any longer. That’s the meaning of the following words of Jesus: “The people [lit: children] of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God’s children, since they are children of the resurrection” (Luke 20:34-36 – NIV)
The angels of God should be invoked and are worthy to be worshiped

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christians can invoke the angels of God and worship them. Here is what we read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*: ‘In her liturgy, the church joins with the angels to adore the thriceholy God. She invokes their assistance (in the funeral liturgy's In Paradisum deducant te angeli ... ['May the angels lead you into Paradise...']); in the funeral liturgy's In Paradisum deducant te angeli...("May the angels lead you into Paradise...")). Moreover, in the “Cherubic Hymn” of the Byzantine Liturgy, she celebrates the memory of certain angels more particularly (St. Michael, St. Gabriel, St. Raphael, and the guardian angels) ..... The Church venerates the angels who help her on her earthly pilgrimage and protect every human being (CCC 335,352).

The verb to venerate derives from Latin *venerat-venerari* which means 'adore, revere'. Angels are regarded as powerful intercessors. The Roman Catholic Church celebrates the guardian angels on October 2.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture says that “the angels of the Lord encamp all around those who fear Him, and deliver them” (Psalm 34:7 – Italian Bible Diodati Version), and also that because we have made the Lord our dwelling place, He shall give His angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways (cf. Psalm 91:9-11). However, it does not say that we should invoke the angels of God for they make intercession for us; the reason is that there is one mediator between God and us, the Man Christ Jesus (cf. 1 Timothy 2:5). Nor does it say that we are allowed to worship angels, rather the Scripture warns us not to worship them, for Paul says: “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind” (Colossians 2:18 – NKJV). The angels of God are not worthy to be worshipped because God alone is worthy to be worshiped; the apostle John confirmed this when he wrote the following words: “And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God” (Revelation 22:8-9).

We know very well that Roman Catholics affirm that they don't worship angels, rather they venerate them, that is to say, they revere them; however facts speak for themselves, because what they call veneration actually is adoration.

Brothers, beware of anyone who somehow seeks to induce you to invoke and worship angels, for he is trying to make you become an idolater in the sight of God and as you know all idolaters will have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (cf. Revelation 21:8). Let no one deceive you with empty words.

The angels of God are waiting for our orders

The late Kenneth Hagin taught that the angels of God sent by God to serve us are waiting for our orders. Here is what he wrote in his book *I Believe in Visions*: “They are waiting on you to give them the order, just as the waitress cannot do anything for you until you give her the order” (Kenneth Hagin, *I Believe in Visions*, page 126). Therefore, according to this teaching, that Hagin claimed that God had revealed to him in 1963, when we need something we can give the angels of God, who protect and serve us, some orders such as, ‘Go and bring me a car!’ or ‘Go, and bring me ten Euro’ and so on.
Confutation

According to the Scripture, angels don’t take orders from us rather they take orders from God alone, as it is written in the Psalms: “Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will” (Psalm 103:20-21 - NIV). We can notice this very clearly in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, for in all the angelic apparitions as well as all the tasks accomplished by angels recorded in the Bible, we never read that they took orders from some human beings, rather some human beings took orders from the angels of God. Let me cite just the New Testament; an angel of the Lord commanded Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary home as his wife (cf. Matthew 1:20); an angel of the Lord commanded him to take the Child Jesus and His mother and to escape to Egypt (cf. Matthew 2:13) and after king Herod died an angel of the Lord commanded Joseph to go to the land of Israel (cf. Matthew 2:20); an angel of the Lord appeared to Peter while he was kept in prison and commanded him to gird himself and to tie on his sandals, to put on his garment and follow him (cf. Acts 12:7-8); an angel of the Lord appeared to Paul on the ship and commanded him not to be afraid (cf. Acts 27:23-24); an angel of God commanded Cornelius the roman centurion to send men to Joppa and call for Simon Peter who would tell him words by which he and all his household would be saved (cf. Acts 11:13-14); an angel of the Lord commanded the evangelist Philip to arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza (cf. Acts 8:26).

Of course, angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation (cf. Hebrews 1:14), however, this does not mean that they are at our disposal (they are not at our beck and call) for they are at God’s disposal. In other words, they intervene in our life at God’s command and not at our command. Let me give you an example. If I am in prison because of the Gospel and God has decided to deliver me from prison in a supernatural way through His angels, He will send His angels to deliver me and His angels will deliver me according to His orders. Therefore, when the angels of God to whom God entrusted this task deliver me those who keep the prison will not notice it. Only after my deliverance will they realize that I am no longer in prison. However, while I am waiting for God’s deliverance, the angels of God are not waiting for my orders, that is to say, they are not waiting for me to say to them: ‘Angels, listen to me, deliver me from prison!’.

Brothers, beware of this false doctrine taught by Hagin, because anyone who gives heed to it will surely stop praying to God (or he will pray to God much less than before) and will begin to pray to angels so that they may meet his needs. In other words, he will act like many Roman Catholics who have been taught that they can talk to angels when they need something. And such a conduct is contrary to the sound doctrine. Let no one deceive you with empty words, we must pray to God in the midst of every distress, then God will meet our needs the way He wants. We must pray to Him in faith and then God will send His angels to help us. However, let us not give any orders to the angels of God for they are waiting for God’s orders.

Christians have not guardian angels

Mormons deny the existence of guardian angels assigned by God to the righteous, for they say: ‘This well-known guardian function of angels has given rise to an assumption on the part of some that all persons, or at least the righteous, have individual angels assigned to them throughout life as guardians. There is no scriptural justification for this tradition, although it has been entertained sometimes among Latter-day Saints and others’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 1, page 42). Unfortunately even some Pentecostals deny that Christians have guardian angels. For instance Myer Pearlman in his well-known book Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible, translated in Italian with the title Le Dottrine della Bibbia [Doctrines of
Confutation

First of all, I want to remind you that angels are “ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation” (Hebrews 1:14). Therefore angels serve those who are eagerly waiting for the Lord who will appear to them for salvation (cf. Hebrews 9:28), and we are among those who are waiting for the Lord.

There are some passages of the Scripture which somehow attest that we believers have some angels around us who protect and serve us.

● The Psalmist says: “The angels of the Lord encamp all around those who fear Him, and deliver them” (Psalm 34:7 – Italian Bible Diodati Version), and also that because we have made the Lord our dwelling place, He shall give His angels charge over us to keep us in all our ways (cf. Psalm 91:9-11). Therefore, according to these Scriptures we have some angels around us who keep us. This is confirmed by many visions God has given to both believers and unbelievers over the centuries, in which angels were seen around the saints dressed in white robes or dressed normally like us. I would like to mention just two of these visions taken from the book Delivered from the power of darkness written by Emmanuel Eni Amos, who was a wizard prior to his conversion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Here are his words concerning two incidents happened to him while he was under the power of the devil: ‘There was this Pastor - Pastor I.K. (name withheld). He was pastoring a church in Ebute Metta. He became my target and his offences were: 1. He disturbed our peace by carrying out early morning calls i.e. preaching in the early hours. 2. He went about with his megaphone and stationed himself at No. 2 Bus stop along Akintola Road, Ebute Metta. There he would preach. He would not stop at that but would keep binding demons, etc. 3. In his church he would preach, exposing the works of darkness, after which he started binding demons. 4. He prayed a lot. 5. He was always singing and praising God. I sent my messengers to him but they could not kill him so I decided to carry out the mission myself. On the said day, I saw him walking along the new G.R.A. A thing worth mentioning here about this Pastor is: anytime we went for him, we would see pillars of cloud by his right and left hands, walking along with him, so these hindered us. But this particular day I saw nothing, so I was doubly sure my mission would be very successful. I commanded rain to fall to enable me to strike him with thunder. The rain started and the thundering began. The whole trees in the area started loosing their branches, but this Pastor was singing joyfully. I still remember the chorus: “IN JESUS NAME EVERY KNEE SHALL BOW.” As he continued with this chorus the rain stopped, the thundering ceased and there appeared immediately two angels, one on each side, with flaming swords. Their eyes and the swords were like flames of fire. Then a strong wind carried me away and I found myself in another town! In fact I was baffled, but because we were so hardened, what I said was: “This man has escaped again!” The Pastor did not know the spiritual war that was fought on his behalf (Emmanuel Amos Eni, Delivered from the powers of darkness, Scripture Union Press and Books Ltd, P.O. Box 4011, Oyo Road, Ibadan, Nigeria, First Published 1987, page 57), ‘The second testimony is about a Christian who boarded the same taxi with me. He was very zealous and started distributing Gospel tracts inside the taxi. When he gave me the tract I rejected it. He started preaching. So I became disturbed and knocked him with the ring on my finger. That was to kill him. This boy shouted: “THE BLOOD OF JESUS!” and immediately lightning and fire and an angel appeared. A strong wind again removed me with great force out of the taxi and into the thick jungle. Had it not been that I was a man backed by evil powers I could have got lost in the jungle. The Christian did not know the war that went on his behalf. All he knew, including the other passengers, was that I had disappeared from the taxi!’ (Ibid., page 58). Emmanuel Amos Eni says also another interesting thing, that is to say, he says how, while he was a wizard, was able to know the true Christians, listen to his words: ‘When a Christian was walking along, WE SAW ANGELS WALKING ALONG WITH HIM/HER, ONE BY THE RIGHT, ONE BY THE LEFT, AND ONE
BEHIND. This made it impossible for us to come near him/her. The only way we succeeded was by making the Christian sin, thereby giving us a loophole to come in. When a Christian was driving a car and we wanted to harm him/her, we found that he/she was never alone in the car. There was always an Angel by him/her” (Ibid., page 29).

● Jesus said: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10). I want you to note that Jesus said that those little ones had angels, therefore God has assigned at least one angel to each one of the little ones who believe on Him to keep him.

● Luke says that after Peter was delivered from prison by an angel of the Lord, he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark “where many were gathered together praying. And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a damsel came to hearken, named Rhoda. And when she knew Peter's voice, she opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in, and told how Peter stood before the gate. And they said unto her, Thou art mad. But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel. But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished. But he, beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place” (Acts 12:12-17). As you can see, those believers believed that the apostle Peter had an angel, and I am persuaded that their belief was based on the above mentioned words written in the Psalms.

● In the book of Daniel we read: “And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people ….” (Daniel 12:1). Michael is the same heavenly being who, according to Jude, defended the body of Moses against the devil who wanted to lay hold of it (Jude 9). Therefore, if the children of Israel have the archangel Michael who defend them, why should we consider a strange thing that we children of God have some individual angels of God who defend us?

● Mark says: “And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him” (Mark 1:13). Why then should we not believe that we also who live in the midst of this desolate world, who are tempted by the devil and surrounded by serpents and wolves ready to hurt us, have some angels of God who keep and serve us?

We believe in God, we serve Him and Him we invoke in the day of trouble, and Him we glorify after we have been delivered from our troubles; we do not glorify the angels that God uses to deliver us. We believe that God has put some angels around us, this is a further manifestation of His goodness, of His love, and of His care toward us. The kings of the earth recruit bodyguards and put them around their children to protect them against possible murderers or kidnappers, and they pay the bodyguards for their service. Likewise the King of Kings has put around His sons some guards to protect them day and night, but their guards are more powerful than men, for they are angels. To God, who is the One who keeps us, be the glory now and forever. Amen.

**The sons of God spoken of in Genesis chapter 6 were the descendants of Seth**

Concerning the following words written in the book of Genesis: “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the Lord said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’ There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown”
(Genesis 6:1-4 – NKJV), the Seventh-Day Adventist Church teaches that the sons of God spoken of were the descendants of Seth; Ángel Manuel Rodríguez, director of the Biblical Research Institute of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, says: ‘.... the best interpretation of the phrase ‘sons of God’ is the one that finds in it a designation of the descendants of Seth. This appears to be the one suggested by Scripture itself.’

(https://biblicalresearch.gc.adventist.org); while the daughters of men that were taken as wives by the sons of God were the descendants of Cain. This view is held even by many Evangelical Churches.

Confutation

The sons of God who married the daughters of men were angels of God. Let me explain to you why I believe and teach that they were angels.

In the book of Job it is written: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them” (Job 1:6; cf. Job 2:1 - NKJV). Who were those sons of God? Let me say first of all who they were not. They were not the souls of the righteous who had died under the Old Covenant, for they were in the bosom of Abraham, which was a place of rest located under the earth, precisely it was located above Hades which was a place of torment where the souls of the wicked went (Hades still exists and the wicked are turned into it when they die); that’s what the story of the rich man and Lazarus, which was told by Jesus, teaches us. They were not human beings, for the Scripture says that Satan came also among the sons of God to present himself before the Lord, whose throne is in heaven. Therefore we conclude that they were angels of God, which is confirmed by the following words God said to Job: “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” (Job 38:4-7 – NKJV). For if we examine carefully these words of God we will realize that all the sons of God who shouted for joy when God laid the foundations of the earth were heavenly creatures and not earthly creatures, for at that time God had not yet made man and woman, since they were made on the sixth day, after God created the heavens and the earth. Furthermore, if we read carefully the above mentioned words concerning the union between the sons of God and the daughters of men we can notice that it is written: “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful”, which leads one to believe that the sons of God had not the same nature as the daughters of men had; for if they had been normal human beings — some God-fearing descendants of Seth, for instance — who saw that the daughters of Cain were beautiful and took wives for themselves of all whom they chose, the writer would not have said that “the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful” nor would he have said that men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born to them and that afterward the sons of God saw that they were beautiful and so on. Had the sons of God been normal human beings and not angels, what the writer said would have made no sense. Don’t you think so? Imagine you hear me saying, ‘We sons of God, that is, we as believers, must not marry the daughters of men, that is, the daughters of unbelievers’, wouldn’t you say to me, ‘Are not the daughters of believers – that is, the daughters of the sons of God - daughters of men too?’ Therefore the reason why in the book of Genesis they are called sons of God is not that they were God fearing men who descended from Seth, but that they were some creatures of God who had not the same nature as ours. Furthermore, what biblical basis is there for saying that the sons of God were the descendants of Seth while the daughters of men were descendants of Cain? Why should one affirm this? Could not one affirm the opposite?

You may ask me now, ‘Are there any verses in the New Testament, too, which support your view?’ Yes, there are some verses. Here they are: “God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for
judgment” (2 Peter 2:4 – NKJV. The Greek word which has been translated hell is ‘tartarus’); “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home — these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgement on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 6-7 – NIV). The words which make it clear that the sin committed by those angels was fornication are these: “In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion”, for they show that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave up themselves to sexual immorality just as those angels did, who, because of their sin, were cast down to tartarus and delivered into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgement on the great day.
DEMONOLOGY

The devil does not exist

Many people all over the world deny the existence of the devil. Among them are the members of the Christadelphian Church and the followers of spiritist Emanuel Swedenborg. The Christadelphian Church: ‘Today, many people believe in a supernatural Devil, a specific being who goes around causing trouble and tempting people to cause sin. While this idea may be superficially supported by the Bible it obscures the real message: that man is the source of sin, not some ‘fallen angel’ .... Satan is not some supernatural person constantly at odds with God.’ (http://www.christadelphian.org.uk – cf. Christadelphian Answers, page 100). Robert Roberts has written: ‘Now, we make bold at once to assert that the popular doctrine of a personal devil has no foundation whatever in truth, but is the hideous conception of the heathen mind, inherited by the moderns from the mythologies of the ancients, and incorporated with Christianity by those “men of corrupt minds,” who, Paul predicted, would pervert the truth, “giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” (Robert Roberts, Christendom Astray From the Bible – From http://www.christadelphia.org/). What is the devil then? The devil is the scriptural personification of sin in its manifestations among men

The followers of Emmanuel Swedenborg. In his book What the Bible Actually Teaches, John Odhner, who is a follower of spiritist Emmanuel Swedenborg states: ‘The Bible shows that people can be devils and satans, but what about the Devil? Doesn't the Bible describe Satan as a specific personal being of extraordinary power? The answer is a qualified “yes.” In fact the Bible shows that Satan does exist and has great power, yet Satan is not one individual but a group of individuals. ….. Once we understand that the Devil is not some mysterious evil being with almost Godlike power, but is a collection of people choosing to lust, hurt and hate, we can see the real nature of our responsibility for evil. We can't blame evil on others. The Devil is not a tempter created by God, but the temptation we create for ourselves and for each other by our free choices. Satan is not some outside force acting on the human race, but the force of people acting against people - a force that is very much alive and real - one we add to and accept when we act in harmful ways, and one which we diminish and escape when we stop hurting others’. References from Swedenborg: Heaven and Hell 311-317.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture clearly teaches that the devil is a personal being who is able to see, to hear, to speak, to argue, to remember, to hurt people, to kill people, to tempt people, and to deceive them into doing and believing evil things.

When Jesus Christ was tempted by the devil in the wilderness, the devil spoke to Jesus three times. The first time he said to Jesus: “If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread” (Matthew 4:3); the second time [after he had set Him on the pinnacle of the temple] he said to Him: “If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone” (Matthew 4:6); and the third time, after he had showed Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, he said to Him: “All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me” (Matthew 4:9). Each time Jesus answered the devil citing a passage of the Scripture. The first time Jesus said to Him: “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4); the second time He said to him: “It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God” (Matthew
4:7); and the third time: “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matthew 4:10). Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, said the following things about the devil: “He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44 – NKJV). Jesus called the devil “the prince of this world” (John 14:30 – NIV), for he rules over this wicked world. Paul confirmed this by calling the devil “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2 – NKJV). The devil has a kingdom (cf. Matthew 12:26), and many children (cf. Matthew 13:38). The devil put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon’s son, to betray Jesus (cf. John 13:2), and he entered Judas, as it is written: “Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve” (Luke 22:3 – NKJV). The devil filled the heart of Ananias to lie to the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 5:3). The devil hindered Paul and his fellow workers from going to Thessalonica (cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:18). The devil threw some believers of the church of Smyrna into prison (cf. Revelation 2:10). Paul delivered several believers, who had rebelled against God, to Satan for the destruction of the flesh (cf. 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:19-20). When God put Job in the hand of the devil to test Job, the devil “struck Job with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head” (Job 2:7 - NKJV). Peter commands us to be sober and vigilant, because our adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and he tells us to resist the devil steadfast in the faith (cf. 1 Peter 5:8-9). James commands us to submit to God, to resist the devil, and he will flee from us (cf. James 4:6). The devil accuses the brethren before God day and night, but the hour is coming when he will be cast to the earth (cf. Revelation 12:7-12). When Jesus Christ returns, the devil will be bound for a thousand years, and cast into the bottomless pit, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years are finished. When the thousand years have expired, the devil will be released from his prison, and will deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, and fire will come down from God out of heaven and will devour them, and the devil will be cast into the lake of fire where he will be tormented day and night forever and ever (cf. Revelation 20:1-10). Therefore, brothers in the Lord, beware of those who deny the existence of the devil, for they lie against the truth; they are deceivers of mind that have been deceived by the devil.

While tempting Jesus, Satan claimed to be the angel who had saved Isaac from certain death

Ellen G. White, the prophetess of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, said: "As soon as the long fast of Christ commenced in the wilderness, Satan was at hand with his temptations. He ... tried to make Christ believe that God did not require Him to pass through self-denial and the sufferings He anticipated. ... He (Satan) also stated he was the angel that stayed the hand of Abraham as the knife was raised to slay Isaac” (Selected Messages, vol. 1, page 273).

Confutation

The Holy Scriptures do not contain this supposed conversation between Christ and Satan, therefore it must be rejected.
**Satan repented after his fall**

Ellen G. White, the prophetess of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, wrote: ‘After Satan was shut out of heaven, with those who fell with him, he realized that he lost all the purity and glory of heaven forever. Then he repented and wished to be reinstated in heaven. He was willing to take his proper place, or any place that might be assigned him. ... He and his followers repented, wept and implored to be taken back into the favor of God. But no, their sin their hate, their envy and jealousy, had been so great that God could not blot it out. It must remain to receive its final punishment” (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 1, p. 18, 19).

**Confutation**

The above mentioned words written by Ellen G. White are nothing but the fruit of her imagination. Reject them without hesitation. Nowhere does the Bible state that Satan repented and desired to be reinstated in heaven.
Man’s body evolved from a subhuman species created by God (the evolution theory taught by Roman Catholics)

Here is what the late John Paul II said to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on October 22, 1996.

‘WITH GREAT PLEASURE I address cordial greeting to you, Mr. President, and to all of you who constitute the Pontifical Academy of Sciences, on the occasion of your plenary assembly. I offer my best wishes in particular to the new academicians, who have come to take part in your work for the first time. I would also like to remember the academicians who died during the past year, whom I commend to the Lord of life.

1. In celebrating the 60th anniversary of the academy’s refoundation, I would like to recall the intentions of my predecessor Pius XI, who wished to surround himself with a select group of scholars, relying on them to inform the Holy See in complete freedom about developments in scientific research, and thereby to assist him in his reflections. He asked those whom he called the Church’s "senatus scienticus" to serve the truth. I again extend this same invitation to you today, certain that we will be able to profit from the fruitfulness of a trustful dialogue between the Church and science (cf. Address to the Academy of Sciences, No. 1, Oct. 28, 1986; L’Osservatore Romano, Eng. ed., Nov. 24, 1986, p. 22).

2. I am pleased with the first theme you have chosen, that of the origins of life and evolution, an essential subject which deeply interests the Church, since revelation, for its part, contains teaching concerning the nature and origins of man. How do the conclusions reached by the various scientific disciplines coincide with those contained in the message of revelation? And if, at first sight, there are apparent contradictions, in what direction do we look for their solution? We know, in fact, that truth cannot contradict truth (cf. Leo XIII, encyclical Providentissimus Deus). Moreover, to shed greater light on historical truth, your research on the Church’s relations with science between the 16th and 18th centuries is of great importance. During this plenary session, you are undertaking a "reflection on science at the dawn of the third millennium," starting with the identification of the principal problems created by the sciences and which affect humanity’s future. With this step you point the way to solutions which will be beneficial to the whole human community. In the domain of inanimate and animate nature, the evolution of science and its applications give rise to new questions. The better the Church’s knowledge is of their essential aspects, the more she will understand their impact. Consequently, in accordance with her specific mission she will be able to offer criteria for discerning the moral conduct required of all human beings in view of their integral salvation.

3. Before offering you several reflections that more specifically concern the subject of the origin of life and its evolution, I would like to remind you that the magisterium of the Church has already made pronouncements on these matters within the framework of her own competence. I will cite here two interventions.

In his encyclical Humani Generis (1950), my predecessor Pius XII had already stated that there was no opposition between evolution and the doctrine of the faith about man and his vocation, on condition that one did not lose sight of several indisputable points. For my part, when I received those taking part in your academy's plenary assembly on October 31, 1992, I had the opportunity with regard to Galileo to draw attention to the need of a rigorous hermeneutic for the correct interpretation of the inspired word. It is necessary to determine the proper sense of Scripture, while avoiding any unwarranted interpretations that make it say what it does not intend to say. In order to delineate the field of their own study, the exegete and the theologian must keep informed about the results achieved by the natural sciences (cf. AAS 85
4. Taking into account the state of scientific research at the time as well as of the requirements of theology, the encyclical Humani Generis considered the doctrine of "evolutionism" a serious hypothesis, worthy of investigation and in-depth study equal to that of the opposing hypothesis. Pius XII added two methodological conditions: that this opinion should not be adopted as though it were a certain, proven doctrine and as though one could totally prescind from revelation with regard to the questions it raises. He also spelled out the condition on which this opinion would be compatible with the Christian faith, a point to which I will return. Today, almost half a century after the publication of the encyclical, new knowledge has led to the recognition of the theory of evolution as more than a hypothesis. [Aujourd'hui, près d'un demi-siècle après la parution de l'encyclique, de nouvelles connaissances conduisent à reconnaître dans la théorie de l'évolution plus qu'une hypothèse.] It is indeed remarkable that this theory has been progressively accepted by researchers, following a series of discoveries in various fields of knowledge. The convergence, neither sought nor fabricated, of the results of work that was conducted independently is in itself a significant argument in favor of this theory.

What is the significance of such a theory? To address this question is to enter the field of epistemology. A theory is a metascientific elaboration, distinct from the results of observation but consistent with them. By means of it a series of independent data and facts can be related and interpreted in a unified explanation. A theory's validity depends on whether or not it can be verified; it is constantly tested against the facts; wherever it can no longer explain the latter, it shows its limitations and unsuitability. It must then be rethought. Furthermore, while the formulation of a theory like that of evolution complies with the need for consistency with the observed data, it borrows certain notions from natural philosophy.

And, to tell the truth, rather than the theory of evolution, we should speak of several theories of evolution. On the one hand, this plurality has to do with the different explanations advanced for the mechanism of evolution, and on the other, with the various philosophies on which it is based. Hence the existence of materialist, reductionist and spiritualist interpretations. What is to be decided here is the true role of philosophy and, beyond it, of theology.

5. The Church's magisterium is directly concerned with the question of evolution, for it involves the conception of man: Revelation teaches us that he was created in the image and likeness of God (cf. Gn 1:27-29). The conciliar constitution Gaudium et Spes has magnificently explained this doctrine, which is pivotal to Christian thought. It recalled that man is "the only creature on earth that God has wanted for its own sake" (No. 24). In other terms, the human individual cannot be subordinated as a pure means or a pure instrument, either to the species or to society; he has value per se. He is a person. With his intellect and his will, he is capable of forming a relationship of communion, solidarity and self-giving with his peers. St. Thomas observes that man's likeness to God resides especially in his speculative intellect, for his relationship with the object of his knowledge resembles God's relationship with what he has created (Summa Theologica I-II:3:5, ad 1). But even more, man is called to enter into a relationship of knowledge and love with God himself, a relationship which will find its complete fulfillment beyond time, in eternity. All the depth and grandeur of this vocation are revealed to us in the mystery of the risen Christ (cf. Gaudium et Spes, 22). It is by virtue of his spiritual soul that the whole person possesses such a dignity even in his body. Pius XII stressed this essential point: If the human body take its origin from pre-existent living matter, the spiritual soul is immediately created by God ("animas enim a Deo immediate creari catholica fides nos retinere iubei"; "Humani Generis," 36). Consequently, theories of evolution which, in accordance with the philosophies inspiring them, consider the spirit as emerging from the forces of living matter or as a mere epiphenomenon of this matter, are incompatible with the truth about man. Nor are they able to ground the dignity of the person.

6. With man, then, we find ourselves in the presence of an ontological difference, an ontological leap, one could say. However, does not the posing of such ontological discontinuity run counter
to that physical continuity which seems to be the main thread of research into evolution in the field of physics and chemistry? Consideration of the method used in the various branches of knowledge makes it possible to reconcile two points of view which would seem irreconcilable. The sciences of observation describe and measure the multiple manifestations of life with increasing precision and correlate them with the time line. The moment of transition to the spiritual cannot be the object of this kind of observation, which nevertheless can discover at the experimental level a series of very valuable signs indicating what is specific to the human being. But the experience of metaphysical knowledge, of self-awareness and self-reflection, of moral conscience, freedom, or again of aesthetic and religious experience, falls within the competence of philosophical analysis and reflection, while theology brings out its ultimate meaning according to the Creator's plans.

7. In conclusion, I would like to call to mind a Gospel truth which can shed a higher light on the horizon of your research into the origins and unfolding of living matter. The Bible in fact bears an extraordinary message of life. It gives us a wise vision of life inasmuch as it describes the loftiest forms of existence. This vision guided me in the encyclical which I dedicated to respect for human life, and which I called precisely "Evangelium Vitae."

It is significant that in St. John’s Gospel life refers to the divine light which Christ communicates to us. We are called to enter into eternal life, that is to say, into the eternity of divine beatitude. To warn us against the serious temptations threatening us, our Lord quotes the great saying of Deuteronomy: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Dt 8:3; cf. Mt 4:4). Even more, "life" is one of the most beautiful titles which the Bible attributes to God. He is the living God.

I cordially invoke an abundance of divine blessings upon you and upon all who are close to you.

(Excerpted from the October 30 issue of the English edition of L'Osservatore Romano)

As you can see, the pope has endorsed the evolution theory. What the pope has said about the theory of evolution, however, does not mean that the pope has endorsed the evolution theory taught by Darwin, Lamarck, Haeckel and many others. For he has endorsed an evolution theory which acknowledges that the soul was created immediately by God from nothing, while as for man’s bodily origins this evolution theory endorsed by the pope says that God used intermediate living forms to produce the body of the first man, that is to say, God did not take man's body directly from the dust of the ground for He created a subhuman species from which man's body evolved.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture says: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed” (Genesis 2:7-8). Therefore, God took man's body directly from the dust of the ground. There were no intermediate steps, that is to say, God did not use intermediate living forms to produce the body of the first man. It is not true that God created a subhuman species (a brute) first, and then He caused man's body to evolve from that subhuman species. For according to the Bible, man's body was taken by God directly from the dust of the ground; and immediately after God formed man's body He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living being. All this took place on the sixth day.

The evolution theory endorsed by Roman Catholics, therefore, is to be rejected because it contradicts God’s Word, which is truth.

Brethren, know this, that it is impossible to reconcile the modern theories of evolution with the Biblical account of creation, for you can’t reconcile lies with the truth.
When man sinned he lost his spirit

Jack Hyles, the late pastor of First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana (FBCH), taught that God made man body, soul, and spirit, but when man fell, he lost his spirit and became only body and soul—on the same level as an animal. He said that when man falls, he is no longer human, but becomes an animal, arguing, ‘Man in his unregenerate state is not human.’

Victor Paul Wierwille taught the same thing, for he said: ‘The spirit which God originally created in man was given on a condition …. In not fulfilling the conditions which God had prescribed, man became a two-fold being of just body and soul’ (Are The Dead Alive Now, pages 109-110, Old Greenwich, CT: Devin-Adair Company, 1971), ‘Adam’s mistake was cataclysmic …. The spirit disappeared. The reason the spirit was called dead is that it was no longer there …. From that very day Adam and Eve were just body and soul as any other animal. Man, being body and soul, had to rely solely on his five senses’ (Power For Abundant Living, page 258, New Knoxville, OH: American Christian Press, 1971).

Confutation

According to the Holy Scripture, after man sinned he continued to have a spirit in his body. In the book of Numbers God is called “the God of the spirits of all flesh” (Numbers 27:16 – NKJV) and men are included in ‘all flesh’ (the NIV reads “all mankind”). In the book of Proverbs we read: “The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness. But who can bear a broken spirit?” (Proverbs 18:14 – NKJV) and also: “The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart” (Proverbs 20:27 – NKJV). In the book of Ecclesiastes we read: “Remember now thy Creator … In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the windows be darkened, And the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low; Also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail: because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets: Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it. Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity. And moreover, because the preacher was wise, he still taught the people knowledge; yea, he gave good heed, and sought out, and set in order many proverbs” (Ecclesiastes 12:3-9). And Paul says to the Corinthians: “For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God” (1 Corinthians 2:11 – NKJV).

Therefore, a man, even if he is not yet a Christian, has a body, a soul and a spirit. Therefore man is not on the same level as an animal, first of all because man is a creature God made in His own image and likeness while animals were not made in God's image; secondly because animals don't have a soul, which at death goes either to paradise or to hell, animals have a spirit but not a soul (therefore those who teach that an unregenerate man has not a spirit but only a body and a soul as any other animal are mistaken even when they say that animals have a soul).

Man is part of God

Theosophy (from the Greek term theosophia which means ‘divine wisdom’) teaches: “In divine essence, latent power and potential spirituality, man is an image of God, because he is part of
If the idea of the immanence of God is sound, then man is a literal fragment of the consciousness of the Supreme Being, an embryo-god, being destined to ultimately evolve his latent powers into perfect expression. The oneness of life was explicitly asserted by Jesus. It is an unqualified assertion that humanity is a part of God, as leaves are part of the tree, not something a tree has created, in the sense that a man creates a machine, but something that is an emanation of the tree and a living part of it. Thus only has God made man. Humanity is a growth, a development, an emanation, an evolutionary expression of the Supreme Being. It is simplicity itself when we think of the solar system as simply an emanation of the Supreme Being, as something generated from a central life, an expression of that life which gives rise to the poles within it that we know as consciousness and matter. The human soul is an individualized fragment of that divine life. Is literally a spark of the divine fire, and latent within it are the characteristics of that central light from which it originated. The theosophical conception of the soul is that it is literally an emanation from God, and since it is therefore of its own essence, it becomes clear why Theosophists assert that man is a god in the making (L. W. Rogers, *Elementary Theosophy*, Wheaton, ILL; The Theosophical Press, 1956, pages 22-25: 19-20).

This teaching about man is accepted by the New Age Movement. Ruth Montgomery, in 'A World Beyond', a book she claims was written by automatic writing and transmitted from medium Arthur Ford, who was waiting in the spirit world to enter another body, writes on page 7: 'Now let us start with the premise that each person is a continuing entity through all eternity. No beginning and no ending, despite what some moralists say about our life beginning with physical birth as a baby and ending with Judgment Day. Bosh! There has never been a time when we were not, and we always will be, even though in constantly changing forms and stages, for we are as much God as God is a part of us.'

**Confutation**

The Scripture says: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Genesis 1:26-27). Therefore, man is not part of God nor an emanation of God. For he is just a creature made by God in His image and likeness.

Remember the following things, lest you be deceived by the devil, who is the father of the doctrine according to which man is part of God: God is the Creator of all things, while you are one of God's creatures; God can do everything for he is omnipotent, while you cannot make one hair white or black; God knows everything for He is omniscient, while you know in part; God is everywhere for He is omnipresent, while you can be in one place at a time; God is eternal for He exists from all eternity, while you had a beginning and you are a mortal being; God is invisible, while you are visible; God is perfect and does not make any mistakes, while you are full of imperfections and make many mistakes; God is holy, while you need to cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit; God is spirit, while you are made of flesh and bones.

God resists all those who believe that they are God or part of God for they are haughty people; here is what God said to the prince of Tyrus who had said, 'I am a god': ‘Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said, I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: .... Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God: Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD" (Ezekiel 28:2,6-10).
To confirm that God resist those who think that they are God I cite the following incident told by a former guru – now a Christian - called Rabindranath R. Maharaj in his book Death of a Guru. ‘At the end of my third year in high school, Ma and Aunt Revati invited a large group of neighbors and relatives to join us in a special puja in our home. Those arriving approached to make their respectful bows and to reminisce a bit upon my father’s greatness. Their comments, overheard here and there as the room filled, bore out the admiration I read in their appraising eyes. I was a Yogi who would bring fame to our town, a guru who would one day have many, many followers. My inner conflicts were forgotten in the sheer pleasure of being worshiped. Although I was not quite 15, I knew that already I had attained a status among Hindus that was the envy of some pundits. It gave me a good, honest feeling to know that I was not among the hypocrites my Uncle Deonarine despised. Our Baba, Pundit Jankhi Prasad Sharma Maharaj, my spiritual adviser and greatest inspiration, the acknowledged Hindu leader for all of Trinidad, performed the elaborate ceremony. Proudly I assisted. It was a great occasion for me. Fingering a large, fragrant garland of flowers around my neck, I stood near the altar greeting the guests after the ceremony. A neighbor laid several pieces of money one after another at my feet, and bowed to receive my blessing – the Shakti pat that every worshipper craved because of its supernatural effect. I knew her to be a poor widow who earned pitifully little for her long hours of hard labor. The offerings I received at one ceremony would far exceed her wages for a month. The gods had decreed this system of giving to Brahmins, and the Vedas declared it to be of great benefit to the giver, so why should I feel guilty? Uncle Deonarine's words rose vividly before me in all their venom: ‘It’s a business with all of them; they do nothing without pay … mainly from the poor! I glanced at her small offering of coins uncomfortably. Of course I had much to give her in exchange. Reaching out to touch her forehead in bestowal of my blessing, I was startled by a voice of unmistakable omnipotent authority: ‘You are not God, Rabi!’ My arm froze in midair. ‘You … are … not … God!’ The words smote me like the slash of a cutlass felling the tall green cane. Instinctively I knew that the true God, the Creator of all, had spoken these words, and I began to tremble. It was a fraud, a blatant deception to pretend to bless this bowing woman. I pulled back my hand, acutely aware that many eyes were watching and wondering. I felt that I must fall at the holy feet of the true God and ask his forgiveness – but how could I explain that to all these people! Abruptly I turned and pushed my way through the crowd, leaving that poor woman staring after me in bewilderment. Inside my room, I locked the door, tore the garland of flowers from around my neck with trembling fingers, flung it to the floor, and fell across my bed, sobbing’ (Rabindranath R. Maharaj with Dave Hunt, Death of a Guru, Hodder and Stoughton, Great Britain 1986, pages 107-108)

**Man may become God**

Mormons teach that man may become God. Here is what Joseph Smith said: ‘Here, then, is eternal life – to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one; from grace to grace; from exaltation to exaltation, until you attain to the resurrection of the dead, and are able to dwell in everlasting burnings, and to sit in glory, as do those who sit enthroned in everlasting power’ (Sermon ‘How God came to be God’, preached on March 9, 1844; in Robert L. Millet, Joseph Smith: Selected Sermons and Writings, N.J. 1989, page 132). Lorenzo Snow (1814-1901), fifth president of the Mormon Church, expressed this doctrine epigrammatically: ‘As man is, God once was; as God is, man may be’ (James E. Talmage, A Study of the Articles of Faith, Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A., 42nd edition, 1968, page 430). The Encyclopedia of Mormonism, referring to the above mentioned words, states: ‘This principle is clearly demonstrated in the person of Jesus Christ, a God who became mortal, and yet a God like whom mortals may become’ (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 2, page
549). According to Mormons, therefore, ‘man is a god in embryo’ (A Rational Theology, 6th ed. Salt Lake City, 1952, page 26). Spencer W. Kimball said that ‘in each of us is the potentiality to become a God’ (Salt Lake Tribune, October 7, 1974; quoted in Jerald and Sandra Tanner, The Changing World of Mormonism, Chicago 1980, page 188)

Confutation

Whoever believes that a man may become or will become God has believed a lie (and as you know, the father of lies is the devil). For according to the Holy Scripture, the children of God can by no means become gods. The children of God are creatures of God, and even after they are raised from the dead or transformed they will continue to be creatures of God. Of course, they will have an immortal, incorruptible and powerful body, that is, their resurrected body will be like the glorious body of Jesus Christ (cf. Philippians 3:21); however, they will not be as God. Brethren, beware of this damnable heresy taught by Mormons and expose it.

**Man is born sinless**

Mormons deny the doctrine of original sin, for they say that ‘divine justice forbids that we be accounted sinners solely because our parents transgressed’ (James E. Talmage, A Study of the Articles of Faith, Salt Lake City, Utah (USA), 42nd edition, 1968, page 475). According to Mormons, ‘modern Christendom has the false doctrine of original sin’ (Bruce McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, 1993, page 550). Men are born sinless: ‘Every spirit of man was innocent in the beginning; and God having redeemed man from the fall, men became again, in their infant state, innocent before God’ (Doctrine and Covenants 93:38).

The doctrine of original sin is denied also by Jews, for they believe that man enters the world free of sin, with a soul that is pure and innocent and untainted. ‘According to Judaism, a child is born pure, completely free from sin. We pray daily “Oh God, the soul which you gave me is pure. You created it, you fashioned it, you breathed it into me” (http://www.jewfaq.org); as well as by Muslims: ‘A true Muslim believes that every person is born free from sin and good, like a blank book’ (The Fundamental Articles of Faith in Islam, 10; in Encyclopedia of American Religions: Religious Creeds, 1st edition, page 780)

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that man is born with sin, for David says: “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). All this because of the disobedience of the first man, that is, Adam, for Paul says: “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12).

It is, of course, true that on the day of judgement sinners will be judged according to their works, but it remains still true that when men are born they are sinners and they are under condemnation because of the sin of Adam. Therefore, it is not true that men are born good and sinless, and then with the passing of time they become sinners and corrupted. For the Scripture says: “The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21), and: “Even from birth the wicked go astray; from the womb they are wayward and speak lies” (Psalm 58:3 – NIV).

In that day, therefore, all those men who have not repented of their sins, will be punished according to the sins they have committed under the bondage of sin, which entered the world through Adam.
**Man can attain immortality in this life**

Franklin Hall in his book *The Return of Immortality* suggests that Christians can learn how to become immortal through stages of spiritual growth. This involves experiences with UFO's, and the UIO gravitational and levitation control. His teachings on attaining immortality in this life through psycho-spiritual exercises and righteous living were the foundation upon which many in the Latter Rain and subsequent movements based their immortalization theories. Hall's main point in his immortalization theory is that "the sleeping, so called, unfoundationally built church" must awaken to "a real cause and calling, that when God's word is completely acted upon and complied with, will result in bringing about the real gushers and torrents of the long, past due, RAIN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, a rain of IMMORTALITY UPON THE EARTH that so many prophets have written about and portrayed in their prophesies" (Franklin Hall, 'The Return of Immortality', Phoenix: Hall Deliverance Foundation, Inc., 1976, pages. 2-3). Hall's premise is not, however, predicated upon God's promise of immortality for the faithful after their resurrection. This is evidenced by his following words: "Permanent, lasting freedoms from all sickness, harmful accident things and defeat will come about. Freedom from the imprisonment of all gravitational forces will also be brought upon the whole man. This study teaches one the power and secrets of space flight. Space floatation and hovering ability. It gives the Bible formula for weightlessness, the 'raising up' power of those who come to immortality" (Ibid., page 3)

**Confutation**

The Holy Scriptures teach that Christians can by no means become immortal in this life through stages of spiritual growth, for they will attain immortality when the dead in Christ are raised from the dead and the living are changed, that is, when Christ returns.

The apostle Paul wrote: “For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17), and again: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave [Hades], where is thy victory?” (1 Corinthians 15:51-55).

Let no one deceive you with vain words. Beware of all those who teach such a doctrine.

**The traducian theory**

The traducian theory holds that ‘the immaterial part of man is imparted through procreation so that the individual receives his whole person from his parents.’ In other words, this theory holds that when God created Adam and Eve, He endowed them with the power to reproduce after their own image, and this power includes both the material and immaterial parts of man, that is, both the body and the soul. This theory was accepted by Tertullian (2nd and 3rd centuries AD), by Augustine (354 - 430 AD), by Lutherans, and by most modern theologians (Chafer, Bancroft, Delitzsch).
Confutation

The Scripture teaches that the soul is created by God, as it is written: “For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.” (Isaiah 57:16).

Those who hold the traducian theory affirm that the creation theory (the one I accept and teach) can’t be accepted because Genesis 2:1-2 tells us that God ceased creating after the sixth day, while this theory says that God creates the soul of every child who is to be born. Well, then, how is it that Elihu, one of the descendants of Adam, said: “The Spirit of God has made me ....” (Job 33:4 – NKJV)? Is it not because he believed that God had created both his body and his soul? Therefore, it is true that God gave man and woman the power to reproduce after their own image, but this reproduction always involves the work of God. In other words, it is God who makes our body and soul. However, while the body is from the earth (for it is the product of the union of man and woman), the soul is from God (for it is not material), thus the soul can’t come from the parents. The soul is not material, that’s why physical parents can’t produce it.

The argument according to which God ceased creating after the sixth day, and consequently He can’t create the soul of every child who is to be born, is nullified by what the prophet Amos says: “For behold, He who forms mountains, and creates the wind ....” (Amos 4:13 – NKJV), for the wind was created by God in the beginning, yet the Word of God says that God creates it.
SIN

**Sin does not exist**

A *Course in Miracles*, a book which is accepted by many New Agers, teaches that sin does not exist, and each person is perfectly guiltless and innocent. In other words, it teaches no one is sinful in any way. Here are some statements we read in this book: ‘No one is punished for sins, and the Sons of God are not sinners” (*A Course in Miracles*, Vol. 1, page 88); ‘The Holy Spirit will never teach you that you are sinful” (Ibid., 1, page 423), ‘When you are tempted to believe that sin is real, remember this: If sin is real, both God and you are not” (Ibid., page 377). Christian Science also says that sin is not real: ‘The only reality of sin, sickness, or death is the awful fact that unrealities seem real to human, erring belief, until God strips off their disguise. They are not true, because they are not of God’ (*Science and Health*, Boston, 1971, page 472), ‘Man is incapable of sin’ (Ibid., page 475). Sin is an illusion, there is no such thing as evil or sin.

Confutation

First of all, let us see what sin is. The apostle John says in his first epistle: “Sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Therefore we must establish whether the law of God is violated or not, for if the law of God is not violated then those who deny the reality of sin are right. Who can say that the law of God is not violated by men, who are so wicked, who have perverted the straight ways of the Lord, who have given themselves over to lewdness to work all uncleanness with greediness, who refuse to believe the testimony that God has given of His Son and thus they have made Him a liar? Therefore sin is real, and not unreal. Sin is in the world, the Scripture says so and we can see that sin is in this world with our own eyes. To deny the existence of sin is foolishness. The Scripture says also that sin is a work of the devil, for John says that “he who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning” (1 John 3:8 – NKJV) – therefore those who are slaves of sin are prompted to commit evil works by the devil – and that “for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8 – NKJV). Christ, by the sacrifice of Himself, has put away sin for He has delivered us from the dominion of sin. Those who formerly stole, now they no longer steal; those who formerly blasphemed God, now they no longer blaspheme God; those who formerly gave themselves to revelries and drunkenness, now they eat and drink moderately, and all this because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the law of sin and death; Christ has destroyed that work of the devil in their life; Christ has taken away from them that vice, that bad habit.

**Sin is any act or thought which robs man of his self-esteem**

Robert Schuller has stated: ‘Sin is that deep lack of trust that separates me from God and leaves me with a sense of shame and unworthiness. I can offer still another answer: Sin is any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-esteem” (*Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, page 14). He states over and over again that the core of man’s sin is not his depravity, but a “lack of self-dignity” (page 15), “self-esteem,” or “trust” (page 65).
Confutation

The Holy Scripture says that “sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4). Therefore, sin is any act or thought that is contrary to the law, and sinners are transgressors of the law. Sinners are not people who lack self-esteem, but people who disobey God taking pleasure in doing what God hates. So they must repent of their sins and believe in the Gospel of the grace of God, in order to obtain remission of sins, or else they will go to hell when they die.

When I say that they must repent, I mean that they must recognize that they have sinned against God, that is, they are wretched people who have rebelled against God and they deserve to go to hell for their sins, and they must be sorry about their sins and decide to forsake their sinful life. When I say that they must believe in the Gospel of the grace of God, I mean that they must believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification, and appeared to many after His resurrection.

We should not attempt to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition

In a 10/5/84 letter to Christianity Today, Robert Schuller wrote, “I don’t think anything has been done in the name of Christ and under the banner of Christianity that has proven more destructive to human personality and hence counterproductive to the evangelism enterprise than the often crude, uncouth, and unchristian strategy of attempting to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition”.

Confutation

According to the Holy Scripture, we must make people aware of their lost and sinful condition, for only when they realize that they are lost and slaves of sin will they repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Of course, it is the Holy Spirit who convicts people of sin; however for our part we must speak to them with boldness, saying to them the following things: first, they are lost and slaves of sin; second, Jesus Christ died on the cross and rose from the dead to save what was lost and to set free sinners from sin; third, in order to be saved they must repent of their sins and believe in Jesus Christ.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. The Scripture speaks abundantly about the sinful condition of men, therefore we are not wrong in speaking to men about their sinful condition. We must say what the Bible says. So, since the Bible says that men have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (cf. Romans 3:23), they are corrupt and they have done abominable works and they have all turned aside (cf. Psalm 14:1-3), and the imagination of their heart is evil from their youth (cf. Genesis 8:21), and that they shall be turned into hell (cf. Psalm 9:17) unless they repent of their sins and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 20:21), we must say the same things. Why shouldn’t we tell men that they are lost? Why shouldn’t we tell them that unless they repent and believe in Jesus they will be turned to hell? There is no reason to refrain from saying to men these things. Instead, there is a good reason to tell them these things. The reason is this: that they might be saved from their sins and escape the torments of Hades first and then the everlasting torment in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. Isn’t this a good reason?
The sin Eve committed consisted in a sexual relationship with the serpent (or Satan)

There are some people who teach that the sin committed by Eve in the garden of Eden did not consist in eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil but in having a sexual relationship with the serpent. Among those who teach this thing are the followers of William Marrion Branham and those of Sun Myung Moon.

William Marrion Branham: ‘Here is what actually happened in the Garden of Eden. The Word says that Eve was beguiled by the serpent. She was actually seduced by the serpent. He was as close to being a human that his seed could, and did mingle with that of the woman and cause her to conceive” (William Branham, *The Original Sin*, pages 2, 3).

Sun Myung Moon: ‘The fact that Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil means that she had an illicit love relationship with Satan, and the fact that Eve gave Adam the same fruit implies that she seduced Adam to fall in the same way. Consequently, the root of human sin is not that the first human ancestors picked and ate a literal fruit, but that they had an illicit love relationship with a spiritual being, who was symbolized by the serpent’ (Sun Myung Moon, *Divine Principle*, on line version at this address http://www.unification.org); ‘Many Christians to this day believe that the fruit which caused Adam and Eve to fall was literally the fruit of a tree ….. According to what has been elucidated by the Bible, we have come to understand that the root of sin is not that the first human ancestors ate a fruit, but that they had an illicit blood relationship with an angel symbolized by a serpent’ (Sun Myung Moon, *Divine Principle*, 2d ed. Washington, D.C.; The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, 1973, pages 66, 75) ‘The root of man's sin stems from adultery …. Every religion which teaches how to eliminate sin has called adultery the greatest sin …. This also demonstrates that the root of sin lies in adultery’ (Ibid., page 75)

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that both Eve and Adam sinned by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Here is what we read in the Holy Scripture: “Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die. And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel. Unto the woman he said, I
will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return. And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living. Unto Adam also and to his wife did the LORD God make coats of skins, and clothed them. And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Genesis 3:1-24).

As you can see, it is unscriptural to teach that both Adam and Eve, or only Eve, had an illicit blood relationship with the serpent or Satan. Therefore, I exhort you to refute all those who hold this teaching. Beware of them for they want to deceive you.

Let's thank Adam and Eve for disobeying God

On 5/26/85, Jack Hyles, the late pastor of First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana (FBCH), preached on “Thank you, Adam,” actually thanking Adam and Eve for disobeying God and bringing sin into the world. He said such things as, “Thank God for the chains of sin,” and, “If nobody ever got drunk, I wouldn’t enjoy preaching.” Mormons also thank Adam and Eve for sinning against God. Let me explain to you why. They teach that if Adam and Eve had not partaken of the forbidden fruit they would have had no children: ‘And now, behold, if Adam had not transgressed he would not have fallen, but he would have remained in the Garden of Eden …. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin …. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy’ (Book of Mormon, II Nephi 2:22-25). In other words, without the fall there would have been no human race. So Adam did not do a wrong thing when he ate the forbidden fruit, but rather he did a wise thing, for he even thanked God after he sinned; here are his words: ‘Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God’. Eve also was very glad after she sinned and declared: ‘Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient’ (James E. Talmage, A Study of the Articles of Faith, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA, 42nd edition, 1968, page 68). That’s why Mormons prefer not to speak of Adam’s transgression as a sin; Joseph Fielding Smith stated: ‘I never speak of the part Eve took in this fall as a sin, nor do I accuse Adam of a sin. One may say: ‘Well, [,] did they not break a commandment?’ Yes. But let us examine the nature of that commandment and the results which came out of it. In no other commandment the Lord ever gave to man, did he say: ‘But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it, nevertheless, thou mayest choose for thyself’ (Quoted from Moses 3:17. The final clause has been added to the text by Joseph Smith); ‘It is true, the Lord warned Adam and Eve that to partake of the fruit they would transgress a law, and this happened. But it is not always a sin to transgress a law. I will try to illustrate this. The chemist in his laboratory takes different elements and combines them, and the result is that something very different results. He has changed the law …. Well, Adam’s transgression was of a similar nature, that is, his transgression was in accordance with the law’ (Doctrines of Salvation, I, 114). To sum up, the fall of Adam was a means for providing billions of pre-existent
spirits with mortal tabernacles, and a necessary stage in man’s ultimate exaltation to godhood (bear in mind that according to Mormonism before men inhabited this earth, they existed as spirits, and they came into this world so that one day – by obeying all the laws and ordinances of the Mormon church - they might become gods). Therefore, ‘we, the children of Adam and Eve, may well be proud of our parentage’ (Widtsoe, *Evidences and Reconciliations*, page 195), ‘our first parents are entitled to our deepest gratitude for their legacy to posterity – the means of winning title to glory, exaltation, and eternal lives’ (James Talmage, op. cit., page 70).

Confutation

We must be grateful to God for saving us and we must say together with Paul: “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15 - NKJV), or ‘God be thanked that though we were slaves of sin, yet we obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which we were delivered, and having been set free from sin, we became slaves of righteousness’ (cf. Romans 6:17-18 – NKJV). But we must not thank Adam and Eve for sinning against God and allowing thus sin to enter into the world with all his evil consequences. We must be grateful toward those who do some good to us; and He who has done and is still doing good to us is God; He is our benefactor, who has turned the evil done by Adam and Eve into good setting us free from sin. Therefore from the bottom of our hearts we thank Him and not our disobedient progenitors.

Someone may say: ‘However, if Adam had not sinned we could not have experienced the salvation which is in Christ Jesus!’, but the fact is that God in His foreknowledge determined that things had to go that way, that is to say, that Adam should sin, because He had decided to send His only begotten Son in this world to save the world before the foundation of the world; that’s why Peter called Jesus Christ a Lamb foreordained before the foundation of the world (cf. 1 Peter 1:19-20), Therefore, the reason why God allowed sin to enter into the world was this. However, God rebuked Adam for sinning, there is no doubt about it, and He punished both Adam and Eve for their disobedience (cf. Genesis 3:14-19). And remember that God punished also the serpent for deceiving Eve.
WATER BAPTISM

Baptism is not a religious ordinance instituted by Christ to be universally observed

Salvation Army does not practice water baptism. In The History of the Salvation Army we read that ‘at first the Christian Mission had adopted the usages of the churches to which its earliest leaders were accustomed, notably outward baptism (christening) and outward communion (the Lord’s supper), and these were continued until – after full and prayerful consideration – the General [William Booth] decided to abandon them, through earnest conviction that there was no scriptural warrant for the view that these observances were essential to salvation or were to be perpetuated’ (R. Sandall, The History of the Salvation Army, London, 1950, Vol. 2, page 130). That’s why the members of the Salvation Army do not practice water baptism.

The main grounds upon which it was decided to cease to perform outward baptism were:

1. That the all-important baptism enjoined in the New Testament was the baptism of God the Holy Spirit.
2. Over and above all other indications that baptism is not required of partakers of the New Covenant is the record that its Author and Finisher, the Lord Jesus Christ, did not baptise.
3. The lack of any scriptural basis for the claim that it is essential to salvation; and the overwhelming evidence to the contrary provided by the multitudes who unquestionably have become ‘new creatures in Christ Jesus,’ and who have continued ‘steadfast in the faith’ without having been outwardly baptised.
4. The conflicting views held as to how and when it should be performed (cf. Ibid., page 132).

Quakers also do not practice water baptism. They say in the Declaration of Faith issued by the Richmond conference in 1887: ‘We would express our continued conviction that our Lord appointed no outward rite or ceremony for observance in His church ….’ According to them, there is no scriptural evidence for the establishment of any ordinance or ceremonial rite for perpetual observance.

Conutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that Christ instituted water baptism and that it must be administered to all those who have believed on Him. Here is what Jesus Christ commanded His apostles before He was taken up into heaven: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you ….” (Matthew 28:19-20).

The apostles of the Lord commanded those who believed in the Gospel to be baptized. The Scripture says that on the day of Pentecost, Peter said to those who were pricked in their heart and asked what they had to do: ‘Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). And it says also that Peter, when he saw that the Holy Spirit had come upon Cornelius and his household, “commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48 – NKJV).

When Ananias, a disciple who lived in Damascus whom the Lord sent to lay his hands on Saul so that he might receive his sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit, had laid his hands on Saul, he said to Saul: “Now, why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized ….” (Acts 22:16 – NKJV).

Philip the evangelist baptized those who believed, for it is written that when the people of Samaria “believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12 – NKJV).
The apostle Paul, even though he said that Christ did not send him to baptize but to preach the Gospel, baptized several believers. He baptized the about twelve disciples he met at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:5); and he baptized also Crispus, and Gaius and the household of Stephanas (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:14-16).

In the light of what the Scripture says, therefore, all those who have believed in the Lord must be baptized immediately. If you are a member of the Salvation Army or the Society of Friends, therefore, and you have not yet been baptized in water, I exhort you to be baptized as soon as possible.

**Baptism should be or may be administered to infants**

Baptism is administered to infants by the following people: Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodoxes, Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists, Reformed, Presbyterians, Waldenses, Nazarenes and others.

Roman Catholic Church: "By Baptism all sins are forgiven, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin. ... The Church does not know of any means other than Baptism that assures entry into eternal beatitude; this is why she takes care not to neglect the mission she has received from the Lord to see that all who can be baptized are 'reborn of water and the Spirit.' God has bound salvation to the sacrament of Baptism ... Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also makes the neophyte 'a new creature,' an adopted son of God, who has become a 'partaker of the divine nature,' member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit. ... From the baptismal fonts is born the one People of God of the New Covenant" (The New Catholic Catechism, 1994, # 1263,1257,1265,1267).

Eastern Orthodox Church: "We confess one baptism for the remission of sins" Constantinopolitan [or Nicene] Creed, 381). 'Our sacraments, however, not only contain grace, but also confer it on those who receive them worthily ... Through baptism we are spiritually reborn" (Council of Florence, 1438-45). 'When one asserts his faith in the Son of God, the Son of the Ever Virgin Mary, the Mother of God, he accepts first of all the words of faith into his heart, confesses them orally, sincerely repents for his former sins and washes them away in the sacrament of Baptism. Then God the Word enters the baptized one, as though into the womb of the Blessed Virgin and remains in him like a seed' (The Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, Russian Orthodox Church, Issue No. 4, 1980). 'Sacraments ... are not simply symbols of divine grace, but sure agents and means of its transmission. ... [through baptism one] becomes a member of the church of Christ, being liberated from the controlling power of sin, and being reborn in the new creation in Christ" (International Eastern Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Dialogue Commission, 1985).

Lutheran Church: "Baptism effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare. ... It is not the water that produces these effects, but the Word of God connected with the water, and our faith which relies on the Word of God connected with the water" (Luther's Small Catechism, 1529, IV). "It is taught among us that Baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it. ... [through baptism one] becomes a member of the church of Christ, being liberated from the controlling power of sin, and being reborn in the new creation in Christ" (International Eastern Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Dialogue Commission, 1985).

Anglican Church: "Baptism is a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly
signed and sealed.... The Baptism of young Children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ" (The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, XXV, XXVII).

Methodist Church and Waldensian Church: “Sacraments are ... signs of grace ... by the which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm our faith in him. ... Baptism ... is also a sign of regeneration, or the new birth. The baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church” (The Articles of Religion, 1784, XVI, XVII). The Italian Waldensian Church joined the Methodists, therefore their doctrine on baptism is the same as that of the Methodists.

Reformed Church: "We condemn the Anabaptists, who deny that young infants, born of faithful parents, are to be baptized. ... We therefore are not Anabaptists, neither do we agree with them in any point that is theirs" (The Second Helvetic Confession, 1566, chapter XX).

Presbyterian Church: "Baptism ... is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins ... Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person. Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience to Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents are to be baptized. ... by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time" (The Westminster Confession of Faith, 1646, XXVIII).

Church of the Nazarene: ‘Baptism being a symbol of the new covenant, young children may be baptized, upon request of parents or guardians who shall give assurance for them of necessary Christian training’ (Articles of Faith XII)

Confutation

In the days of the apostles water baptism was ministered only to people who believed in the Lord. Therefore water baptism cannot be administered to infants, for they have not believed in the Lord since they are not yet able to accept the Gospel.

Here are some biblical passages which clearly affirm that in the early Church water baptism was administered only to people who believed. “Then they that gladly received his word [the word of Peter] were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (Acts 2:41); “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12); “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house; and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8). As you can see, in the light of these biblical passages, a person can’t be baptized unless he has repented and believed in the Gospel.

If a priest or a pastor poured or sprinkled some water upon your head when you were an infant, and you are a child of God, know this, that what your Church calls ‘baptism’ is not the true baptism which was instituted by Jesus Christ. Therefore you still need to be baptized. Leave your Church immediately and join a Church which teaches and practices the true water baptism (by immersion, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit).

Baptism may be administered also by pouring or sprinkling some water upon the head of the candidate

Many Churches teach that baptism can be administered by pouring or sprinkling some water upon the head of the candidate. Among them are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Lutheran Church, the Anglican Church, the Presbyterian Church, the
Reformed Church, the Methodist Church, the Waldensian Church, the Church of the Nazarene and others. Usually the Churches which practice infant baptism (or pedobaptism) administer baptism by pouring or sprinkling some water upon the head of the candidate. Here are the statements, concerning the way water baptism should be administered, made by some of the above mentioned Churches.

Roman Catholic Church: "The essential rite of Baptism consists in immersing the candidate in water or pouring water on his head, while pronouncing the invocation of the Most Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1278)

Lutheran Church: "What is the meaning of the word 'baptize'? 'Baptize' means to apply water by washing, pouring, sprinkling, or immersing" (Luther's Small Catechism, par. 244, p. 170)

Presbyterian Church: "Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; the Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person" - "Westminster Confession of Faith," par. 6.141, Presbyterian Book of Confessions, 1967 ed.

The Church of the Nazarene: 'Baptism may be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, according to the choice of the applicant' (Articles of Faith XII)

Confutation

Water baptism must be administered by immersion. Here is what the Scripture says about the baptism which was administered by evangelist Philip to the eunuch: "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:36-39). As you can see, Philip did not pour some water upon the head of the eunuch but he plunged the eunuch into water. On the other hand, to baptize (Greek baptizein) means to ‘plunge’ or ‘immerse.’

Let no one deceive you with empty words.

Baptism regenerates (baptismal regeneration)

The following Churches teach that baptism regenerates man.

Roman Catholic Church. This sacrament is also called "the washing of regeneration and renewal by the Holy Spirit," for it signifies and actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no one "can enter the kingdom of God." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1215)

Orthodox Churches: ‘Sacraments ... are not simply symbols of divine grace, but sure agents and means of its transmission. ... [through baptism one] becomes a member of the church of Christ, being liberated from the controlling power of sin, and being reborn in the new creation in Christ" (International Eastern Orthodox-Old Catholic Theological Dialogue Commission, 1985); "Baptism is a new birth. It is being born to the life made new by our Lord Jesus Christ. It means to be alive in Christ... Through Holy Baptism all become Christ's. We become Christians and have the opportunity to inherit God's Kingdom... Why in the world would any parents who claim to be Christians want to put off making their offspring Christians as soon as possible? Don't they want their infants to share in the Kingdom of God? The baptized one becomes a member of Christ's body -- His Church" (Doctrine of the Russian Orthodox Church, ONE CHURCH, 1981).

Lutheran Church: "Baptism effects forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and grants eternal salvation to all who believe, as the Word and promise of God declare. ... It is not the water that produces these effects, but the Word of God connected with the water, and our
faith which relies on the Word of God connected with the water” (Luther’s Small Catechism, 1529, IV). ‘Being by nature sinners, infants as well as adults, need to be baptized. Every child that is baptized is begotten anew of water and of the Spirit, is placed in covenant relation with God, and is made a child of God and an heir of his heavenly kingdom” (Baptism formula used by Lutheran pastors in baptizing infants, The New Analytical Bible and Dictionary of the Bible, Chicago: John A. Dickson Publishing Co., 1973).

Anglican Church: ‘Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christenes, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or new Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church: the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed …’ (The 39 Articles of Religion of the Anglican Church of Canada from the Book of Common Prayer, 1959, XXVII)

The Church of Christ (bear in mind that, unlike the above mentioned Churches, the Church of Christ rejects infant baptism): ‘Jesus informed Nicodemas that one does not enter the kingdom of God except by the new birth process (Jn. 3:5), which involves “water,” i.e., baptism. Not many would deny that the new birth and “regeneration” are equivalents. Hence, there is a solid connection between regeneration and the birth that involves water’ (http://www.christiancourier.com/)

I want to say another thing: evangelist Billy Graham, who is a Baptist, accepts not only infant baptism but also baptismal regeneration. Here are his eloquent words: “I have some difficulty in accepting the indiscriminate baptism of infants without a careful regard as to whether the parents have any intention of fulfilling the promise they make. But I DO BELIEVE THAT SOMETHING HAPPENS AT THE BAPTISM OF AN INFANT, particularly if the parents are Christians and teach their children Christian Truths from childhood. We cannot fully understand the miracles of God, but I BELIEVE THAT A MIRACLE CAN HAPPEN IN THESE CHILDREN SO THAT THEY ARE REGENERATED, THAT IS, MADE CHRISTIAN, THROUGH INFANT BAPTISM. If you want to call that baptismal regeneration, that’s all right with me” (Graham, interview with Wilfred Bockelman, associate editor of the Lutheran Standard, American Lutheran Church, Lutheran Standard, October 10, 1961). Therefore, if during one of his crusades a Roman Catholic or a Lutheran or an Orthodox accepts Jesus Christ as His personal Saviour and Lord he does not exhort him to come out of his Church and join an Evangelical Church which rejects infant baptism and baptismal regeneration (where he must be baptized by immersion), for he thinks that baptism is not his concern nor his business. Instead, what happens if during one of his crusades a Muslim or a Buddhist or a Hindu turns to Christ? Well, he lets him choose his own church, whether it is Catholic or Protestant or Orthodox or whatever it is. Listen to what he said in 1999: ‘Baptism is very important because Jesus taught that we are to believe and to be baptized. But that is up to the individual and the church that they feel led to go to. The churches have different teachings on that. I know that in the Lutheran or the Episcopal or Catholic Church it is a very strong point, and in the Baptist church. But there are some churches that would not insist on baptism. So, I give them the freedom to teach what they want. I am not a professor. I am not a theologian. I’m a simple proclaimers. I’m announcing the news that God loves you and that you can be forgiven of your sins. And you can go to heaven. My job from God is not to do all these other things. I am not a pastor of a church. That’s not my responsibility. My responsibility is to preach the Gospel to everyone and let them choose their own church, whether it is Catholic or Protestant or Orthodox or whatever it is” (Billy Graham, interview with Patricia Rice, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, October 10, 1999).

Confutation

We have been born again through the Word of God

The Scripture says: “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God” (1 Peter 1:23 – NIV), and: “He chose to give us
Therefore one is regenerated through the Word of God and not through water baptism—whether baptism consists in immersing the candidate or in pouring some water upon his head. Let me explain to you when and how the Word of God regenerates a man. When a person hears the Gospel of the grace of God, that is, the Word of God, and the Holy Spirit convicts him of sin, he feels sorry about his sins and he repents of them, and he puts his faith in the Word of God. When he puts his faith in the Word of God, the Word of God regenerates him and he becomes a new creature, that is, a son of God washed in the blood of the Lamb. This spiritual regeneration is called new birth.

John 3:5 and Titus 3:5

Those who hold the doctrine called ‘baptismal regeneration’, in order to confirm their doctrine through the Holy Scriptures, quote the following words spoken by Jesus: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5), and also the following words written by Paul: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration ….,” (Titus 3:5). According to them, the water Jesus spoke of and the washing of regeneration refer to water baptism. However, their interpretation is wrong.

The water Jesus spoke of is the Word of God, for the Scripture compares the Word of God to the water which comes down from heaven, as it is written: “For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void. But it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11 – NKJV). Therefore, as the natural water which comes down from heaven is able to make the earth produce its fruit, so the Word of God is able to regenerate all those who believe it. To be born again of water means, therefore, to be born again of the Word of God.

The washing of regeneration is the cleansing performed by the Word of God in all those who have believed in Jesus Christ. For Paul wrote to the Ephesians that Christ “loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word” (Eph. 5:25-26). In order to confirm that Christ has cleansed believers through the Word of God, and not through the water baptism which was administered to them after they believed on Him, I remind you of the following words Jesus said to His disciples on the night He was betrayed: “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3 – NKJV). Notice that He did not say to them that they were clean because of their water baptism, but because of His word, which was the Word of God as Jesus said: “The word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me” (John 14:24 – NKJV).

Conclusion

To conclude, therefore, I say this. We have become sons of God not through water baptism but through our faith in the Word of God. When we believed in the Word of God—which says that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification—we were made alive and became sons of God by the power of the Word of God. The Scripture clearly teaches that a man becomes a son of God by faith; John says: “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:11-13 - NKJV). And our sins have been forgiven us and we have been justified not through water baptism but through faith, as it is written: “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43 - NIV) and: “Through him everyone who believes is justified from
everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39 – NIV). Therefore let no one deceive you with vain words.
THE LORD’S SUPPER

There is no ground in the New Testament for the belief that Christ at His last Passover instituted a religious ordinance to be permanently and universally observed

Salvation Army does not have the Lord’s Supper. In The History of the Salvation Army we read that ‘at first the Christian Mission had adopted the usages of the churches to which its earliest leaders were accustomed, notably outward baptism (christening) and outward communion (the Lord’s supper), and these were continued until — after full and prayerful consideration — the General [William Booth] decided to abandon them, through earnest conviction that there was no scriptural warrant for the view that these observances were essential to salvation or were to be perpetuated’ (R. Sandall, The History of the Salvation Army, London, 1950, Vol. 2, page 130). That’s why the members of the Salvation Army do not have the Lord’s Supper.

The principal reasons for abandonment of the Lord’s supper were:
1. That there is reason shown in the Scriptures for supposing that our Lord intended that His followers should remember the significance of His death whenever they ate and drank together, and not merely on a ceremonial occasion, and that the earliest records show that this is what was then understood.
2. Even more than outward baptism it has been a cause of bitter controversy.
3. As with baptism there is the clearest evidence that it is neither essential to salvation nor of itself capable of bringing about any change in the lives of those who partake of it.
4. That the church has regarded certain other commands of our Lord, couched in unmistakably explicit language, as having only a spiritual significance.
5. The very practical consideration that its orthodox administration was a snare to the poor souls who had been slaves of strong drink (cf. Ibid., page 133)

Quakers also do not have the Lord’s Supper. For according to them, there is no scriptural evidence for the establishment of any ordinance or ceremonial rite for perpetual observance.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that Christ, on the night He was betrayed, instituted a supper which is to be observed by all His followers. This supper is called Lord’s Supper. For the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). As you can see, on that night Christ said the following words: “This do in remembrance of me” to His disciples twice. Therefore, the Lord’s Supper is to be observed universally and permanently by all Christians.

To confirm this I want to point out that Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the Lord’s Supper was something that he had received from the Lord, for he wrote to them: “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you …” (1 Corinthians 11:23). Therefore, Paul received from the Lord not only the Gospel (as he wrote to the Corinthians: “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye
have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures …… 1 Corinthians 15:1-4) but also the Lord's Supper, which he delivered to the saints of Corinth. Therefore if Paul received from the Lord both the Gospel and the Lord’s Supper and delivered them to the saints, why should we deliver to the saints only the Gospel? Why should we omit the Lord’s Supper, which is to observed permanently and universally by the followers of Christ in order to proclaim the Lord's death till He comes? Therefore let us keep observing the Lord’s Supper to proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

**By the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood; this change is called transubstantiation. Here is what we read in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*:

"Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised from the dead, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us," is present in many ways to his Church: …… But "he is present... most especially in the Eucharistic species.” The mode of Christ's presence under the Eucharistic species is unique. It raises the Eucharist above all the sacraments as "the perfection of the spiritual life and the end to which all the sacraments tend." In the most blessed sacrament of the Eucharist "the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ and, therefore, the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained." This presence is called 'real' - by which is not intended to exclude the other types of presence as if they could not be 'real' too, but because it is presence in the fullest sense: that is to say, it is a substantial presence by which Christ, God and man, makes himself wholly and entirely present." It is by the conversion of the bread and wine into Christ's body and blood that Christ becomes present in this sacrament. …… The Council of Trent summarizes the Catholic faith by declaring: "Because Christ our Redeemer said that it was truly his body that he was offering under the species of bread, it has always been the conviction of the Church of God, and this holy Council now declares again, that by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation." The Eucharistic presence of Christ begins at the moment of the consecration and endures as long as the Eucharistic species subsist. Christ is present whole and entire in each of the species and whole and entire in each of their parts, in such a way that the breaking of the bread does not divide Christ.' (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 1373, 1374, 1375, 1376, 1377). Those who refuse to believe this dogma are cursed: 'If any one denieth, that, in the sacrament of the most holy Eucharist, are contained truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ; but saith that He is only therein as in a sign, or in figure, or virtue; let him be anathema’ (Council of Trent, Session XIII, Canon 1).

Since the 'sacrament' of Eucharist contains really the body and blood together with the soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, it is worthy to be worshiped: 'In the liturgy of the Mass we express our faith in the real presence of Christ under the species of bread and wine by, among other ways, genuflecting or bowing deeply as a sign of adoration of the Lord. "The Catholic Church has
always offered and still offers to the sacrament of the Eucharist the cult of adoration, not only during Mass, but also outside of it, reserving the consecrated hosts with the utmost care, exposing them to the solemn veneration of the faithful, and carrying them in procession.” (CCC 1378). Those who say that it is not to be worshiped are cursed, for the Council of Trent stated: ‘If any one saith, that, in the holy sacrament of the Eucharist, Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, is not to be adored with the worship, even external of latria; and is, consequently, neither to be venerated with a special festive solemnity, nor to be solemnly borne about in processions, according to the laudable and universal rite and custom of holy church; or, is not to be proposed publicly to the people to be adored, and that the adorers thereof are idolators; let him be anathema’ (Council of Trent, Session XIII, Canon VI)

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that the bread we eat and the wine we drink at the Lord’s Supper, are just symbols, for the bread symbolizes the body of Christ while the wine symbolizes the blood of Christ. Therefore when they are blessed the substance of the bread does not change into the substance of the body of Christ nor does the substance of the wine change into the substance of the blood of Christ.

Let us look at some biblical passages which confirm what I have just stated.

● When Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper He said to His disciples: “Do this in remembrance of Me” (1 Corinthians 11:24,25 - NKJV). Therefore Jesus Christ can’t be present really and substantially in the bread and in the wine with His body and blood, together with His soul and divinity.

● Paul says that whenever we eat this bread and drink the cup of the Lord we “proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26 – NKJV). Therefore, after we bless the bread and the cup, the Lord does not come into the bread and the wine with His body and blood and soul and divinity.

● The Scripture says that Jesus took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to His disciples, saying: “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:28-29 – NKJV), Note that Jesus called what was in the cup ‘this fruit of the vine’ (or “the fruit of the vine” according to Mark 14:25) after He had given thanks. Therefore the substance of the wine did not change into the substance of His blood after He gave thanks; there was no transubstantiation.

● Luke says that Jesus also took the cup after supper, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20 – NKJV). As you can see, Jesus called the cup the new covenant. Now we know that the new covenant is not a cup but a covenant that God has made with us through the blood of Christ; therefore with those words Jesus meant that the cup represented or symbolized the New Covenant in His blood. The same thing must be said, therefore, about the following words Jesus said about the wine in the cup: “This is My blood of the new covenant ….” (Mark 14:24 – NKJV). Jesus did not mean that the wine in the cup was His blood but He meant that the wine represented His blood. Therefore, to sum up, the wine in the cup represents both the New Covenant and the blood of Christ.

● Paul said to the Corinthians: “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16). Therefore whenever we drink the cup of the Lord we have communion with the blood of Christ, and whenever we eat the bread we have communion with the body of Christ. This excludes that the wine and the bread are the true blood and the true body of Christ. That the wine and the bread of the Lord’s Supper are not the true blood and the true body of Christ is clear from what Paul says immediately after: “Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?” (1 Corinthians 10:18) The Italian Bible Riveduta Version reads: “Guardate l’Israele secondo la carne; quelli che mangiano i sacrifici non hanno essi comunione con l’altare?” that is, “Observe Israel after the flesh: Do not those who eat
of the sacrifices have communion with the altar?" This means that whenever the Israelites ate the sacrifices which were offered upon the altar, they had communion with the altar which was most holy. Therefore just as we can’t say that the sacrifices the Israelites ate were the altar, so we can’t say that the wine and the bread which are blessed at the Lord’s Supper are the true blood and the true body of Christ for those who partake of the Lord’s Supper have just communion with the blood and the body of Christ. In other words, those who drink the cup of the Lord and eat the bread have communion with the blood and the body of Christ but they don’t drink the true blood of Christ nor do they eat the true body of Christ, for the wine and the bread do not change their substance after they are blessed. I ask you this question, ‘If after the wine and the bread of the Lord’s Supper have been blessed there took place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood, how could the wine still become vinegar and the bread go mouldy?
● When Jesus said about the bread: “This is My body,” and about the wine: “This is my blood”, He meant that the bread represented His body while the wine represented His blood. This is confirmed by the fact that when Joseph interpreted the dream of the chief butler and the dream of the chief baker of the king of Egypt he said to the former: “The three branches are three days .....,” and to the latter: “ The three baskets are three days” (Genesis 40:12, 18 – NKJV). In both cases ‘are’ means ‘represent’ or ‘symbolize’. The bread and the wine of the Lord’s Supper, therefore, are just symbols, for they symbolize the body and the blood of Christ.
In the light of the above mentioned passages of the Scripture, I conclude that transubstantiation is nothing but one of the many lies taught by the Roman Catholic Church, and thus it must be rejected. As a consequence, the worship of the ‘sacrament’ of Eucharist also is to be rejected; anyone who worships it is an idolater, and the Scripture says that no idolater “has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” (Ephesians 5:5 – NKJV).

The Lord’s Supper is the repetition of the sacrifice of Christ: the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner, and this sacrifice is truly propitiatory

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the Lord’s Supper – which they call ‘Mass’ or ‘Eucharist’ - is the repetition of the sacrifice of Christ: ‘Because it is the memorial of Christ's Passover, the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. The sacrificial character of the Eucharist is manifested in the very words of institution: “This is my body which is given for you” and “This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in my blood.” In the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he “poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents (makes present) the sacrifice of the cross, because it is its memorial and because it applies its fruit: [Christ], our Lord and God, was once and for all to offer himself to God the Father by his death on the altar of the cross, to accomplish there an everlasting redemption. But because his priesthood was not to end with his death, at the Last Supper “on the night when he was betrayed,” [he wanted] to leave to his beloved spouse the Church a visible sacrifice (as the nature of man demands) by which the bloody sacrifice which he was to accomplish once for all on the cross would be re-presented, its memory perpetuated until the end of the world, and its salutary power be applied to the forgiveness of the sins we daily commit. The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice. ‘The victim is one and the same: the same now offers through the ministry of priests, who then offered himself on the cross; only the manner of offering is different.’ ‘And since in this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is
Confutation

The Scripture says that when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper He said to His disciples twice: “Do this in remembrance of Me” (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25), and the Scripture says also that as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we “proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26 – NKJV). Therefore whenever we partake of the Lord’s Supper we remember the atoning sacrifice of Christ for by it we proclaim the Lord’s death. In other words, the sacrifice of Christ is not repeated or represented at all in the Lord’s Supper, but it is just remembered or proclaimed.

The Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ gave Himself for us once for all, for it is written: “And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God” (Hebrews 10:11-12 – NKJV), and: “Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people” (Hebrews 9:28 – NIV), and again: “For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people’s, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself” (Hebrews 7:26-27 – NKJV). Therefore, His sacrifice cannot be re-presented (made present) or repeated in any way or form. It can be remembered or proclaimed – and this is what we do when we partake of the Lord’s Supper - but it cannot be re-presented or repeated. Therefore, in the light of the teaching of the Holy Scripture, we conclude that the Lord’s Supper is not a sacrifice.

Let me tell you another thing. Roman Catholics affirm that the Eucharist is an unbloody sacrifice, for they say: “In this divine sacrifice which is celebrated in the Mass, the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner”, but at the same time they say that it is a propitiatory sacrifice. My question is this then, “How can Mass be considered a propitiatory sacrifice since there is no shedding of blood? Is it not written that “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22 – NKJV)? As you can see, then, Catholics contradict themselves, for Jesus shed His blood on the cross for the remission of sins, while they make people believe that Jesus is offered daily in the Mass for the sins of the people without shedding of blood! Reflect upon this contradiction.

Mass is not an unbloody sacrifice nor a propitiatory sacrifice, but just one of the pagan rites performed by the Roman Catholic Church. Know this, that what the Roman Catholic Church calls ‘Mass’ or ‘Eucharist’ is not the Lord’s Supper, but a pagan rite. Reject it and expose it.
A man who experienced divorce and remarriage before his conversion to Christ can receive credentials as a pastor

In 2001 the Assemblies of God (U.S.A.) at its biennial convention in August (which was held in Kansas City), passed a resolution that lifted a restriction on the ordination of divorced clergy candidates, provided the divorce was before the candidate’s conversion. The Church’s General Council, composed of delegates and pastors, passed the resolution by secret ballot on a vote of 998 to 834.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that he who desires the position of a bishop, must be “the husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:2 – NKJV). Therefore, a Christian who divorced and remarried before his conversion, whose former wife is still alive, cannot receive the credentials as a pastor, for in the sight of God he has two wives.

Let no one deceive you with empty words.

Women are allowed to teach, therefore they can be ordained as elders or pastors

Many Protestant Churches allow women to teach the Word of God, and to be ordained as elders or pastors. Among them are the Assemblies of God (AOG) and the Southern Baptist Churches (SBC).

AOG. The Assemblies of God in USA has affirmed the ministry of women ever since its first constitutional statement in 1914 which included an article on the ‘Rights and Offices of Women.’ The General Council adopted a resolution according to which women had the right ‘to be ordained, not as elders, but as Evangelists and Missionaries, after being duly approved according to the scriptures.’ In 1935, however, the Assemblies of God reversed the prohibition of female elders enacted in 1914 and authorized the ordination of women as elders or pastors. In the statement on the role of women in ministry, which was adopted by the General Presbytery of the Assemblies of God in 1990, we read among other things the following eloquent words: ‘We are aware that the ministry and leadership of women are not accepted by some individuals, both within and outside the Christian community. We condemn all prejudice and self-promotion, by men or women. The existence in the secular world of bigotry against women cannot be denied. But there is no place for such an attitude in the body of Christ. We acknowledge that attitudes of secular society, based on long-standing practice and tradition, have influenced the application of biblical principles to local circumstances.’ Therefore, according to these words, those who within the Church of God do not allow women to teach or to be ordained as elders or pastors, have a prejudice (which is a preconceived opinion that is not based on reason or actual experience) against women. In 1993, 330 of all credentialed ministers in the AOG were female senior pastors.

SBC. ‘The Fall 1997 edition of Folio, the newsletter of Baptist Women in Ministry, published the results of an extensive study and said there were 1,225 ordained women in the SBC and that roughly 200 of those are pastors and associate pastors. There were 16 states where women...
serve as senior pastors in SBC churches. North Carolina had the most. The other top 10 states for employing Baptist clergywomen are, in order, Texas, Virginia, Georgia, Kentucky, South Carolina, Florida, Missouri, Alabama and Maryland. The Midwestern Theological Seminary published a report recently that claims there are only about 35 pastors in Southern Baptist churches, but the report is “preliminary” and addresses only the issue of senior pastors. SBC seminaries and other seminaries used by SBC congregations (such as Dallas Theological Seminary) are filled with women who have feminist sympathies and who are training for the ministry. Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, stated that more women are now being trained for ministry in Southern Baptist seminaries than at any other time in the SBC’s history (Southern Baptist Convention web site, June 15, 2000). Billy Graham’s daughter, Anne Graham Lotz, who preaches to mixed crowds of men and women, is a member of a Southern Baptist congregation. Texas Southern Baptists featured Lotz’s "stirring preaching" at their Evangelism Conference in 1996. Furthermore, there is a large number of Southern Baptist churches that allow women to teach adult Sunday School classes …' (from an article titled ‘Why I am not Southern Baptist,’ written by David W. Cloud, which is on his site http://www.wayoflife.org/).

Confutation

The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: “Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control” (1 Timothy 2:11-15 – NKJV), and to the Corinthians: “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says” (1 Corinthians 14:34 – NKJV). Therefore, according to the Holy Scripture, a woman cannot teach the Word of God, and thus she cannot become a pastor or one of the elders, for both of them are appointed by the Holy Spirit among the Church to teach the doctrine of God.

Now I want to comment briefly on the above mentioned words of Paul.

● The apostle says that a woman must learn, therefore the fact that he says that she must learn shows us that a woman must occupy the place of those who must learn and not the place of those who must teach. Furthermore, saying “in silence with all submission” Paul explains the way she must learn. In other words, Paul says that she is not allowed to speak while the Word is being taught to the Church, nor is she allowed to ask questions when the Church is assembled, for he says to the Corinthians: “And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church” (1 Corinthians 14:35 – NKJV).

● The apostle says that he does not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; therefore to him it was shameful for women both to teach and to exercise authority over a man. So I ask the following questions to those who are contentious, ‘If Paul does not permit both things, why do you affirm that a woman is allowed to teach but she cannot have authority over a man? Why have you nullified the former prohibition but you have not nullified the latter? Do you not think that it is lawful to forbid both things?’

● The apostle specified the reasons why he did not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man. The first reason is that it was Adam that was formed first and not Eve, for Eve was formed after Adam; the second reason is that it was Adam and not Eve who was deceived by the serpent. Therefore the apostle forbade a woman to teach or to have authority over a man not because he had some prejudices against women nor because of a personal opinion of his, but because the Scripture teaches that the head of woman is man (not the contrary) for man was not created for the woman, but woman for the man (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:9), and that it was Eve who was deceived by that serpent of old in the garden of Eden and not Adam. Of course, Adam also fell into transgression, but after Eve. Someone may say, ‘I understand the first reason, but not
the second. What has the fact that it was Eve and not Adam who was deceived by the serpent to do with this prohibition for women? Well, it has something to do with it, which can't be ignored. Let me ask you this, 'Why did the serpent go to the woman?' For the woman at that time was already different from man in many things; we can say that the serpent noticed that the woman was weaker than man in many things and thus he chose to go to speak to her in order to deceive her. The woman spiritual weakness can be seen in the answer she gave to that serpent of old, for when the serpent said to her, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ Eve said to the serpent: ‘We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ (Genesis 3:2-3 – NKJV). Note that the woman added to the words of God the following words ‘nor shall you touch it’ and ‘lest you die’ which was the softened version of these words spoken by God: “For in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17 – NKJV). Now do you think that the woman has changed after all these centuries to the point that now she can teach the doctrine of God? Not at all. Do not deceive yourselves, every woman in Christ Jesus is still the weaker vessel, and even if she perfects holiness she has the same weak aspects as Eve had, so she is not allowed to teach the doctrine of God. Let those men who are appointed by God teach the doctrine of God; but let women learn in silence. Furthermore, I want to remember you that both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament we do not find any woman who taught, or rather we find one woman who taught in the Church of Thyatira, her name was Jezebel and she called herself a prophetess. Do you know what she taught? She taught the servants of the Lord to commit fornication and eat things sacrificed to idols (cf. Revelation 2:20)!! In other words, she taught heresies. As for the Old Testament, I remember you that when God appointed the Levites to be in charge of the tabernacle of the testimony and to teach His laws to the children of Israel (as it is written: “They shall teach Jacob Your judgements, and Israel Your law” Deuteronomy 33:10 – NKJV), He chose only men for those tasks. No woman was appointed by God to teach His laws to the children of Israel. Someone may say, ‘What about Miriam, Deborah and Hulda, then, who spoke from God?’ They were prophetesses, that is to say, they had received the ministry of prophet. However the prophets under the Old Testament were not appointed by God to teach the law to the people but to speak to the people (or those who went to enquire of the prophets) the words He revealed to them in a vision or in a dream or through an audible voice. God did appoint the Levitical priests to teach the law, as it is written: “They shall teach Jacob Your judgements, and Israel Your law” (Deuteronomy 33:10 – NKJV) and again: “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 2:7 – NKJV). As you can see, it was the priests and not the prophets who taught the law. The Scriptures of the Old Testament make a clear distinction between the priest and the prophet, for when God rebuked the people He said: “Her priests [Zion's priests] teach for pay, and her prophets divine for money” (Micah 3:11 – NKJV), and again: “The priests did not say, 'Where is the Lord?' … The prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit … For both prophet and priest are profane; Yes in My house I have found their wickedness … The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule by their own power” (Jeremiah 2:8; 23:11; 5:31 – NKJV).

As for the New Testament, while Jesus was on earth there were no women who taught the Word of God, but only men. Jesus chose twelve men, whom he designated apostles, and sent them to preach; and afterwards He appointed seventy other men whom He sent two by two ahead of Him. There were many women who followed Jesus, but they did not teach the Word but they ministered to Him and His disciples, as it is written: “The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means” (Luke 8:1-3 – NIV). As you can see, the women who were with Jesus did not preach nor teach the Word of God, rather they were helping to support Jesus and His disciples out of their own means. Even after Jesus was taken up into heaven, there were no women who taught the Word.
of God in the midst of the Church but only men, as it is written: “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching ....” (Acts 2:42 – NIV).

Someone may ask me now, ‘What about Phoebe, who was a deaconess of the Church in Cenchrea, and Euodia and Syntyche, who had labored with Paul in the gospel, and the four daughters of Philip the evangelist, who prophesied?’ Here is my answer.

A deacon or a deaconess is not appointed to teach the Word of God but to assist the pastor and the elders in the temporal matters of business and administration (among other things, the deacons tend to the needs of the poor, widows, and orphans). That’s why among the necessary qualifications a believer must have in order to become a deacon we don’t find “able to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2 - NKJV). Therefore, Phoebe, who was a deaconess of the Church in Cenchrea, ministered to the saints but she did not teach; Paul confirms that for he says to the Romans: “I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant [or deaconess] of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me” (Romans 16:1-2 - NIV).

Euodia and Syntyche did not teach the Word, for Paul did not permit a woman to teach; the fact that it is written that they labored with Paul in the Gospel does not mean that they also taught the Word of God, for a believer can labour with a man of God in the Gospel (or can contend at his side in the cause of the Gospel) ministering to the man of God, praying to God, fasting, giving offerings, and in other ways. It is wrong to think that all those who labored with Paul in the Gospel were able to teach and to preach, for it was not so.

The four virgin daughters of Philip, of whom Luke says that they prophesied, did not teach the Word of God either, for the Scripture teaches that the gift of prophecy and the gift of teaching are two different gifts and not the same gift. That’s what Paul affirms when he says: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophecy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching” (Romans 12:6-7). Therefore a woman can receive the gift of prophecy. That’s why Paul permitted a woman to prophesy. Had Paul stated that a woman is not allowed to prophesy he would have contradicted the Word which says: ‘Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy’ (Joel 2:28 – NKJV).
Prayer

Praying to dead saints

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christians should pray to the saints who are in heaven. Here is what the Council of Trent stated: ‘The holy Synod enjoins on all bishops, and others who sustain the office and charge of teaching, that, agreeably to the usage of the Catholic and Apostolic Church, received from the primitive times of the Christian religion, and agreeably to the consent of the holy Fathers, and to the decrees of sacred Councils, they especially instruct the faithful diligently concerning the intercession and invocation of saints; .... teaching them, that the saints, who reign together with Christ, offer up their own prayers to God for men; that it is good and useful suppliantly to invoke them, and to have recourse to their prayers, aid, (and) help for obtaining benefits from God, through His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who is our alone Redeemer and Saviour; but that they think impiously, who deny that the saints, who enjoy eternal happiness in heaven, are to be invoked; or who assert either that they do not pray for men; or, that the invocation of them to pray for each of us even in particular, is idolatry; or, that it is repugnant to the word of God; and is opposed to the honour of the one mediator of God and men, Christ Jesus; or, that it is foolish to supplicate, vocally, or mentally, those who reign in heaven. .... are wholly to be condemned, as the Church has already long since condemned, and now also condemns them.’ (Council of Trent, Session XXV)

The custom of praying to dead saints is accepted and followed even by some Protestants. According to a nationwide (USA) survey conducted within the 48 continental states in August 2002 by the Barna Research Group (an independent marketing research company located in southern California), one out of six evangelicals (16%) and half of the non-evangelical born again Christians (50%) also believe in praying to dead saints.

Jack Hyles, the late pastor of First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana, claimed to go once a week to the mausoleum where his mother’s remains are interred and there he prayed to her. In his prayer meeting talk on 12/3/87, he noted that his mother was not dead, she had just moved beyond his senses: “Hence, I go to the cemetery and visit with her and speak to her. She can hear me, but I cannot hear her.” Hyles had pictures in his study of John R. Rice, Lester Roloff, his mother, and Lee Robertson. Before he left town on a speaking engagement, he said he followed this ritual: he stopped before the picture of Rice and Roloff, promising them he would do his best; then he stopped before the picture of his mother and asked her to intercede for him to do a good job while he was preaching.

Confutation

The Scripture teaches us that we must pray to God. Here are some biblical passages which attest this:
- “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God” (Philippians 4:6 – NKJV);
- “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me” (Psalm 50:15);
- “Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you” (Jeremiah 29:12 – NKJV).

The Scripture teaches also that every time we pray to God we must do it in the name of Jesus Christ, that is, relying on the intercession of Jesus Christ, for He is the only Mediator between God and us, as it is written: “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus Christ said: “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name,
that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son” (John 14:13), and also: “Verily, verily, I
say unto you. Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have
ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:23-
24), and again: “Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye
should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of
the Father in my name, he may give it you” (John 15:16).
Therefore, praying to the saints who are in heaven – whether they are our relatives or not – or
relying on their intercession is a practice which is contrary to the sound doctrine.
Furthermore, the Scripture teaches that those who have died and gone to be with the Lord know
nothing about what happens on the earth and can’t see us, as it is written: “The dead know
nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5 – NKJV), and again: “But you are our Father, though Abraham does
not know us or Israel acknowledge us” (Isaiah 63:16 – NIV). Therefore, since they neither hear
nor see us, it is useless to pray to them.
**BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT**

_The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is received when one believes in the Lord Jesus, that is, at the time of his regeneration_

Many Protestant Churches – such as Baptist Churches, Reformed Churches, Presbyterian Churches, Church of the Brethren, and many others - hold that when one believes in the Lord Jesus Christ he is baptized with the Holy Spirit. In other words, believers are baptized with the Holy Spirit at the time of their regeneration. So there is no baptism with the Holy Spirit which can be experienced after the new birth.

Alan Morrison has written: ‘If we are serious in discovering the true meaning of ‘Baptism with the Holy Spirit’, what do we find? We discover the remarkable fact that it is in reality an experience that it is applied to all believers at the time of their regeneration. This is the clear and unequivocal teaching of Scripture on the Baptism with the Holy Spirit. … in the apostolic way of thinking, there never was a post-conversion ‘Baptism with the Holy Spirit’. …’ (Alan Morrison, *Baptized with an unholy spirit. The Exercise of Mind-Control Techniques in the Pentecostal & Charismatic Movements*, in www.diakrisis.com)

Brian Schwertley has written: ‘Paul says that all Christians have been baptized in the Spirit. “You don’t need to seek a Spirit-baptism as a post-conversion experience, Paul is saying to the Corinthians and to us; if you are in Christ, you have already been Spirit-baptized!” … the Bible teaches that everyone who becomes a Christian is baptized in the Holy Spirit’ (*The Charismatic movement: a biblical critique*, by Brian Schwertley, edited by Stephen Pribble)

**Confutation**

The Holy Scripture teaches that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a post conversion experience, therefore it is received after one believes in the Lord and not when he believes in the Lord. Now I will show you from the Scripture what I have just stated.

_The apostles of the Lord were baptized with the Holy Spirit after they believed in the Lord_

The apostles of the Lord obtained remission of sins by their faith in Christ even before Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, for Jesus on the night He was betrayed said to His Father: “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them.” (John 17:6-10). So there is no doubt that the apostles of the Lord were believing people even before the day of Pentecost (on which they were baptized with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance). It is true that after Jesus had prayed to God in the Garden of Gethsemane, all the apostles stumbled on account of Jesus for they forsook Jesus and fled, and particularly Peter denied the Lord three times (but after a little while he repented of his sin), and it is also true that at first they did not believe that the women had seen Jesus alive after His resurrection, but we know that afterward they all believed in the resurrection of Jesus. Now, as for the apostles of the Lord, those who affirm that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is not a post conversion baptism say that in the case of the apostles they actually did not receive the Holy Spirit before the day of Pentecost for the Holy
Spirit had not yet been sent for Jesus had not yet been glorified, therefore the example of the apostles cannot be cited to show that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is a post conversion baptism. I agree with them when they say that the Holy Spirit had not yet been given for Jesus had not yet been glorified, but I cannot agree with them totally when they affirm that before the day of Pentecost the apostles of the Lord did not receive the Holy Spirit, for according to the apostle John when Jesus appeared to the apostles after His resurrection He said to them: “Receive the Holy Spirit” (John 20:22 – NKJV), thus the apostles had the Holy Spirit before the day of Pentecost. Obviously they had just a measure of the Spirit, and not the fullness of the Spirit for they received the fullness of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, that is, when they were baptized with the Holy Spirit. That is a very important thing I want to underline for it nullifies the arguments of those brothers who do not believe that the baptism with the Spirit is a post conversion baptism. For if the apostles received the Holy Spirit when Jesus (three days after His death) said to them: “Receive the Holy Spirit”, what did they receive on the day of Pentecost? Did they receive again the Holy Spirit? Of course, they did, but on that occasion, as I said before, they received the fullness of the Holy Spirit which they had not yet experienced. In other words, on the day of Pentecost the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit. Therefore why should one be surprised at hearing that when one believes in the death and resurrection of Jesus he receives a measure of the Spirit, and afterward when he is baptized with the Holy Spirit he is filled with the Spirit? If a similar thing happened to the apostles, why then should one be offended at hearing that there is a difference between the reception of the Holy Spirit at the time of one’s regeneration and the reception of the Holy Spirit at the time of the infilling of the Holy Spirit? So the example of the apostles, who received a measure of the Spirit when Jesus appeared to them and they were baptized with the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, on which day the promise of the Father was fulfilled, is an irrefutable proof that there is a difference between the reception of the Spirit which takes place when one believes, and the reception of the Spirit which takes place afterward when one is baptized with the Holy Spirit. In the former case one receives a measure of the Spirit, but he is not endued with power from on high, nor does he begin to speak in tongues; while in the latter case one is filled with the Spirit, endued with power from on high and he begins to speak in other tongues.

The believers of Samaria were baptized with the Holy Spirit after they believed in the Lord

The Scripture says that the people of Samaria believed Philip as he preached to them the good news of the kingdom of God, and they were baptized (cf. Acts 8:12). Now there is no doubt that they really believed, thus they were born of God for one is born again when he believes in the Gospel. However, the Scripture says also that the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to the Samaritans, that they might pray for them and they might receive the Holy Spirit. Why had they not received the Holy Spirit yet? Because Philip, the evangelist, did not have the power to lay hands on believers so that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Some assert that the people of Samaria had not yet really believed in the Gospel, but that’s not true for the Scripture clearly affirms that they believed and they received the Word of God (cf. Acts 8:12,14), and thus Philip baptized them. How could Philip have baptized unbelieving people? Was he not a man of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom? It is unthinkable that he baptized people who had not really believed. On the other hand the Scripture says that the people of Samaria believed, so we are bound to believe that they believed in the Gospel. Therefore they became children of God when they believed Philip, and consequently they also received a certain measure of the Spirit, through whom they could affirm they were children of God. However when Peter and John had prayed for them they received the fullness of the Spirit, that is to say, they were filled with the Holy Spirit just as the apostles were filled on the day of Pentecost. Furthermore the fact that the apostles prayed for those believers indicates that there are some brothers that have received a specific gift from God, that is, the power to lay hands on believers so that they may receive the Holy Spirit. For Peter, when he spoke to Simon of the power of laying hands on
believers so that they might receive the Holy Spirit, - that he and John had received from God - called it "the gift of God" (Acts 8:20 – NKJV).

The disciples from Ephesus were baptized with the Holy Spirit after they believed in the Lord

Luke says: "And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, He said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. And when Paul had laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied. And all the men were about twelve." (Acts 19:1-7).

Now, were those disciples Paul met at Ephesus true believers? Of course they were, for the fist question Paul put to them was: “Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?” If Paul had not regarded them as true believers, he would not have used the verb 'to believe.' Let me ask you a question. If you meet a believer and you want to know whether he has been baptized in water or not, will you not ask him, 'Have you been baptized in water since you believed?' Of course, you will! Why? For you know that he is a true believer. So if Paul put that question to those disciples that means that he knew that they were true believers, that is to say, he knew that they had believed that Jesus was the Christ. It is true that when Paul met them they had not yet received the Holy Spirit, however by 'the Holy Spirit' Paul meant the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which is a baptism that does not save but imparts power to the recipients, and not the measure of Spirit which is received by every believer at the time of his regeneration.

Now, you, who do not accept the baptism with the Holy Spirit as a post conversion experience, may say to me, 'The Bible I use reads: 'Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed'! Well, that passage was not translated correctly. However, let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the correct translation is 'when you believed' and not 'since ye believed', I ask you, 'If Paul believed that the reception of the Holy Spirit takes place when one believes why did he ask them that question?' Don't you think that it is logical to think that if Paul had believed what you also believe – that is, that the reception of the Holy Spirit takes place when one believes - he would have refrained from asking them that question? Let me ask you this, 'Would you ask a believer this question, 'Did you receive eternal life when you believed?' or 'Did you receive remission of sins when you believed?' I am sure your answer is, 'Of course not!' Why? Because there is no need to ask such questions to believers for you know that they have already remission of sins and eternal life by their faith. Why then should Paul have asked those believers if they had received something that they already had? In the light of what I have just said, then, it is evident that the correct translation of those words is, 'Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?'

Maybe some of you will say to me then, 'Well, the case of those disciples at Ephesus was an exceptional case, but usually believers received the Holy Spirit when they believed!' Let us assume, for the sake of argument, that you are right in saying that in those days believers usually received the Holy Spirit when they believed, it is still true that when Paul laid his hands on those believers they began to speak with other tongues, so it follows that if you say that believers usually received the Holy Spirit (or were baptized with the Holy Spirit) when they believed you should say also that when believers received the Holy Spirit they began to speak with other tongues; why don’t you affirm then that speaking with tongues still accompanies the reception of the Holy Spirit? Why don’t speaking with tongues accompany the reception of the Holy Spirit? It is evident, therefore, that you are wrong in saying that the baptism with the Holy Spirit is received when one believes and it is not accompanied with speaking in tongues. For this event, which has been recorded by Luke in the book of the Acts of the apostles, clearly shows
that in the days of the apostles believers received the Holy Spirit after they believed, and it shows also that speaking with tongues accompanied the reception of the Holy Spirit.

The baptism with the Holy Spirit is part of the salvation process

The United Pentecostal Church International, which is one of the Oneness Pentecostal denominations that teach Jesus is at once the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaches that if a believer is not baptized with the Holy Spirit, he is not born again, thus, he is not yet saved. Jimmy Louis Hall has written: ‘Jesus called the transforming of a person from sin to the kingdom of God a birth of water and the Spirit (John 3:5). This new birth is more than water baptism, for it includes the transforming work of the Spirit of God. A person may be baptized in water in the name of Jesus and still not be born again; he will remain outside the kingdom of God until he also receives the Holy Spirit. (See 1 Corinthians 12:13; Romans 14:17.) Without the infilling of the Holy Spirit, a person’s birth is not complete; he may be forgiven of his past sins, but he is not born again. His new birth is not finished. He need a spiritual change of his sinful nature that comes only by the infilling of God’s Spirit. A saved person, then, is one who is both forgiven and regenerated, both pardoned and transformed ... the baptism of the Holy Ghost is an essential experience in salvation’ (J. L. Hall and David K. Bernard, editors, Doctrines of the Bible, Word Aflame Press, Hazelwood, MO, USA, 1998, pages 201, 203). This doctrine is held even by some Trinitarian Pentecostals.

Confutation

A person receives forgiveness of sins when he believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, for it is written: “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name" (Acts 10:43 – NIV); and he becomes a child of God when he believes in Him, as it is written: “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13 – NKJV). In other words, a person is forgiven and regenerated when he repents of his sins, and believes in the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Whoever has repented of his sins and believed in Jesus Christ, therefore, can say with all boldness, ‘I am forgiven! I am born again! I am a child of God!’

The baptism with the Spirit is undoubtedly an important experience, but it is not part of the salvation process. For the baptism with the Holy Spirit is an endowment with power from on high, for Jesus Christ – just before He was received up into heaven - said to His disciples: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ....” (Acts 1:8 – NKJV). Notice that Jesus did not say to them: ‘You shall receive remission of sins when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ....’ or ‘You shall be born again when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ....’, but ‘you shall receive power ....’

Let no one deceive you with empty words, brothers and sisters. Beware of those who teach that the baptism with the Spirit is part of the salvation process, for they lie against the truth.
GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The gifts of the Spirit have ceased

Many Protestant Churches – such as Baptist Churches, Reformed Churches, Presbyterian Churches - teach that the gift of tongues and the other supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit have ceased.

In their opinion, the gifts of the Spirit were given by God only for a certain period of time, that is to say, till the Church was established and the Canon of the Scriptures was completed.

They support their teaching through some passages of the Bible, such as 1 Corinthians 13:8-9, which according to them confirms their teaching on the gift of tongues and the other gifts of the Spirit – and also through some statements of some well known Christian writers who lived in former times, such as John Calvin, John Owen, Thomas Watson, Matthew Henry, Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, James Buchanan, Robert L. Dabney, and Benjamin B. Warfield.

John Calvin (1509-1564): ‘...the gift of healing, like the rest of the miracles, which the Lord willed to be brought forth for a time, has vanished away in order to make the preaching of the Gospel marvellous for ever’ (Institutes of the Christian Religion, Bk IV:19, 18).

John Owen (1616-1683): ‘Gifts which in their own nature exceed the whole power of all our faculties, that dispensation of the Spirit is long since ceased and where it is now pretended unto by any, it may justly be suspected as an enthusiastic delusion’ (Works IV, 518).

Thomas Watson (c 1620-1686): ‘Sure, there is as much need of ordination now as in Christ's time and in the time of the apostles, there being then extraordinary gifts in the church which are now ceased’ (The Beatitudes, 140).

Matthew Henry (1662-1714): Speaking of the ‘gift of tongues,’ he said, ‘These and other gifts of prophecy, being a sign, have long since ceased and been laid aside, and we have no encouragement to expect the revival of them; but, on the contrary, are directed to call the Scriptures the more sure word of prophecy, more sure than voices from Heaven; and to them we are directed to take heed, to search them, and to hold them fast ...’ (Preface to Vol IV of his Exposition of the OT & NT, vii).

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758): ‘Of the extraordinary gifts, they were given 'in order to the founding and establishing of the church in the world. But since the canon of Scriptures has been completed, and the Christian church fully founded and established, these extraordinary gifts have ceased' (Charity and its Fruits, 29).

George Whitefield (1714-1770): ‘... the karismata, the miraculous gifts conferred on the primitive church ... have long ceased ...’ (Second Letter to the Bishop of London, Works, Vol. IV, 167).

James Buchanan (1804-1870): ‘The miraculous gifts of the Spirit have long since been withdrawn. They were used for a temporary purpose’ (The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit, 34)

Robert L. Dabney (1820-1898): ‘After the early church had been established, the same necessity for supernatural signs now no longer existed, and God, Who is never wasteful in His expedients, withdrew them ... miracles, if they became ordinary, would cease to be miracles, and would be referred by men to customary law’ (‘Prelacy a Blunder,’ Discussions: Evangelical and Theological, Vol. 2, 236-237).

Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921): ‘These gifts were ... distinctively the authentication of the apostles. They were part of the credentials of the apostles as the authoritative agents of God in founding the church. Their function thus confirmed them to distinctively the apostolic church and they necessarily passed away with it’ (Counterfeit Miracles, 6).
Confutation

The Scripture says that during the first century after Christ God confirmed the message of His grace by working signs, wonders and various miracles, and by distributing gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His will (cf. Hebrews 2:4; Acts 14:3; Mark 16:20). Today God still confirms the message of His grace in the same way He did in the days of the apostles, that is, by working signs, wonders and various miracles, and by distributing gifts of the Holy Spirit to His children. For God has not changed (cf. Malachi 3:6).

1 Corinthians 13:8-12

Let me say something about the following words of Paul: “Love never fails. But whether there are prophecies, they will fail; whether there are tongues, they will cease; whether there is knowledge, it will vanish away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known” (1 Corinthians 13:8-12 – NKJV). According to those who support cessationism (the theory which says that all the gifts of the Spirit have ceased), ‘that which is perfect’ is the completion of the Bible. However, they are wrong, for Paul did not refer to the completion of the canon of the Scriptures but to the perfection we will experience at the return of Christ from heaven. For when Christ returns we will receive perfect bodies, as it is written: “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:20-21 - NIV); we will know the Lord fully, just as we also are fully known by Him; and we will see Him face to face. Therefore, tongues, prophecy and the other supernatural gifts of the Spirit will cease when Christ returns. That is evident also from the fact that Paul says that when that which is perfect has come knowledge will vanish away (“For we know in part .... But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away” 1 Corinthians 13:9 – NKJV). Did knowledge vanish away when the Bible was completed? Of course not. When will it vanish away then? When Jesus returns from heaven, for at that time we will know Him fully.

The works of Satan

All those who know the Holy Scriptures know that Satan is God’s adversary, and that he counterfeits both the works and words of God. Satan is a liar and the father of lies, and so he takes delight in whatever opposes the truth. He counterfeits the Gospel, he counterfeits the doctrines of the Bible, and he counterfeits also the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the fact that Satan counterfeits the spiritual gifts means that the spiritual gifts still exist. In other words, just as the fact that Satan counterfeits the Gospel and the doctrines of the Bible indicates that the Gospel and the doctrines of the Bible still exist and have not vanished away, so the fact that there are false spiritual gifts indicates that there are true spiritual gifts still in operation. I do not think that Satan would counterfeit something which does not exist any longer. So the existence of counterfeit spiritual manifestations implies that the gifts of the Spirit are still in operation in the midst of the Church of God.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters, “eagerly desire spiritual gifts” (1 Corinthians 14:1 – NIV), so that you may lack no spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. Let no one deceive you with empty words.
Tongues plus interpretation is equal to prophecy

Most Pentecostal Churches teach that tongues plus interpretation is equal to prophecy. The late Donald Gee, a well-known Pentecostal teacher, in his book Concerning spiritual gifts, wrote: 'It is distinctly affirmed that when these twin gifts of Tongues and Interpretation were exercised in proper order in the church, they equaled the gift of Prophecy (1 Cor. 14:5); and it is generally conceded that, since such is the case, they provide an equivalent method by which the Holy Spirit can cause His voice to be heard in the church. It should always be borne in mind, however, that the revealed purposes of the gift of Tongues are chiefly devotional, and we do well to emphasize the fact. The normal spiritual gift for a 'message' is the gift of Prophecy, unless the Lord has a special purpose in using the gift of Tongues as a 'sign' (Donald Gee, Concerning Spiritual Gifts, pages 58-59). In other words, God sometimes speaks to the church through the combined gifts of tongues and interpretation. The first gift, tongues, arrests the attention and reveals that God is trying to communicate with the audience. The second gift, interpretation, discloses the actual message that God wishes to convey. In the light of this teaching, therefore, when someone speaks in tongues in the midst of the congregation of the saints, he is speaking to the whole congregation or to a person in that congregation, and the gift of interpretation enables that person or someone else to proclaim the meaning of the utterance directed toward the whole congregation or a single person. That's why most Pentecostals use the expression 'message in tongues', for they believe that tongues which are interpreted are a message to the Church. The biblical passages cited to support this teaching are 1 Corinthians 14:5: "I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification" (NKJV); and 1 Corinthians 14:21: "In the law it is written: With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me" (NKJV).

Confutation

Tongues speaking is directed toward God

The apostle Paul said to the Corinthians: “Pursue love, and desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy” (1 Corinthians 14:1 – NKJV). As you can see, Paul exhorts the saints not only to pursue love but also to desire spiritual gifts, for he knows that it is God’s will that the saints should desire spiritual gifts. Somewhere else in the same epistle Paul says: “Earnestly desire the best gifts” (1 Corinthians 12:31 – NKJV). Paul says also that the saints must desire especially that they may prophesy. Why did Paul, who was a servant of God who could affirm that he spoke with tongues more than all the Corinthians, say that we must desire especially that we may prophesy? He explains the reason immediately after when he says: “For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church” (1 Corinthians 14:2-4 - NKJV). As you can see, Paul explains why we must desire especially that we may prophesy and why the gift of prophecy is greater than the gift of tongues; we must desire the gift of prophecy for he who prophesies speaks to men, while he who speaks in Tongues speaks to God for in the spirit he speaks mysteries; and moreover he who prophesies edifies the church, while he who speaks in tongues edifies himself. Now let me dwell upon the expression of Paul “he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God.” If Paul says that he who speaks in tongues does not speak to men but to God, that means that tongues speaking is directed toward God. What does he who speaks in tongues say to God? Paul says that in the spirit he speaks mysteries.
Let us look at some other biblical passages which confirm that tongues speaking is directed toward God and not toward men.

- Paul says a little further: “For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also” (1 Corinthians 14:14-15).

As you can see, Paul is talking about praying in other tongues (or praying with the spirit), and since we know that prayer is directed toward God and not toward men, that confirms that tongues speaking is directed toward God. As for praying with the spirit – which is mentioned by Paul also in the epistle to the Ephesians when he says: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit …” (Ephesians 6:18 – NKJV), and by Jude in his epistle when he says: “But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God … “ (Jude 20-21) – I remember you that it refers to the intercession made by the Spirit of God for the saints, as it is written: “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27 – NKJV). Therefore, he who prays in an unknown tongue asks God through the Spirit to do certain things for us and for the other saints who are on earth. It is evident that since the Spirit of God, who knows all the things we have need of, makes intercession (in an unknown tongue) for us and all the other children of God, the things He asks of God are mysteries to us, that is, secret things. I will give you an example: if the Spirit of God is making intercession for some unknown brothers who are in Africa who need a particular thing right now, we will never know that the Spirit was asking God for that particular thing unless one interprets by the Spirit what the Spirit is saying. Obviously in this case we will know the mysteries through the gift of interpretation of tongues.

- Paul says: “I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.” (1 Corinthians 14:15). To sing with the Spirit means to sing spiritual songs to God through the Spirit. Therefore, it follows that he who sings in a tongue speaks to God and not to men.

- Paul says: “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest? For thou verily givest thanks well, but the other is not edified.” (1 Corinthians 14:16-17). The following expressions “when thou shalt bless with the spirit” and “thou verily givest thanks well” confirm that he who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God for he blesses and thanks God.

Tongues speaking in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost, at the house of Cornelius, and at Ephesus

Let us examine now those cases recorded in the book of the Acts of the apostles wherein some believers spoke with tongues, in order to see whether their tongues speaking was directed toward men or God.

- On the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem: “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God.” (Acts 2:4-11).
As you can see, according to what Luke wrote, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples they began to speak in other tongues. However their tongues speaking was not addressed to men. There is no slight hint that they spoke to men. Some say that they preached in tongues to the outside crowd, but they are wrong for when the tongues speaking began, the crowd had not yet assembled. It was only after there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and the disciples began to speak in tongues, that the crowd gathered, as it is written: “Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together ....” (Acts 2:6). Some others have come to the conclusion that, once the crowd gathered, the gospel was preached to them through supernatural tongues speaking. But they too are wrong, for according to Luke the tongues speaking which had started before the crowd arrived simply continued on, and when the onlookers (who understood what they were saying) inquired as to what the strange phenomenon meant, Peter preached the Gospel to them in a tongue common to himself and to all of them (cf. Acts 2:14-36). In the light of what the Scripture says, then, we come to the reasonable conclusion that in their tongues speaking they were addressing God as they spoke of “the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11).

While Peter was preaching the Word to Cornelius and his household, it came to pass that “the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God” (Acts 10:44-46 – NKJV). In this case also we can’t affirm that tongues speaking was addressed to men, for there is no slight hint that such thing happened. So Cornelius and his household spoke to God.

When the Holy Spirit came upon those disciples Paul had met at Ephesus “they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6). Note that the prophesying is cited separately from the speaking in tongues for he who speaks in tongues does not prophesy, that is, he does not speak edification and exhortation and comfort to men, but he speaks to God. Note also that Luke does not say that they were speaking in tongues and interpreting, but they spoke with tongues (in spirit they spoke mysteries) and prophesied (that is, they spoke in a known tongue edification and exhortation and comfort to men). That excludes that those believers ‘prophesied interpreting’ or ‘prophesied in tongues’. It is evident that the tongues speaking was not addressed to men but to God, for those believers both spoke with tongues and prophesied. Since they prophesied it makes no sense to believe that the tongues speakers addressed each other in their new unknown tongues or even that they addressed Paul.

Explanation of the passages cited by some to hold that he who speaks in tongues speaks to men

Paul says to the Corinthians: “I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification” (1 Corinthians 14:5 - NKJV). Paul wished that all the saints of Corinth had the gift of tongues, even though he knew that not all have this gift (as it is written: “Do all speak with tongues?” 1 Corinthians 12:30 – NKJV), but even more that they all prophesied, for he who speaks in a tongue edifies only himself (unless what he says is interpreted), while he who prophesies edifies the church for he speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. However Paul did not mean that he who speaks in tongues cannot edify the church, for he who speaks in tongues edifies the church when his words are interpreted. Why does tongues speaking edify the Church when it is interpreted? Because in this case he who speaks in tongues does not speak into the air, that is to say, because the words uttered in an unknown tongue can be understood by all through the gift of interpretation. Therefore, since the listeners can understand what the Spirit has asked God to do for Tom and Dick and Harry, since the listeners understand the giving of thanks made by the Holy Spirit, and they understand the words of the spiritual song sang to God in other tongues, they are made partakers of the knowledge of these mysteries and thus they can say ‘Amen’.
is, ‘So be it,’ for they have understood the meaning of those words uttered in other tongues. And this is exactly what has happened many times in many churches all over the world: some brothers prayed to God, thanked God and sang to God in other tongues and through the interpretation all the listeners were edified for they understood what was said. In the light of the above mentioned explanation, then, it is evident that Paul by those words did not mean that tongues plus interpretation is equal to prophecy, but simply that if tongues speaking is not interpreted it edifies only him who speaks in tongues, while if it is interpreted it edifies the Church also, for the listeners understand what was said to God. Thus when tongues are interpreted the saints are edified just as when one prophesies, even though the interpretation of tongues is addressed to God for the utterance is directed toward God. Paul by those words did not mean that tongues plus interpretation is equal to prophecy, but simply that if tongues speaking is not addressed to God but to men, the interpretation of it cannot be addressed to men but to God, that is, to say, the interpretation of it cannot be a prophecy. The interpretation of tongues does not change the direction of the original utterance. If the speaking in tongues is addressed to God and not to men, then the interpretation of it should be addressed to God, not to men.

● “In the law it is written: With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; and yet, for all that, they will not hear Me.” (1 Corinthians 14:21 - NKJV).

By these words Paul did not mean that the Lord would cause someone to speak to the Jews through the gift of tongues, for the speaking in tongues is addressed to God and not to men, but he meant that the Lord would speak to the people of Israel by the sign of tongues. Do you remember what happened on the day of Pentecost? Is it not true that God spoke to those Jews from every nation under heaven through some Galileans? Is it not true that God astonished those Jews who came together on the day of Pentecost, for He astonished and marvelled them. Signs speak for themselves. They testify of the greatness and presence of God. One day Jesus said to the Jews: “But I have a greater witness than John’s; for the works which the Father has given Me to finish – the very works that I do – bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me” (John 5:36 – NKJV), and when God commanded Moses to perform certain signs in the presence of the elders of Israel that they might believe that He had appeared to him, He said to Moses: “Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign” (Exodus 4:8 – NKJV). Note the expressions ‘the message of the first sign’ ‘the message of the latter sign’ for they make it clear that the signs of God speak for themselves. Therefore, since tongues speaking also is one of the signs of God to unbelievers, we conclude that God speaks to unbelievers through tongues (that is to say, through the sign of tongues and not through the so called ‘messages in tongues’). That’s what has happened during the Pentecostal Revival which started in the last century, for some Jews turned to Jesus Christ through the sign of tongues, that is, after they heard some Gentiles, who did not know Hebrew, praying or singing in Hebrew.

Conclusion

Brothers in the Lord, there is no doubt that in the light of the Holy Scriptures the teaching according to which tongues and interpretation is equal to prophecy is not true, so I urge you to reject it. I realize that you may find it very difficult to reject it for you have held it for many years, but that’s the right thing to do. I myself accepted this wrong teaching for a certain period of time after my conversion, but one day I had to reject it for I found out that it contradicts God’s word.
The tongues which the Holy Spirit enabled the early disciples to speak on the day of Pentecost were given to enable the disciples to preach the Gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring.

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church teaches that the tongues which the Holy Spirit enabled the early disciples to speak on the day of Pentecost were given so that the disciples might proclaim the Gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring. Ellen G. White, the prophetess of the Adventists, in her book *The acts of the apostles* wrote: ‘The Holy Spirit, assuming the form of tongues of fire, rested upon those assembled. This was an emblem of the gift then bestowed on the disciples, which enabled them to speak with fluency languages with which they had heretofore been unacquainted. The appearance of fire signified the fervent zeal with which the apostles would labor and the power that would attend their work. “There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.” During the dispersion the Jews had been scattered to almost every part of the inhabited world, and in their exile they had learned to speak various languages. Many of these Jews were on this occasion in Jerusalem, attending the religious festivals then in progress. Every known tongue was represented by those assembled. This diversity of languages would have been a great hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel; God therefore in a miraculous manner supplied the deficiency of the apostles. The Holy Spirit did for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime. They could now proclaim the truths of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring. This miraculous gift was a strong evidence to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven. From this time forth the language of the disciples was pure, simple, and accurate, whether they spoke in their native tongue or in a foreign language’ (Ellen G. White, *The acts of the apostles*, pages 39-40)

Confutation

The Holy Scripture says: “And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine.” (Acts 2:1-13).

As you can see, those Jews came together to the place where the disciples of the Lord were sitting after they heard the sound like the blowing of a violent wind coming from heaven and after the disciples began to speak in other tongues, therefore when they came to that place the disciples were already speaking with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. And what were the disciples of the Lord speaking in other tongues? They were speaking the wonderful works of God, for those Jews said to one another: “We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11). Was the Gospel among the wonderful works of God they spoke in other tongues? No, it wasn’t. For the Gospel was preached to those Jews in Hebrew
(that is, in the language they all could understand) by Simon Peter, after he stood up with the eleven (cf. Acts 2:14-36). So the Gospel was not preached by the disciples of the Lord to those Jews through supernatural tongues speaking, but it was preached by the apostle Peter in a language common to himself and to the crowd that had gathered.

Let no one deceive you with empty words. Tongues speaking is always directed Godward and not menward, as it is written: “He who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God…” (1 Corinthians 14:2 – NKJV). So tongues are not given to preach the Gospel, but to pray to God and to give thanks to Him in other tongues. That does not mean, however, that a believer cannot mention the miracles of Christ, the death of Christ and His resurrection while he speaks in other tongues, for these things are among the wonderful works of God which the Spirit of God may move someone to speak in other tongues.

**The word of knowledge is a teaching gift in the Church**

The late Donald Gee in his book *Concerning spiritual gifts*, wrote concerning the gift of word of knowledge: ‘…. ‘the Word of Knowledge’ is a TEACHING GIFT IN THE CHURCH ……The possession of a ‘word of knowledge’ does therefore, almost automatically, make a man a teacher as nothing else will do. The gift operates with all that intense passion and irrepressible spontaneity which we rightly associate with all the gifts of the Spirit. Teach he must, and to define the gift of the ‘word of knowledge’ as a teaching gift in the church is a satisfying, consistent and worthily Pentecostal definition of its nature and purpose …. If we want an illustration of that gift of the Spirit from the Bible we can find it pre-eminently in all the glorious doctrinal passages of the New Testament, where again and again Christian teachers exultantly declare, ‘WE KNOW’ (Donald Gee, *Concerning Spiritual Gifts*, pages 111, 112, 113). Many non-Pentecostal teachers also teach the same thing.

**Confutation**

The word of knowledge is the revelation of the existence, condition or whereabouts of some person or object or place, of the location or occasion of some event. It is the revelation of past happenings or of things existing or events taking place in the present. For instance, it may be the revelation of a plot against someone, a sin committed by someone secretly, the nature of a man’s thoughts or the condition of his heart, the place where something or someone is hidden, the place where a lost object is, etc. The word of knowledge also can be received through a vision, or a dream, or through an audible voice. Here are some biblical examples of the word of knowledge.

**Old Testament**

It was through a word of knowledge that the prophet Elisha knew the secret encampment selected by the king of Syria as the base of his military operations against Israel. Here is what we read in the Scripture: “Then the king of Syria warred against Israel, and took counsel with his servants, saying, In such and such a place shall be my camp. And the man of God sent unto the king of Israel, saying, Beware that thou pass not such a place; for thither the Syrians are come down. And the king of Israel sent to the place which the man of God told him and warned him of, and saved himself there, not once nor twice. Therefore the heart of the king of Syria was sore troubled for this thing; and he called his servants, and said unto them, Will ye not shew me which of us is for the king of Israel? And one of his servants said, None, my lord, O king: but Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel the words that thou speakest in thy bedchamber” (2 Kings 6:8-12).
It was through a word of knowledge that the Israelites knew where Saul was hidden. Here is the biblical account of that event: "And Samuel called the people together unto the LORD to Mizpeh; and said unto the children of Israel, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought up Israel out of Egypt, and delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all kingdoms, and of them that oppressed you: And ye have this day rejected your God, who himself saved you out of all your adversities and your tribulations; and ye have said unto him, Nay, but set a king over us. Now therefore present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes, and by your thousands. And when Samuel had caused all the tribes of Israel to come near, the tribe of Benjamin was taken. When he had caused the tribe of Benjamin to come near by their families, the family of Matri was taken, and Saul the son of Kish was taken: and when they sought him, he could not be found. Therefore they enquired of the LORD further, if the man should yet come thither. And the LORD answered, Behold, he hath hid himself among the stuff. And they ran and fetched him thence: and when he stood among the people, he was higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward. And Samuel said to all the people, See ye him whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people? And all the people shouted, and said, God save the king [Long live the king!]" (1 Samuel 10:17-24).

It was through a word of knowledge that the prophet Elisha knew that his servant Gehazi had taken something from Naaman. Elisha had refused to accept from the hands of Naaman what he had brought, who had been healed of leprosy by Elisha. However, Gehazi coveted what Naaman brought and took something from Naaman secretly, but God exposed the treachery and punished Gehazi for his sin. Here is the biblical account of that event: "But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, Behold, my master hath spared Naaman this Syrian, in not receiving at his hands that which he brought: but, as the LORD liveth, I will run after him, and take somewhat of him. So Gehazi followed after Naaman. And when Naaman saw him running after him, he lighted down from the chariot to meet him, and said, Is all well? And he said, All is well. My master hath sent me, saying, Behold, even now there be come to me from mount Ephraim two young men of the sons of the prophets: give them, I pray thee, a talent of silver, and two changes of garments. And Naaman said, Be content, take two talents. And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags, with two changes of garments, and laid them upon two of his servants; and they bare them before him. And when he came to the tower, he took them from their hand, and bestowed them in the house: and he let the men go, and they departed. But he went in, and stood before his master. And Elisha said unto him, Whence comest thou, Gehazi? And he said, Thy servant went no whither. And he said unto him, Went not mine heart with thee, when the man turned again from his chariot to meet thee? Is it a time to receive money, and to receive garments, and oliveyards, and vineyards, and sheep, and oxen, and menservants, and maidservants? The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow" (2 Kings 5:20-27).

New Testament

Jesus, while He was talking with the Samaritan woman, told her that she had had five husbands and the man living with her at that time was not her husband. Here is what the apostle John wrote: "Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly. The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet" (John 4:16-19). That woman realized through that word of knowledge that the one who was speaking to her was a prophet. In addition to this, she believed that Jesus was the promised Messiah, for the apostle wrote that when she went back to the town she said to the people: "Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?" (John 4:29).

It was through a word of knowledge that the apostle Peter knew that Ananias and Sapphira his wife had lied to the apostles concerning the price of the land they had sold. It is written in the
book of the Acts of the apostles: "But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried him out, and buried him. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much. Then Peter said unto her, How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out. Then fell she down straightway at his feet, and yielded up the ghost: and the young men came in, and found her dead, and, carrying her forth, buried her by her husband. And great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:1-11).

It was through a word of knowledge that Ananias, a disciple who lived in Damascus, knew that Saul of Tarsus was in the house of a man named Judas on Straight Street and that he was praying and had seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and placing his hands upon him. Here is what Luke wrote: “And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth, And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized” (Acts 9:10-18)

As you can see, the word of knowledge is a useful gift, for through it the Spirit reveals also certain sins which have been committed secretly by some people. So we need this kind of manifestation, that people may acknowledge that our God is holy, that His eyes are everywhere, and that man cannot mock Him, and thus great fear may seize them. Very often believers behave in their private life as if God did not exist and then they come to the place of worship as if nothing had happened. Very often we see the places of worship full of hypocrites whose secret sins need to be revealed publicly so that everybody may realize that God cannot be mocked.

Conclusion

In the light of the teaching of the Scripture, therefore, we conclude that the word of knowledge is not a teaching gift – as many say – and the possession of it does not make any man a teacher of the Word. Know this, that to teach that this gift is a teaching gift means to deprive it of its supernatural character, and consequently to deprive the Church of a powerful and useful spiritual manifestation.
The word of wisdom is a deep spiritual insight and unusual understanding of the more mystical parts of God’s Word or the sublimities of the Gospel and it is also an administrative wisdom

Many teachers of God’s Word teach that the word of wisdom is a deep spiritual insight and unusual understanding of the more mystical parts of God’s Word or the sublimities of the Gospel. For instance, one expositor comments that the ‘word of wisdom’ is ‘a comprehensive view of the scheme of redemption with the faculty of clearly explaining it to the apprehension of others’ (Albert Barnes, *Notes on the New Testament*, Vol. 5, pg. 230). They also say that it is also administrative wisdom, that is, the ability to govern in divine things.

Confutation

The word of wisdom is the revelation of a future event. Therefore it is the prediction of an event, such as a war, a famine, a flood, a marriage, an arrest, the coming of someone, the birth of someone, the death of someone, a judgement of God upon someone, a blessing of God for somebody, the salvation of somebody, the healing of somebody, etc. However, the word of wisdom is expressed not only in foretelling future events, but also in the giving of those divine commands and instructions which make for the development of those future events. The word of wisdom can be received through a vision, or a dream, or through an audible voice. Here are a few biblical examples of the word of wisdom.

Old Testament

Through a word of wisdom Noah knew that God would send the flood on the earth and that he had to build an ark, as it is written: “And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch. And this is the fashion which thou shalt make it of: The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, the breadth of it fifty cubits, and the height of it thirty cubits. A window shalt thou make to the ark, and in a cubit shalt thou finish it above; and the door of the ark shalt thou set in the side thereof; with lower, second, and third stories shalt thou make it. And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee. And of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive with thee; they shall be male and female. Of fowls after their kind, and of cattle after their kind, of every creeping thing of the earth after his kind, two of every sort shall come unto thee, to keep them alive. And take thou unto thee of all food that is eaten, and thou shalt gather it to thee; and it shall be for food for thee, and for them” (Genesis 6:13-21). As you can see, Noah received not only the prediction of the flood, but also some important commands which he had to put in practice so that the plan of God might be fulfilled. Noah built the ark, the flood came upon the earth, and all the human beings and the animals were destroyed except Noah and seven others, and all the animals which were in the ark.

It was through a word of wisdom that the prophet Samuel knew that the following day God would send him a man from the land of Benjamin, who was the man appointed by God to reign over Israel. Here is what we read in the Bible: “Now the LORD had told Samuel in his ear a day before Saul came, saying, To morrow about this time I will send thee a man out of the land of Benjamin, and thou shalt anoint him to be captain over my people Israel, that he may save my people out of the hand of the Philistines: for I have looked upon my people, because their cry is come unto me” (1 Samuel 9:15-16). That word was fulfilled on the following day, as God had
said to Samuel. God sent Saul to Samuel and “when Samuel saw Saul, the LORD said unto him, Behold the man whom I spake to thee of! this same shall reign over my people” (1 Samuel 9:17). It was through a word of wisdom, which God gave to the prophet Samuel, that Saul knew what would happen to him after he would leave Samuel. Here is what Samuel said to Saul: “Is it not because the LORD hath anointed thee to be captain over his inheritance? When thou art departed from me to day, then thou shalt find two men by Rachel's sepulchre in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah; and they will say unto thee, The asses which thou wentest to seek are found: and, lo, thy father hath left the care of the asses, and sorroweth for you, saying, What shall I do for my son? Then shalt thou go on forward from thence, and thou shalt come to the plain of Tabor, and there shall meet thee three men going up to God to Bethel, one carrying three kids, and another carrying three loaves of bread, and another carrying a bottle of wine: And they will salute thee, and give thee two loaves of bread; which thou shalt receive of their hands. After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where is the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy: And the Spirit of the LORD will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man” (1 Samuel 10:2-6). All those signs were fulfilled on that day, as the Lord had said through Samuel.

It was through a word of wisdom, which God gave to the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite, that Jeroboam knew that he would become king of Israel, as it is written: “And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field: And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:) Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my judgments, as did David his father. Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did: that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever” (1 Kings 11:29-39). And Jeroboam some time later became king of Israel, as the Lord had said.

**New Testament**

At Antioch, one prophet named Agabus, “stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world” (Acts 11:28 - NIV), which came to pass in the days of Claudius. After some years, Agabus, while the apostle Paul was at the house of Philip, came and predicted that Paul would be bound by the Jews and handed over to the Gentiles, as it is written: “And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle, and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owenneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles” (Acts 21:11). This prediction also was fulfilled.
It was through a word of wisdom that the evangelist Philip knew that he had to go toward the south along the road which went down from Jerusalem to Gaza, and it was through a word of wisdom that when he saw the Eunuch sitting in his chariot he knew that he had to go near and overtake that chariot, as it is written: “Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, ‘Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go near and overtake this chariot.’ So Philip ran to him, and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah, and said, ‘Do you understand what you are reading?’ And he said, ‘How can I, unless someone guides me?’ And he asked Philip to come up and sit with him. The place in the Scripture which he read was this: ‘He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth’. So the eunuch answered Philip and said, ‘I ask you, of whom does the prophet say this, of himself or of some other man?’ Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture, preached Jesus to him. Now as they went down the road, they came to some water. And the eunuch said, ‘See, here is water. What hinders me from begin baptized?’ Then Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ So he commanded the chariot to stand still. And both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:26-38 - NKJV).

The word of wisdom is as important as it was in the days of the prophets and of the apostles. Through it we can know things that no human being knows, for they are hidden in God. Is it not wonderful? I can tell you by experience that when God reveals to you a portion of His wisdom, by revealing to you something that will happen in the future, or by commanding you to do certain things so that His plan may be fulfilled, you feel happy, strengthened and also comforted, and compelled to praise His great name. Earnestly desire this manifestation of the Spirit, so that men may acknowledge that our God still predicts future events, as He did in ancient times, and at the appointed time He brings to pass His predictions. Let everyone acknowledge the truthfulness of this Scripture: “Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors.: Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposedit, I will also do it” (Isaiah 46:8-11)

Conclusion

In the light of the Scripture, therefore, the word of wisdom cannot be an unusual understanding of God’s Word nor the ability to clearly teach the doctrines of the Bible or administrative wisdom or simple wisdom which every Christian can gain from studying the Word of God and putting it into practice, for it is the supernatural revelation of future events, and this revelation very often includes also divine instructions and commands, which God gives so that the future event which He has foretold might be fulfilled. And therefore, even a young convert with a little knowledge of the Word and with little experience, as well as a Christian who does not have the ability to clearly expound the Word of God, can receive a word of wisdom. I conclude by saying that to teach that the word of wisdom is one of the things which is not means to deprive this gift of its supernatural character and thus to deprive the Church of this powerful and useful manifestation of the Spirit of God.
PROSPERITY AND TITHING

The prosperity message

A peculiar and seductive message is being proclaimed by many preachers all over the world: this message is called ‘prosperity message’. The best known proponents of the ‘prosperity message’ are: Kenneth Hagin, late pastor of the Rhema Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma; Kenneth and Gloria Copeland, founders of Kenneth Copeland Ministries in Fort Worth, Texas; Bob and Marte Tilton, founding pastors of the Word of Faith Church, Farmers Branch, Texas; John Osteen, pastor of the Lakewood Church, Houston, Texas; Jerry Savelle, evangelist and former associate of Kenneth Copeland; Charles and Frances Hunter, founders of the City of Light, Kingwood, Texas; Charles Capps, a preacher who is headquartered in England, Arkansas; and Frederick Price, pastor of Crenshaw Christian Center in Los Angeles; Benny Hinn, former pastor of Orlando Christian Center in Orlando, Florida; Crefo Dollar, founder and senior pastor of World Changers Church International in College Park, Georgia; John Avanzini, founder of International Faith Center in Haltom City, TX; and Paul Crouch, founder of Trinity Broadcasting Network, Santa Ana, CA.

This message is called ‘prosperity message’ because those who proclaim it say very clearly that it is God's will for every believer to prosper and succeed in every area of life. Frederick Price says: ‘It is God's perfect will that everyone prosper in every area of life’ (Frederick Price, High Finance: God's Financial Plan, Tulsa, Harrison House, 1984, page 12). To support this they quote the following biblical passage: “Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2 – NKJV). This means that a poor or sick believer is outside God’s will for his life.

Let me explain to you now what the proponents of the prosperity message teach about poverty and sickness, and how every believer can become wealthy and healthy.

How to be wealthy

Poverty is a curse. Gloria Copeland says: ‘Poverty and lack are a part of the curse of the Law .... The curse of the law definitely included financial reversal’ (Gloria Copeland, God's will is prosperity, Harrison House, Tulsa, 1978, page 45); and Jerry Savelle says: ‘In God’s sight poverty is a curse ....”’ (Jerry Savelle, Godly Wisdom for prosperity, Tulsa, Harrison House, 1980, page 86). However, since Christ died on the cross to deliver us from the curse of the law, as it is written: “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree’) Galatians 3:13 - NKJV . He delivered us from poverty as well, so that we might be rich like Abraham; yes, like Abraham. For Paul says that Christ delivered us from the curse of the law “that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:14 – NKJV), and this blessing of Abraham is financial as well as spiritual. Are we not Abraham’s seed? So we are heirs of his blessing. Therefore Christ died for us so that we might become rich; Savelle says: “Prosperity for God's people is just as much a part of the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus as His being made sin with your sin. Jesus not only died for your sin; He became sick with your sickness; He was made poor that you might be made rich’ (Jerry Savelle, Godly Wisdom for prosperity, page 53). This is confirmed by Paul when he says to the Corinthians: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9 – NKJV). God has promised to make every believer prosperous in material things because of His covenant with Abraham; that is to say, the covenant made with Abraham places God under obligation to prosper every believer: ‘Because of His promise, God
will multiply you exceedingly and make you exceedingly fruitful. God has obligated Himself to bless you as He blessed Abraham’ (Gloria Copeland, *God’s will is prosperity*, page 15). Isaac, Jacob and Joseph became extremely rich because of their relationship to the Abrahamic Covenant. Possession of the wealth provided through the Abrahamic Covenant is achieved by knowing, obeying, and believing.

First a Christian must know the promise before the promise can be claimed. Savelle says: ‘If a person doesn’t know it is God’s will for him to prosper, it is highly improbable that he will prosper’ (Jerry Savelle, ‘True Prosperity – What is it?’ *Christian Life*, July 1983, page 47) A believer who is unaware that prosperity is his is like the passenger on a cruise ship who ate only cheese and crackers because he did not know that meals were included in the price of the ticket.

Second, a Christian must be obedient. Savelle says: ‘If he doesn’t obey the laws of God that produce prosperity, he will not be able to appropriate them …. Obedience is the key to prosperity! If we are willing to obey God’s commands in every area of our lives, we will prosper. If we don’t obey, we won’t prosper. It’s that simple’ (Ibid., page 47-48), This means that he must pay tithe and give offerings to God’s work. As Price puts it, ‘Tithing is God’s primary way of materially and financially blessing His people’ (Frederick Price, *High Finance: God’s Financial Plan*, page 69). Savelle says: ‘Giving is very important for prosperity’ (Jerry Savelle, *Godly Wisdom for prosperity*, page 110).

Third a Christian must exercise faith in God’s promises by asking for riches in faith or rather by commanding riches to come to him: ‘Take authority over them and command them to come to you in the Name of Jesus. Command the money you need to come to you. The authority is yours. Have dominion and subdue the earth and its vast resources’ (Gloria Copeland, *God’s will is prosperity*, page 49) This is done in obedience to the following words of Jesus: “Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:22-24 – NKJV). In other words, the motto of the prosperity movement is, ‘You can have what you say!’ For words have creative power. The things we say, especially the favors we demand of God, must all be stated positively and without wavering, then God is required or compelled to answer. Gloria Copeland says: ‘Words are the bridge between the physical world and the spiritual world …. What you say with your mouth is what you are going to get – even though you might desire something else’ (Ibid., page 82), and Kenneth Hagin says: ‘You always get and have in your life what you believe for and say’ (Kenneth Hagin, *Don’t blame God*, Faith Library Publications, Tulsa, 1980, page 3-5).

Gloria Copeland recounted the story of how she obtained an expensive diamond ring through exercising faith. Frederick Price, by exercising ‘faith’, has got in ‘the name of Jesus’ a 25 room mansion, a 6 million dollar yacht, a jet, an helicopter and 7 luxury automobiles. Man is a ‘God-like creature’ or a ‘little god’ for he was made in the image and likeness of God, therefore his words have authority to create every time he speaks. Just as God created the heavens and the earth by His word, as it is written: “He spoke, and it came to be” (Psalm 33:9 – NIV), so man can create things or speak things into existence by his words. If he speaks positive words and in faith, he will surely receive what he wants. With regard to the divine nature of man Kenneth Copeland says: ‘You don’t have a God in you, you are one!’ (The Force of Love, 1987, Tape #02-0028); and Kenneth Hagin says: ‘You are as much the incarnation of God as Jesus Christ was’ (The Word of Faith, December 1980, page 14). This means that a believer must never say to God ‘If it be thy will’ or ‘thy will be done’ for he has full control over his circumstances, he has been given all authority in the earth and God is not going to override his authority! If he says to God, ‘If it be thy will’ he is calling God a fool!

At this point you may ask, ‘How much wealthy will a Christian be if he does what the proponents of this message teach?’ Well, it depends on the amount of money you give for God’s work (of course each preacher wish and exhort people to give money to him). Listen what Gloria Copeland has written: ‘You give $1 for the Gospel’s sake and $100 belongs to you; give $10 and
receive $1,000; give $1,000 and receive $100,000 ... Give one house and receive one hundred houses or one house worth one hundred times as much ... In short, Mark 10:30 is a very good deal.’ (Gloria Copeland, God’s will is prosperity, page 48). You receive materially from God in proportion to how much you sow or give (cf. Luke 6:38). Here is what Tilton says: ‘I started noticing good things showing up around me. I gave away a pair of shoes, then I noticed three or four pairs came back. I kept giving watches away, then I noticed a very expensive Rolex watch jump onto my wrist’ (Tilton, God’s Laws of Success, page 137).

This is God’s formula for prosperity. Why should a Christian become rich? He should become rich so that he might meet the needs of others, but also that he might give Christ a successful image! On the other hand, a Christian is a son of the King of kings, so why should one be offended at hearing that God wants us to have luxurious homes, cars and clothes? Hear what Frederick Price says: ‘If the Mafia can ride around in Lincoln Continental town cars, why can’t the King’s Kids?’ (Faith, foolishness or presumption, page 34). Furthermore, Jesus Himself was a rich man, so we should follow His steps. ‘That’s the reason why I drive a Rolls Royce. I am following Jesus’ steps’ said Mr. Price (‘Ever Increasing Faith’ program on TBN December 19 1990).

Therefore, if we have a modest house, if we wear modest clothing, and we drive a modest car, we can’t give Christ a successful image! That’s why these preachers never say that we should live in modest houses, wear modest clothing and drive modest cars: for through modest things we do not give Christ a successful image!

Why don’t all Christians prosper then? Because they aren’t operating in God’s financial plan, they are not obeying God. Harold Hill summarises the different reasons as follows: ‘Ignorance, unbelief, and disobedience … rob us of the manifestation of the prosperity promises of God’ (Harold Hill, The money book for King’s kids, Old Tappan, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1984, page 96). Therefore, if a Christian is not rich materially that means that God has not blessed him as He wants to because he doesn’t know nor believe the promises of God and as a consequence he does not do the will of God!

How to be healthy

Sickness, according to Deuteronomy 28 is a curse of the law, however Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law and thus He has redeemed us from the curse of sickness. Therefore Jesus died not only that we might be forgiven but also that we might be healed. The provision of healing is found in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, as it is written: “By His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5 – NKJV. Cf. 1 Peter 2:24). In the light of this, it is never God’s will for anyone to be sick. Here is what Kenneth Hagin has stated: ‘Don’t ever tell anyone sickness is the will of God for us. It isn’t! Healing and health are the will of God for mankind. If sickness were the will of God, heaven would be filled with sickness and disease’ (Kenneth Hagin, Redeemed from Poverty, Sickness, and Death, Tulsa, 1983, page 16), ‘...it is the plan of our Father God in His great love and His great mercy that no believer should ever be sick, that every believer should live his life full span down here on earth and that every believer should finally just fall asleep in Jesus” (Hagin, Seven Things You Should Know About Divine Healing, p. 21). Therefore God does not want any of His children to be sick or to die of sickness. Why is it the plan of God that no believer should ever be sick? Because God cannot be glorified in a sick body. Here is what Frederick Price has stated: ‘ ... how can you glorify God in your body, when it doesn't function right? How can you glorify God? How can He get glory when your body doesn't even work? ... What makes you think the Holy Ghost wants to live inside a body where He can't see out through the windows and He can't hear with the ears? What makes you think the Holy Spirit wants to live inside of a physical body where the limbs and the organs and the cells do not function right? ... And what makes you think He wants to live in a temple where He can't see out of the eyes, and He can't walk with the feet, and He can't move with the hand? ... The only eyes that he has that are in the earth realm are the eyes that are in the body. If He can't see out of them then God's gonna be limited he's not going to be helped...” applause (Frederick K.C. Price,
“Is God Glorified Through Sickness?” Los Angeles: Crenshaw Christian Center, n.d., audiotape #FP605). Therefore, a Christian must be healthy in order to glorify God in His body. How can he be healed? By His faith. Faith is defined as speaking or confessing something with authority in the full expectation that what is spoken will happen. Mark 11:23-24 confirms this definition of faith, for it is written: “Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:22-24 – NKJV). Therefore a Christian must name his healing and claim it. Here is what the Hunters say: “TALK TO THE DISEASE! Speak with authority and then believe! SAYING is a command to be healed! CONFESSING is believing for a future act or manifestation of the healing …. SAYING is giving authority to words, and CONFESSING is receiving the promise; both confessing and saying are calling into being something that does not exist at the present time’ (Charles and Frances Hunter, To Heal the Sick, Kingwood, TX, Hunter Books, 1983, page 64). Kenneth Hagin says that ‘faith’s confessions create reality’ (Kenneth Hagin, How To Turn Your Faith Loose, page 23). The confession of faith will cure any disease or physical handicap, since healing is always the will of God and has been provided for in the atonement. ‘Believe with your heart, and speak with your mouth’ they say, ‘and you will surely be healed!’ Words have creative power, and if you confess your healing you are going to be healed, because you are going to create the reality of your healing with your own mouth; that is a divine law.

But what if the words are spoken and faith is exercised and healing does not take place? This problem is overcome by patience and persistence. The sick are exhorted to persist in their confession and build up their faith to the level necessary to obtain the promised healing.

Confutation

Though Jesus Christ was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, said: “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11:29-30). Therefore we know that Christ left us an example and that we must follow it. Who would dare to say that Christ in certain things did not give a good example to us? Let me start by saying that when Christ, the Son of God, was born He was laid in a manger, as it is written that Mary “brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn” (Luke 2:7 - NKJV). A manger is a humble place, and the King of the Jews was laid right in a manger when He was born. God could have cleared a room in the inn for Joseph and Mary, but He did not, yet the child whom Mary brought forth was the Son of the Highest. Afterward Joseph and Mary moved into a house, in that the wise men from the East found the Child Jesus into a house, as it is written: “And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshipped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Matthew 2:11 – NKJV). The Scripture does not speak of a royal palace, but it speaks of a house. As for the gifts the wise men presented to Jesus, it must be said that they were not kept by Jesus as His own treasure on the earth, for He Himself said: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal” (Matthew 6:19 – NKJV); I say this because there are perverse people who make insinuations on what happened to those gifts. We destroy their insinuations because we know that Jesus was born without sin and He lived blamelessly in the days of His flesh (thus even in His childhood and in His youth).

Jesus, the Son of God, not only was born in a humble place, but also was born of humble parents, for His Father caused Him to be born of poor parents, and not of rich parents, who belonged to the house of David (God could have caused His Son to be born of rich parents, but
He didn't because it was not according to His will). That the parents of Jesus were poor is evident from the following things written by Luke: “And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons” (Luke 2:22-24). For according to the law a poor woman had to offer two turtledoves or two young pigeons – one as a burnt offering and the other as a sin offering – when the days of her purification were fulfilled, as it is written: “And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female. And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean” (Leviticus 12:6-8)

Jesus was poor in the days of His flesh, for it is written: “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9 – NKJV). Now I ask you, ‘Did Jesus own any luxurious houses on the earth?’ No, He didn't. The King of the Jews did not live in a royal palace, nor did He wear expensive clothes or live in luxury, for He said that “those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces” (Luke 7:25 - NIV). So Jesus Christ did not live in a royal palace, yet He was the King of Israel. He could have lived as a King, but He didn't live as a King; He preferred to make Himself of no reputation and to take the form of a bondservant so that He might serve.

The King of Israel in the days of His flesh was not dressed in purple nor did He wear a royal crown. He wore modest garments and a modest tunic which “was without seam, woven from the top in one piece” (John 19:23 – NKJV). The roman soldiers clothed Him with purple, as it is written: “Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple ….” (Mark 15:16-17 – NKJV) to mock Him, and they put a crown on His head …. but it was a crown of thorns, as it is written: “And they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head ….” (Mark 15:17 – NKJV).

He was the King of the Jews, however after He fed thousands of people with only five loaves and two fish, when He “perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone” (John 6:15 – NKJV). He did not seek the honor that comes from men, but the honor that comes from the Father, who sent Him. If He had sought the honor that comes from men, when He perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, he would not have departed again to the mountain by Himself alone.

Jesus entered Jerusalem not sitting on a white horse nor sitting on a royal litter borne by His disciples, but sitting on a donkey, as it is written: “Then Jesus, when He had found a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written: “Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt” (John 12:14-15 - NKJV).

Jesus not only proclaimed that He was humble in heart, but also showed His humility. He never set His mind on high things, but He associated with the humble. I say it again, He lived poor; yes brothers, it is so, for He did not have even two-drachmas to pay the temple tax. For He said to Peter: “Go to the lake and throw out your line. Take the first fish you catch; open its mouth and you will find a four-drachma coin. Take it and give it to them for my tax and yours” (Matthew 17:27 – NIV).

Jesus was poor and He could have become a very rich man if He had taught and healed for money, but He, unlike these preachers who are misled and of corrupt minds, did not think that godliness was a means to financial gain. For He pursued “godliness with contentment” (1 Timothy 6:6 – NIV), leaving us an example so that we should follow His steps.
Did Jesus Christ, being poor, not have a great faith in God? Was Jesus Christ a man of little faith, then, because He did not own anything on earth? Did He not exercise faith in God’s promises perhaps? Was Jesus outside God’s will? Certainly not, for He had a great faith in God and He showed His faith by working a great many signs and wonders and powerful works in the name of His Father, and by not asking for money, and also by laying down His life for us. The Righteous One lived by faith, while these idle talkers and rebels show their lack of faith because they ask for money as the beggars do; some of them even weep when they ask for money; some others curse those who give no money or a little money to their ministry. These people are merchants, who sell their sermons; each one of them fixes the price of his sermons (the more famous he is the bigger the price is). Where is this great faith in God they claim to have, who live in unrestrained luxury and give themselves over to the pleasures of life? They say that they trust in God, but actually they trust in their crooked ways and in their riches that they have heaped up by oppressing the saints with the passages of the Scripture which speak about giving. They have robbed the sheep of the Lord, snatching their money out of their hands through the most various pretexts; they have heaped up many riches through fraud, and then they dare to say, ‘Look how God has blessed me! Do you see it? The Lord honors those who honor Him!’ and many other beautiful but false words. And the simple believe their words, not knowing that these preachers have stolen many desperate people of their money. These preachers speak of their material things as if God gave them to them because of their upright and godly conduct; they say they are like Abraham, but that’s not true, for they are like Balaam. Abraham was called the friend of God, but these people are not friends of God but rather they are enemies of God, because they are friends of the world, as it is written: “Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4 – NKJV).

As we saw before, prosperity preachers assert that every Christian should become rich, so that he may give Christ a successful image! So I ask you, ‘What about Christ then, who lived poor? Shall we say that He did not give God a successful image? Certainly not! For He stated, “I honor My Father” (John 8:49 – NKJV). He was the Son of the Possessor of heaven and earth, and even though He lived poor He honored God. How? By keeping His commandments, that is to say, by living soberly, righteously and godly. So it follows that a Christian can honor God even if he is poor. There is nothing wrong with being poor, for even the only Begotten Son of God was poor in the days of His flesh. What matters is the keeping of God’s commandments, and among them there is no commandment which says somehow, ‘You must become rich!!’

However, while the Scripture clearly teaches that Jesus was poor, some of the prosperity teachers teach that Jesus lived in great prosperity (for instance, Benny Hinn stated, ‘The Lord was not poor. You could not be poor and feed twelve apostles and keep them alive!’): the reason is obvious, because by thinking like this, the believer is then free to receive his or her rich inheritance. Yes, because one of the reasons why some believers fail to prosper (that is, to become rich) ‘is because their subconscious mind has been conditioned into accepting the tradition that Jesus was poor; and it is as a result of such negative conditioning that building faith for prosperity sometimes fails’. And do you know what is the biblical proof that Jesus was rich?

The garment that He wore at His crucifixion, which — according to these preachers — was a custom-made designer garment, the kind that kings and rich merchants wore: that’s why the soldiers who crucified Jesus cast lots over His garment!!!

Let me refute briefly what they assert. First of all, His tunic was not expensive because Jesus Himself stated that those who wear expensive clothes are in palaces (cf. Luke 7:25 – NIV) and He did not live in a palace. He did not own even a house, for He had “nowhere to lay His head” (Matthew 8:20 – NKJV). Second, it is inconceivable to think that a man whose heart was humble wore a custom-made designer garment. Third, it is a proven fact that the kind of tunic Jesus wore was not particularly unusual in Israel in the first century. Fourth, the practice of casting lots for the garment was a common tradition. So there was absolutely nothing particularly out of the ordinary about the clothes Jesus wore. Fifth, if Jesus had been rich and had lived in great prosperity, He would not have borrowed boats, a colt to ride into Jerusalem, a house for Passover, and He would not have been buried in a borrowed tomb. Don’t you think so?
The apostles were poor yet they made many rich.

The apostles also were poor, for Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he and his fellow workers were poor yet they made many rich, they had nothing yet they possessed all things (cf. 2 Corinthians 6:10).

They were poor materially, but they made many rich spiritually; by them the Church was edified, and by the writings of Paul, who was poor and had nothing, the Church on the face of all the earth is still edified, made rich and comforted. We can't say the same thing about these so-called preachers, who destroy the vineyard of the Lord for they do not care about it, in that they all look out for their own interests. Of course, they are rich materially but they are poor spiritually, and through them the saints are not edified, either by their words or by their arid yet much expensive books, which speak above all of material prosperity, or rather of the way Christians can make money.

So the apostles of the Lord, though they were poor they made many rich. How did they make the saints rich? What kind of precious things did they impart to the saints?

Let us take Paul as an example. He said to the Romans: “But I know that when I come to you, I shall come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:29 – NKJV). Therefore he was convinced that Christ would bless that Church through him (for he would come to them in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ). Let us see then how Christ would bless that Church. At the beginning of the epistle Paul said to the saints of Rome: “For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established” (Romans 1:11 – NKJV). We learn from these words that Paul made the saints rich imparting to them some spiritual gifts (that means that the Holy Spirit imparted through Paul some gifts to the saints according to the will of God). God, through the laying on of the hands of Paul, gave the gift of the Holy Spirit to the saints (Paul said to Timothy: “I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands” 2 Timothy 1:6 – NKJV), and some gifts of the Spirit (of course, according to will of God) as in the case of those disciples at Ephesus (who were about twelve in all), as it is written: “And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spoke with tongues and prophesied” (Acts 19:6 – NKJV). Furthermore, the Lord healed the sick through Paul (at Ephesus “God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11-12). Therefore, through the ministry of Paul, many sick people received their healing, which is a blessing of Christ, which cannot be bought with money. Paul enriched the saints in wisdom and knowledge because He delivered to them the wisdom and the knowledge He had received from the Lord Himself; we ourselves recognize that we have been enriched in wisdom and knowledge through the epistles of Paul. Isaiah says that “wisdom and knowledge are a rich store of salvation” (Isaiah 33:6 – Italian Bible Riveduta Version. The Italian words are, “La saviezza e la conoscenza sono una ricchezza di liberazione”). That's why the apostles, to whom God gave wisdom and knowledge, were able to enrich those who listened to them.

I want to remind you, brethren, that when we speak of Paul, we speak of a man of God who never sought his own nor the material things which belonged to the saints, for he said to the Philippians: “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account” (Philippians 4:17 – NKJV). How many people can say the same thing today? God only knows. Certainly only a few can say the same words. Some preachers don’t seek at all the fruit that abounds to the account of the believers; for they seek the material things which belong to the believers: they are never content with what they have, the more they have, the more they wish to have. Among these preachers are those who preach the prosperity message, who show that they do not want to enrich the saints, for they want to become rich with the material things that belong to the saints. These preachers, instead of desiring the spiritual gifts, desire the gold and
the silver which belong to the saints; these preachers, instead of building up the house of God, want to build their personal mansions and their own empire on the earth. They do the opposite of what the apostles did; on the other hand it can’t be otherwise, for these preachers concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck. Go and see with your own eyes what kind of life these preachers live, and you will realize that these preachers are not interested in edifying the Church nor do they desire the spiritual gifts, for they set their mind on earthly things and they are greedy for money.

The apostle Peter also was poor yet he made many rich. Let us take as an example what the Lord wrought through Peter at the gate of the temple which was called Beautiful. It is written: “And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God” (Acts 3:2-8). As you can see, Peter did not have any gold or silver to give to that beggar, but he had some spiritual gifts which he ministered to the others so that they might be blessed. In the above mentioned case, the Lord gave a complete healing to that lame through the apostle Peter. This incident leads us to reflect upon the importance of the faith and of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. It is certainly a good thing to give alms, for this is the will of God, however it is also a good thing to desire the gifts of the Holy Spirit, so that the Church may be edified and the sick may be healed by the power of God. Instead, when one begins to set his mind on earthly things he ceases to desire the gifts of the Spirit, and thus he does not want to edify the Church any longer. Paul said to the Corinthians concerning the spiritual gifts: “Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church” (1 Corinthians 14:12 – NIV); whereas those who preach Mammon (among whom are the proponents of the prosperity message) exhort you to excel in more and more material things. They want to make you want to become rich materially, but they do not want to make you want to become rich spiritually. They often say that at the beginning they were poor and afterward they became rich; however the tragic reality is that some of them at the beginning of their ministry were rich spiritually, and afterward they become poor and miserable.

Brothers, that’s what happens to all those who want to become rich. Therefore let us take heed to ourselves lest we find ourselves in the same spiritual condition of the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans.

However, as in the case of Jesus, many prosperity preachers assert that the apostles too were rich and lived in great prosperity. Fred Price, for instance, says, ‘The apostles were businessmen, they were rich men, and had plenty of money’. Otherwise, how could they have travelled around for 3 years without employment!!! This assertion – as I have already proved - is absolutely contrary to the Scriptures, and it proves that these preachers are conceited and understand nothing. The apostles were poor for they followed the footsteps of Jesus, while they have become rich for they have followed the footsteps of Balaam, who loved the wages of wickedness. Finally, I want to inform Mr. Price that the apostles could travel around for 3 years without employment for the simple reason that the women who followed Jesus supported both Jesus and His apostles out of their own means (cf. Luke 8:3 – NIV).

We have been enriched by Christ

Let us look now at the things that make rich all those who have them. First of all it must be said that “Christ is all and in all” (Colossians 3:11 - NKJV) and in Him we are complete for “His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3 – NKJV).

Let us look now at the things that make rich all those who have them.
Christ is the treasure hidden in a field that we have found; He is the pearl of great price which we have found; He is our gold. Jesus Christ is the heavenly gift that God gave us; He is the true God and eternal life. Jesus is also our peace and our hope, therefore anyone who has received Christ possesses everything, and even if he is poor in this present age, he is rich in the sight of God.

- The spiritual gifts, the ministry gifts, and the knowledge of the things of God

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, that you were enriched in every thing by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, so that you come short in no gift ….” (1 Corinthians 1:4-7 – NKJV). We learn from these words that the gifts of the Spirit, the ministry gifts and any spiritual knowledge of the things of God are precious spiritual things, thus anyone who has them is rich.

- Faith

James says: “Has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him?” (James 2:5 – NKJV) God has chosen those who are poor in this present age to enrich them in faith, therefore the faith believers have received from God (as it is written: “It is the gift of God” Ephesians 2:8 – NKJV) is a precious thing, which makes rich all those who have it.

Peter also confirms that our faith is precious, for he says at the beginning of his second epistle: “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours” (2 Peter 1:1 – NIV). Brothers, you must understand that not all have the faith you have obtained (as it is written: “Not all have faith” 2 Thessalonians 3:2 – NKJV), and this faith is of great value in the sight of God. Therefore do not throw it away, or you will throw away the salvation of your soul and will condemn yourselves.

However, know this, that there is also a false faith, which is of no value because it is false. From the words of James we learn also that those who have believed (being heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ) are heirs of the Kingdom of Christ and God, thus even if they are poor materially they are rich and happy. Jesus confirmed the happiness of the poor who had believed on Him, when, looking at His disciples, He said: “Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20 – NIV). We proclaim, therefore, that the saints are happy and rich because God has made them heirs of His kingdom.

- God’s wisdom.

It is written: “Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding; for her proceeds are better than the profits of silver, and her gain than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things you may desire cannot compare with her” (Proverbs 3:13-15 – NKJV). Now since God said to man: “Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom. And to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28 – NKJV), anyone who fears God has God’s wisdom (for the fear of the Lord produces wisdom), but anyone who does not fear God does not have wisdom. Oh, how precious is the fear of God! It is indeed his treasure, as it is written: “The fear of the Lord is a treasure from him” (Isaiah 33:6 – NIV).

Solomon was a very wise man for he had much wisdom, but he was a very rich man as well. The riches he had were great indeed; suffice it to say that “the weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, besides what the travelling merchants and traders brought. And all the kings of Arabia and governors of the country brought gold and silver to Solomon” (2 Chronicles 9:13-14 – NKJV), and that in his days silver “was accounted as nothing” ( 2 Chronicles 9:20 – NKJV) for “the king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones” (1 Kings 10:27 – NKJV). Yet Solomon said: “There is gold and a multitude of rubies, but the lips of knowledge are a precious jewel” (Proverbs 20:15 – NKJV), and again: “How much better to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen rather than silver” (Proverbs 16:16 – NKJV). That was Solomon’s way of thinking, who surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. However, today not all speak like Solomon, for even among the Church some consider riches more precious than God’s wisdom, and they are greatly
mistaken. Those who think that material riches are better than wisdom have strayed from the faith; those who exalt material things above God’s wisdom (one can realize this when he hears them) are men of corrupt minds, who do not fear God. Beware of these people, lest you also become corrupt and stray from the faith.

**The Word of God is much more precious than material riches**

It is written: “The Law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver” (Psalm 119:72 – NKJV), and: “Therefore I love Your commandments more than gold, yes, than fine gold” (Psalm 119:127 – NKJV), and again: “The judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold” (Psalm 19:9-10 - NKJV). You see, brothers, those who love gold and silver are not satisfied with gold nor with silver, while those who love the Word of God are satisfied with it, because it comforts them when they are downcast, it strengthens them when they are weak, it rebukes them so that they might not be filled with troubles, it guides them in every circumstance of their life and it teaches them in all wisdom. Money is not able to do what the Word of God does; therefore, even though it is useful to all of us, it must not be considered more important than the Word of God. How rich are those who let the Word of God dwell richly in their heart! But how poor are those who don’t let the Word of Christ dwell in their heart! They love money more than the Word of God, what a folly! Their wallet is full of money, but their heart is completely devoid or almost devoid of the Word of Christ. They want to keep their money diligently, but they don’t want to keep the Word of God within them, for they no longer take their delight in it and they no longer pay attention to it. They no longer meditate on the Holy Scriptures nor do they study them; no, for they now study and meditate on the way they can deceive their neighbour in order to become rich as quickly as possible. They are running after luxury, or rather they are running after the wind, together with those who have a stubborn heart like theirs; they are poor and miserable, they show that they are and want to be poor and miserable.

**A good reputation and esteem**

It is written: “A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold” (Proverbs 22:1 – NIV). Those who have a good reputation and are esteemed by their neighbour are those who fear God and keep His commandments; to them a good reputation and esteem are more important than riches and money, and thus they prefer to have a little with the fear of God and with a good reputation, rather than to have vast revenues without justice and with a bad reputation.

I want you to know that those who desire to be rich do not have a good reputation nor are they esteemed, for they “fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9 – NKJV). That’s what happens to those who cease to be content with what they have, and begin to love money. Therefore beware of all these preachers, who are greedy for money and who do not care about a good reputation and esteem at all, lest your heart turn aside to their ways and thus you become corrupt like them.

These preachers, through their vain words, do not speak well of the believers who are poor, for they deceive people into believing that those believers who are poor are men of little faith or people who don’t know God’s promises or who don’t exercise faith in them. However I want to remind you that in the epistle to the Hebrews are written the following words about the ancients: “They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented – of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth” (Hebrews 11:37-38 – NKJV). Here is how those people were clothed (with sheepskins and goatskins and not with soft garments); here is what their social condition was (destitute, and not millionaires); here is how they were treated by the world (they were afflicted and tormented, and they were not given any prize); here is where they were compelled to wander (in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth). But do you know what the Scripture says about these people, of whom the world was not worthy? It says: “And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise” (Hebrews 11:39 – NKJV). The NIV reads:
“They were all commended for their faith ….” Therefore, if on the one hand they were destitute, afflicted and tormented, on the other hand they pleased God through their faith and their conduct.

● Good works
Paul told Timothy to command those who were rich in this present age “to be rich in good deeds” (1 Timothy 6:18 – NIV), therefore those who are zealous for good works and abound in them are rich in the sight of God even if they are poor in the sight of men.

Know this, that those who do not forget to entertain strangers and to share live as wise, and they lay up for themselves treasures in heaven, and therefore they are rich in the sight of God, even if they may be poor in the sight of men. Paul made known to the Corinthians the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia to minister to the poor among the saints. Here is what Paul wrote to them: “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:1-4 – NKJV).

In the light of the above mentioned passages of the Scriptures, then, there are some poor among the saints who are rich in the sight of God, because they have treasures in heaven; and since one lays up for himself treasures in heaven by giving alms and doing every kind of good work, we must conclude that these poor are rich in faith, because by putting the Word of God into practice they show that they fully trust the Word of God. Do you think that a man of little faith would sell what he has and give alms, as Jesus said: “Sell what you have and give alms” (Luke 12:33 – NKJV)? Do you think that a believer who is poor, who gives beyond his ability, has a little faith in God? Is it not those rich who give out of their wealth those who show that they have a little faith in God? Do your remember that poor widow who put into the treasury just two mites? What did Jesus say about her? He said that she had put in more than all the others. Why? For she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on, whereas the rich had put in offerings for God out of their abundance. That poor widow demonstrated her faith in God and Her love toward the Lord in that way. That poor woman was really rich in faith and in good works!

Therefore it is not true at all that those who are poor have not a great faith in God; I am sure that when we are in heaven we will see that many brethren who were poor on the earth will be very rich, and some who were rich on the earth will have less treasures than those who were poor. So we will rejoice greatly in the Lord for God will manifest His very high righteousness before our eyes; within a short time we will see this with our own eyes.

● A gentle and quiet spirit
Peter said to the wives: “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight” (1 Peter 3:3-4 – NIV).

A woman whose heart is adorned with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit is a rich woman, for she has something that is of great worth; something which is more precious than golden jewelry and costly clothing. The haughty women want to show that they are rich by wearing golden jewelry and costly clothing; while the woman who fears Gods shows that she is rich in the Lord by pursuing what is good for all and peace with all people. Therefore, according
to the Scripture, between a rich woman clothed with fine clothes and adorned with very expensive golden jewelry, yet at the same time with a crafty heart, contentious and angry, and a poor woman yet strong and virtuous, who wears modest clothing and has a heart adorned with a gentle and quiet spirit, the latter is the richest.

● The reproach of Christ is very precious

These words may seem strange and incredible, but actually they are supported by the Bible. For the Scripture says: “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he looked to the reward” (Hebrews 11:24-26 – NKJV).

As you can see, Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to be afflicted with the people of God, for he esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. We also must esteem the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of this world, because the reproach of Christ will be richly rewarded by God. Blessed and rich are then all those who are reproached for the name of Christ! Those who are outside think that these words of ours are absurd and that we are out of our mind; however, fear not, for they are confirmed by Jesus Christ, who still says to us: “Blessed are you when men hate you, and whey exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets” (Luke 6:22-23 – NKJV).

However, it must be said that today not all agree with Moses, for some esteem wealth greater riches than the reproach of Christ. Those who have such a mind must become fool that they may become wise and rich in God's sight.

● The trial of our faith

The apostle Peter said: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:3-7).

Brothers, the trail we face in Christ, through which our faith is tested, is much more precious than gold which perishes, though it is refined by fire. Now I will show you that riches are less precious than the trial of our faith, by comparing what wealth produces with what our affliction produces.

Riches do these things: they make many friends but they produce many troubles and sorrows and worries to those who long for them and gain them; in addition, they deceive those who trust in them and keep the Word of God from bearing fruit in them, and eventually riches drown them in destruction and perdition. This is the reason why Solomon said that “whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income” (Ecclesiastes 5:10 – NIV) and that “riches do not profit in the day of wrath” (Proverbs 11:4 – NKJV). What does our affliction produce, instead? Paul says that “tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope:” (Romans 5:3-4).

As you can see, affliction produces directly patience and indirectly experience and hope. James confirmed the words of Paul, saying: “The testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing” (James 1:3-4 – NKJV). By afflictions we are perfected by God and thus we are bound to thank God for them, for they produce patience in us, which is so precious in our life and which we all need in order to receive what God has promised to us. If afflictions did not produce some good to us, Paul would not have said: “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake” (2 Corinthians 12:10 – NKJV). However, he said those words because he experienced the power of God in the midst of his afflictions and through
them he was strengthened by God; so he could say: “For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Corinthians 12:10 – NKJV).

Have you never read the Scripture which says: “He who oppresses the poor makes him rich” (Proverbs 22:16 – Italian Bible Riveduta Version)? Do you know why the poor becomes rich when he is oppressed? Because his affliction produces patience and an eternal weight of glory, as it is written: “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Corinthians 4:17 – NKJV). Yes, for our afflictions work for us even glory. This was confirmed also by Peter in this way: “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). These are the reasons why we can say with all boldness that the proceeds of affliction are better than the profits of gold, which is refined by fire.

One of the peculiarities of those who preach the prosperity message is this: they do not speak about afflictions and persecutions, as if they were things which believers are not called to experience during their life. However, afflictions and persecutions are experienced daily by all those who want to live godly in Christ Jesus, therefore we cannot help speaking about them. If we did not speak about the afflictions and persecutions which every believer is called to endure for Christ’s sake, we would lead believers to believe that the life of those who turn to the Lord is a life without afflictions. The reason why these preachers (or rather, most of them) do not speak about these things is that they think that a Christian should not suffer for righteousness’ sake (and furthermore they know that people prefer to hear about wealth). However, what kind of Christian is a Christian who does not suffer? How can these preachers preach this heresy, when Jesus said: “In the world you will have tribulation …. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 16:33; 15:20 – NKJV), and the apostles said that “we must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22 – NKJV)? That the saints are not called to suffer in this world can’t be demonstrated through the Scriptures nor through the facts; rather the Scriptures and reality show exactly the opposite. Let me quote, for instance, the following words Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwellingplace; And labour, working with our own hands: being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we suffer it: Being defamed, we intreat: we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day” (1 Corinthians 4:11-13). Do they not show that those who preach the Word of God have many enemies and endure all kinds of persecutions? However, those who preach the prosperity message do not like these words. Their Gospel is devoid of afflictions, their sermons are about success and money; on the other hand, how could they preach that we must deny ourselves, when they themselves have not yet denied themselves? Their message is attractive and seductive for this reason also: because it is devoid of these subjects. Every message which does not put emphasis on the afflictions which a believer must endure on earth will always find many people willing to accept it, for today almost nobody wants to hear that we must suffer for the Gospel’s sake. Almost all want to hear only that God loves us, that He will meet all our needs, that He is good and ready to forgive all those who come to Him. Furthermore, if one adds to these words that he who comes to the Lord won’t have any problems any longer, and that God will make him prosper financially and He will allow him to live like a king’s son, then the message will achieve much more success.

Beloved, let no one of these idle talkers deceive you, for Jesus said: “And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:38), and: “So likewise, whosoever be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). Whereas these preachers would like you to follow the Lord without you taking your cross and denying yourselves. Know this, that unless one denies himself and takes his cross, he cannot follow the Lord. For the Christian path is full of sufferings and sacrifices. As for me, I have not found the footprints of Christ in a comfortable path, where there are no necessities nor persecutions nor distresses, but in a narrow path where one must endure a great struggle with sufferings and many afflictions every day because of righteousness. This is the path in which I
began to walk, and in which I want to walk with my Lord till the end; the comfortable paths without persecutions but with the pleasures of life have nothing to do with the holy way; do not walk in them for they lead far from the Lord and His commandments.

Being poor in this world is not a dishonour

Let us now come to one of the statements which is made very often by the prosperity preachers, which is this: ‘God does not want any of His children to be poor, but He wants all His children to be wealthy.’

According to the Scripture, there will always be poor in the midst of the people of God; there were poor people among the saints of old, and there will be poor people among the saints in this generation as well. Now why are there some poor believers in the midst of God’s people? The reason is that not all believers live in the same country and enjoy the same favourable conditions from a climatic and economic and political standpoint. Let me explain this concept. The Scripture says: “The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11 – NKJV). This means that it is not sufficient to be swift to win a race, nor strong to win a battle, nor wise to have bread, nor men of understanding to have riches, nor men of skill to obtain favor, for all men depend on time and circumstances. Let us see now through the Scriptures how the economic situation of a country changes when circumstances change.

● During the life of Jacob it came to pass that God “called for a famine in the land; He destroyed all the provision of bread” (Psalm 105:16 – NKJV). God sent that famine, which was very severe, upon all the earth because He had decided to send Jacob and his household to Egypt. The going down of Israel to Egypt (where Joseph in the meanwhile had become governor of Egypt and where there was plenty of grain) had been foretold by God to Abraham, and God used that severe famine to cause Israel to go down to Egypt. Now bear in mind that when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt he said to his sons: “Indeed I have heard that there is grain in Egypt; go down to that place and buy for us there, that we may live and not die” (Genesis 42:2 – NKJV). As you can see, Jacob, who was a man whom God had blessed by giving him large flocks and many oxen, donkeys and camels, was near death because at a certain point he did not have any bread any longer (and all this came to pass by the will of God). In this case the land of Canaan was plunged into poverty by God’s will, and Jacob took the consequences. However it must be remembered that God saved the life of Jacob and his household from death by a great deliverance worked through Joseph (for Joseph, when he made himself known to his brothers, said to them: “God sent me before you to preserve a posterity for you in the earth, and to save your lives by a great deliverance” (Genesis 45:7 – NKJV). God strikes the countries on the earth by not sending rain on them, and when this happens abundance comes short and poverty starts, for the earth withers and does not produce its fruit any longer, and the animals die of thirst. When this happens, the believers who live in that country take the consequences for they find themselves in need.

In the days of the prophet Elijah, God did not send rain on the land of Israel for three and a half years, for the children of Israel had forsaken the Lord, had killed His prophets and turned to idols. God sent that period of drought to punish the children of Israel, and since Elijah at that time lived in Israel he too find himself in need. However God met his needs. At the beginning He sent Elijah to hide by the Brook Cherith, where for a certain period of time He sent to him some ravens which brought him some bread and meat in the morning as well in the evening; then, when the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land, God sent Elijah to a widow who lived in Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to whom God had commanded to provide for him. Elijah was an upright and holy man who obeyed God, yet he found himself in need by the will of God, because of a drought. Elijah did not find himself in need because he disobeyed to God and thus God punished him; nor did he find himself in need because he had forsaken the Lord and God cursed him. He was a holy man who was very zealous for the Lord and in the midst of the
distress in which he found himself God worked some wonders for him; first He sent to him some ravens to bring him meat and bread, and afterward at Zarephath He kept the bin of flour from using up, and the jar of oil from running dry till the day the Lord sent rain on the earth (cf. 1 Kings 17:1-16).

- After God delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of Pharaoh, He made a covenant with them, according to which He promised that He would bless them if they would obey Him, keeping His commandments. However God told the Israelites that He would curse them and made them poor if they would forsake Him and turn to idols. That’s what happened to the children of Israel when they cast the law of God behind their back. So God made them become poor because of their wickedness. Here is what the book of Judges says about the economical condition in which the children of Israel found themselves after they rebelled against God: “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of Midian seven years. And the hand of Midian prevailed against Israel: and because of the Midianites the children of Israel made them the dens which are in the mountains, and caves, and strong holds. And so it was, when Israel had sown, that the Midianites came up, and the Amalekites, and the children of the east, even they came up against them; And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth, till thou come unto Gaza, and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. For they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude; for both they and their camels were without number: and they entered into the land to destroy it. And Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites; and the children of Israel cried unto the LORD” (Judges 6:1-6). As you can see, in this case God sent the enemies of the children of Israel to ravage the land of Israel because of the wickedness of the children of Israel. Therefore the children of Israel became poor because God made them poor (remember that it is written: “The Lord makes poor…” 1 Samuel 2:7 – NKJV).

God still punishes many countries and make them poor by sending foreign armies against them which take hold of their material goods, their flocks and their crops; when this happens the believers, who live in these countries, also take the consequences for they see their material goods run short. When this happens we can say that poverty comes by the will of God, and therefore the believers who live in the country punished by God begin to be in need by the will of God. Know this, that when God wants to teach us to suffer need (Paul was taught by God “both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need” Philippians 4:12 – NKJV) He accomplishes His purpose and no one can prevent Him from doing it. Therefore, know this, that God can use even a war to teach us, who live in Italy, to suffer need.

- God can appoint a despot over a country to make the people of that country poor; and in this case also the Church of God which is in that country would take the consequences, and would find itself in need.

In ancient times God appointed king Saul, son of Kis, over the children of Israel, and He made known to the Israelites the behaviour of Saul even before he became king. Here is what the prophet Samuel said to the Israelites at God’s command: “This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons, and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take the tenth of your seed, and of your vineyards, and give to his officers, and to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work” (1 Samuel 8:11-16). That Saul oppressed the children of Israel is confirmed by the fact that while he persecuted David “every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him [David]; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men” (1 Samuel 22:2).
• If a dictator becomes the ruler of a country and the saints begin to be persecuted and put in prison, it will happen that many families will be deprived of their breadwinners and thus they will find themselves in need. This is what happens in many countries where Christians are persecuted: the husbands who are put in prison for the Gospel's sake are no longer able to provide for those of their household and thus they begin to experience poverty. We know that when the saints are persecuted they are humbled by God and in the midst of their distresses they begin to demonstrate toward one another a sincere and fervent love, that love which comes short during the years of great plenty and freedom because of selfishness and haughtiness. Believers, when they are persecuted, begin to experience all kinds of financial straits, but they begin also to help those who are the most persecuted. If the governing authorities began to persecute the saints by plundering their goods because of the Gospel, the believers who have plenty of goods would begin to be in need by the will of God; however they would accept all this joyfully (the Scripture says: “You ... joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and enduring possession for yourselves in heaven” Hebrews 10:34 – NKJV).

However, while on the one hand these unfavourable circumstances produce poverty, on the other hand they give those believers who have plenty of goods an opportunity to do good to those believers who find themselves in need; therefore, after all, these hostile circumstances work together for good to those who love God.

Is it then normal or not that among God’s people there are some believers who are poor? According to what the Scripture teaches, we should not be surprised at the presence of some poor among the saints, rather I would like to say that there must be some poor among the saints, for Jesus said to His disciples: “The poor you have with you always ...” (John 12:8 – NKJV), and in the law it is written: “The poor will never cease from the land ....” (Deuteronomy 15:11 – NKJV).

Now let us see whether it is true that God wants us to become rich for it is not for the saints to be poor, as the prosperity preachers say.

First of all, it must be said that if things were so, Jesus did not do the will of God for He lived poor. Did Jesus, who was the Son of the King of kings, dishonor God through His way of life? Certainly not! Otherwise He could not have said to the Jews: “I honor My Father” (John 8:49 – NKJV). Jesus knew the will of His Father, why then did He not wish to become rich? Why did He, who had a great faith in God, not ask God for riches nor did He ask God to make Him live in luxury as was fitting for a King’s son? The reason was that He came into the world not to do His own will but the will of His Father, as He Himself said: “I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38 – NKJV).

Furthermore if we asserted that God wants us to become rich, that would mean that we ought to desire to become rich for this is the will of God for us. However, that would also mean that God wants us to fall into temptation. Why do I say that? Because the Scripture says that “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9 – NKJV). Therefore, since God wants us to stand we must conclude that it is not His will for us to be rich in this present age (why don’t these preachers say that it is the will of God for us to be rich in the world to come?)

However, there is something else which needs to be said: if it is God’s will for all of us to be rich, then we have the right to ask God for plenty of riches, being confident that He hears us, for John says: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us” (1 John 5:14 – NKJV). But if things were so the Scripture would be set aside which says: “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3 – NKJV). As you can see, the words of these preachers are nullified by the Scripture unequivocally.

Now I want you to pay attention to the following words Paul wrote about the saints of Thessalonica, so that you may realize that – unlike what is said by the prosperity preachers - to be poor is not a scandal nor a disgrace for the doctrine of God. Paul said to the Corinthians
about the churches of Macedonia (among which was the Church of the Thessalonians): “Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints” (2 Corinthians 8:1-4 – NKJV)

Therefore, the saints of Thessalonica were poor, for Paul referring to the churches of Macedonia said that they were extremely poor. Now if being poor had been a disgrace or if God had wanted them to become rich or if they had been outside God’s will, Paul would have said that to them somehow in the epistles he wrote to them, but nowhere in his epistles to the Thessalonians Paul hinted at such a thing. Rather it must be said that the saints of Thessalonica, even though they were extremely poor, were an example to the believers of Macedonia (who were poor) as well as to the believers of Achaia, such as the Corinthians, who abounded in material goods. This is the reason why Paul and his fellow workers thanked God for the saints of Thessalonica. Listen to what Paul wrote to them: “We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure” (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4). As you can see, those brothers, even though they were poor materially, were rich in faith and in good works, and in addition to this they kept the faith in all their tribulations and because of this the apostles boasted of those believers. According to Paul and his fellow workers, the saints of Thessalonica conducted themselves in a manner worthy of God, and thus they pleased God, for Paul wrote them: “Finally, brothers, we instructed you how to live in order to please God, as in fact you are living. Now we ask you and urge you in the Lord Jesus to do this more and more” (1 Thessalonians 4:1 – NIV). What kind of disgrace were those believers to the doctrine of God because of their poverty? Furthermore, I say it again, if it had been God’s will for those believers to be rich, Paul would have told them. However Paul did not write to them anything about this so called God’s will for all Christians to be materially rich.

All the sermons of the prosperity preachers are about prosperity, which is so important for them that they harass their listeners with their sermons on prosperity. Listen, do you think that the apostle Paul, whom God by His mercy enabled to write so many commandments to the saints of all the churches of Gentiles, whether rich or poor, would have omitted to speak of such an important thing? In addition, if the extreme poverty of those believers had been a disgrace to the Gospel, Paul would not have written to them: “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy” (1 Thessalonians 2:19-20). The point is that those poor brothers of Thessalonica were an example to many believers, therefore they honored the doctrine of God; while we have to say that these prosperity preachers together with their followers are not an example to the believers, but they are a scandal and a stumbling block, because they are haughty, presumptuous and given to the pleasures of life.

How can they say that they are followers of the Master, when they talk and live in a manner which is clearly contrary to the way Jesus talked and lived in the days of His flesh? They have no shame at all, they do not even know how to blush, their glory is indeed in their shame.

All our ways depend on God

Wisdom says: “The race is not to the swift ..... nor riches to men of understanding .... But time and chance happen to them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11 – NKJV). This is true, for a believer may become rich even though he does not desire to be rich; however this happens in his life when and if God wills.

Let us see some of the ways in which a believer can become rich, even though he does not desire to be rich.
A believer can become rich by inheriting riches. It is written: “Houses and riches are an inheritance from fathers” (Proverbs 19:14 – NKJV). Therefore a believer who does not set his mind on earthly things and does not desire to be rich at all, can become rich all of a sudden because of some riches bequeathed him by his father or by his grandfathers. In the Scripture we have the example of Isaac, who inherited all the things which belonged to his father Abraham, as it is written: “And Abraham gave all that he had to Isaac” (Genesis 25:5 – NKJV).

A believer – who is upright - can become rich when God Himself makes his work prosper wonderfully, that is, in a supernatural way. The Scripture says: “Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: For he had possession of flocks, and possessions of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him” (Genesis 26:12-14). As you can see, Isaac sowed and in the same year he reaped a hundredfold. This means that God worked a miracle on behalf of Isaac, for in order to reap a hundredfold you need a special intervention of God. God was with Isaac, and even the Philistines, who envied him, saw that, for one day they said to him: “We have certainly seen that the Lord is with you” (Genesis 26:28 – NKJV).

In the case of Jacob also it must be said that it was God who made him rich. When Jacob left for Padan Aram he crossed over the Jordan river with his staff, and when he returned from that place to the land of Canaan he owned large flocks, and many camels and donkeys. Let us see how he became so rich. Jacob was with Laban for twenty years during which he served Laban fourteen years for his two daughters, Leah and Rachel, whom he married, and six years for the flock of Laban. At the end of those twenty years God commanded Jacob to return to the land of his fathers; so he called Leah and Rachel and said to them: “I see your father's countenance, that it is not toward me as before; but the God of my father hath been with me. And ye know that with all my power I have served your father. And your father hath deceived me, and changed my wages ten times; but God suffered him not to hurt me. If he said thus, The speckled shall be thy wages; then all the cattle bare speckled: and if he said thus, The ringstraked shall be thy hire; then bare all the cattle ringstraked. Thus God hath taken away the cattle of your father, and given them to me. And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled, and grisled. And the angel of God spake unto me in a dream, saying, Jacob: And I said, Here am I. And he said, Lift up now thine eyes, and see, all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ringstraked, speckled, and grisled: for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee” (Genesis 31:5-12). As you can see, God saw that Laban deceived Jacob and He took away the livestock of Laban and gave them to Jacob; that’s what God worked on behalf of Jacob. God still works in this way, for He takes away the goods of the wicked and gives them to those who are good in His sight, and there is nobody who can keep Him from doing this. The following passages of the Scripture confirm this: “The wealth of the sinner is stored up for the righteous” (Proverbs 13:22 – NKJV); “One who increases his possessions by usury and extortion gathers it for him who will pity the poor” (Proverbs 28:8 - NKJV); “To the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God” (Ecclesiastes 2:26 – NKJV).

Job also was a very rich man but at the same time he was upright and just: let us see how he came into possession of his wealth. The Scripture says: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east” (Job 1:1-3). Now when we speak of Job we often remember his riches but not his integrity, and this is a mistake for we should remember both things for they are closely linked together, for he became so rich because he feared God. Job was an upright man who feared God and shunned evil; he pursued righteousness sharing in his goods with those who were in need, for he caused the widow’s heart to sing for joy, he helped the orphans, he was
eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and he was a father to the poor, he entertained strangers, and furthermore he had a blameless and exemplar conduct. God saw the way his servant Job conducted himself and He blessed him and the work of his hands. Even Satan had to acknowledge that God had blessed Job, for he said to God: “You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land” (Job 1:10 – NKJV). However Job conducted himself uprightly not only when he had plenty of riches and God’s blessing was upon his house, but also when he was in need (for as you know he lost all that he had and Satan struck him with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head). He held fast to his integrity and did not deny God in the midst of his poverty and his awful tribulations (he said: “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord” Job 1:21 – NKJV, and to his wife who wanted him to curse God he said: “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” Job 2:10 – NKJV) as Satan thought he would do (for he had said to God: “But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has … touch his bone and his flesh, and he will surely curse You to Your face!” Job 1:11; 2:5 – NKJV), showing thus that he feared God not because God had blessed him, but because he loved God. God tested Job and saw that Job, even though he was poor and sick, held fast to his integrity and did not deny His name, and so He restored Job’s losses, as it is written: “And the Lord restored Job’s losses when he prayed for his friends. Indeed the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; for he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys” (Job 42:10, 12 – NKJV). In this case also, of course, God worked one of His wonders to make Job so rich. Therefore we believe that: “The blessing of the Lord makes one rich” (Proverbs 10:22 – NKJV), for the Lord makes rich, but we believe also that “the Lord makes poor” (1 Samuel 2:7 – NKJV). So let us fear God, let us keep His commandments, and God will surely meet all our needs and we shall lack nothing; His blessing will be upon our families for He “loves the righteous” (Psalm 146:8 – NKJV) and blesses their home.

Let us now talk about the riches of Solomon, for they were given to him by God, even though Solomon did not ask for them. The example of Solomon also shows that because of God’s blessing, a man can become rich honestly. The Scripture says: “In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days” (1 Kings 3:5-13). Solomon was not an envious man nor greedy for money, and when God said to him to ask for whatever he wanted God to give him, Solomon asked for wisdom, and God was pleased that Solomon had asked for this: so God gave him wisdom. However God did also give Solomon what he had not asked for, that is, riches and honor. Now it is true that Solomon was very rich, but I remember you that Jesus said: “A greater than Solomon is here” (Matthew 12:42 – NKJV), to indicate that He was greater than Solomon even though He did not have on earth as many material things as Solomon had. I believe that we, too, should ask God for wisdom, that we
might conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of God on the earth, for this request is according to the will of God, as it is written: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5 – NKJV). However we ought to see that we do not ask amiss (prompted by bitter envy and vainglory), lest this passage of Scripture be fulfilled in us: “You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3 – NKJV).

In ancient times there was a man who, even though he said he was more stupid than any man and he did not have the understanding of a man, made a wise request, and this request of his is recorded in the book of proverbs. That man was called Agur the son of Jakeh, and his request is this: “Two things I request of You (Deprive me not before I die); remove falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches – Feed me with the food allotted to me; lest I be full and deny You, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or lest I be poor and steal, and profane the name of my God” (Proverbs 30:7-9 – NKJV). Instead, today there are some men who think that they are intelligent, who not only despise this request but also they would never dare to ask God for the things Agur asked for, because according to them such a request is not fitting for the King’s kids; judge for yourselves what I say.

To sum up, a believer who is upright can become rich (therefore we do not exclude this possibility) when God wills and if God allows him to be rich. However this does not lead us to say to the believers: ‘God wants you to be rich for this is His will for you, and if you are not rich you are outside God’s will’ or ‘If you are not rich you have a little faith or you have not asked God to become rich’. The point is that these preachers, through their empty words, tend to make believers who are content with what they have feel miserable people who do not have faith in God and do not do the will of God, and a believer who hears these preachers runs the risk of ceasing to be content with what he has and of starting to wish to become rich.

What is the use of our abundance

There are several passages of the Scripture which attest in various ways that God blesses the righteous materially as well. We can’t prove the contrary; first of all because the Scripture says so and the Scripture cannot be broken, and secondly because we ourselves have experienced the truthfulness of the words of God.

Jesus said: “Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you” (Luke 6:38 – NKJV). Now, as you can see, to give is a commandment of God, and we know that “he who fears the commandment will be rewarded” (Proverbs 13:13 – NKJV); therefore he who gives will be rewarded by God for he keeps the commandment of Christ Jesus. According to what the Scripture teaches, it shall be done to us as we have done to others, as it is written: “As you have done, it shall be done to you” (Obadiah 15 – NKJV), and this is what happens to those who give too, for Jesus said: “Give, and it will be given to you” (Luke 6:38). Therefore if we meet the needs of the saints, God will meet our own needs, as it is written: “He who waters will also be watered himself” (Proverbs 11:25 – NKJV); if we give bountifully, it will surely be given to us bountifully, as it is written: “Whoever sows generously will also reap generously” (2 Corinthians 9:6 – NIV), and again: “One man gives freely, yet gains even more” (Proverbs 11:24 - NIV). In order that you may understand this concept, I remind you of some words Paul wrote to the Philippians and to the Corinthians.

Paul, after he said to the Philippians that he had received the offering that they had sent to him through Epaphroditus, said to them: “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19 – NIV). As you can see, Paul was sure that as the Philippians had renewed their concern for him, so God would remember them by supplying all their needs bountifully. God is just, and He blesses us materially according to the measure we bless others materially

Paul, after he said to the Corinthians: “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7 – NKJV), said to
them: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work .... Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown ...” (2 Corinthians 9:8,10 – NKJV). In this case also, the giving precedes the receiving from God, for Paul commanded the saints to sow first, and then he said to them that God would multiply their seed. It is evident that the harvest (or reaping) will be plentiful if the sowing has been generous; but it will be poor if the sowing has been poor, because we will be rewarded according to what we have given.

This law of giving with the material blessing God has promised to those who keep this law, is also in the law of Moses, for God said: “Give generously to him [the poor brother who is among us] and do so without a grudging heart, then because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to” (Deuteronomy 15:10 – NIV). As you can see, these words ‘because of this’ show that God has promised to bless us materially, multiplying our seed, if we beware of covetousness and give generously and with a cheerful heart to the brothers who are in need.

In the book of Proverbs also there is a promise of material blessing made by God to him who shares in his material goods with others, for Solomon, after saying: “Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase” (Proverbs 3:9 – NKJV), says: “So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine” (Proverbs 3:10 – NKJV). These words also confirm that the Lord blesses even materially those who honor Him with their possessions.

When God does multiply our seed and thus he allows us, who are members of His household, to have plenty, He does so for a definite purpose; let us see what this purpose is.

Paul, after saying: “So let each one give as he pur poses in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7 – NKJV), says: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work .... Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruit of your righteousness, while you are enriched in everything for all liberality ....” (2 Corinthians 9:8,10-11 – NKJV). This is the reason why the Lord makes all grace abound toward us and multiplies our seed, that we, having all that we need, may abound in every good work and meet the needs of the poor among the saints, for Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “At the present time your plenty will supply what they need” (2 Corinthians 8:14 – NIV). Have you got plenty at the present time? If your answer is in the affirmative, then your plenty will supply what you need as well as what the poor among the saints need, and “you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good” (Mark 14:7 – NKJV), said Jesus. This must be done so that there might be equality, as it is written: “Our desire is not that others might be relieved while you are hard pressed, but that there might be equality. At the present time your plenty will supply what they need, so that in turn their plenty will supply what you need. Then there will be equality, as it is written: He that gathered much did not have too much, and he that gathered little did not have too little” (2 Corinthians 8:13-15 – NIV). Among God’s people there have been always those who have gathered much as well as those who have gathered little, and this can be seen still today in the midst of the brotherhood in the world. If he who has gathered much supplies the needs of him who has gathered little, the latter will lack nothing, and he who gathered much will not have too much.

Brothers, in this nation we have plenty of material things by the grace of God; we don’t know till when this plenty will last, but we know that we must remember the poor sharing in our material things with them, for this is good and acceptable in the sight of God, as it is written: “With such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16 – NKJV). Far be it from us to think that our plenty will supply only our needs or that God richly provides us with everything exclusively for our enjoyment. Let us watch, and let us not imitate the children of Israel who, after God brought them out of the land of Egypt by a mighty hand, after they experienced the goodness and the faithfulness of God in the wilderness for forty years, and after they entered the promised land,
forgot God and cast the law of God behind their back turning to the idols of the nations. They forgot God after they ate and were full, and built beautiful houses and dwell in them, and after their herds and flocks multiplied, and all that they had was multiplied. The children of Israel did not serve God with joy and gladness of heart, for the abundance of everything; so God delivered them into the hand of their enemies; the wrath of God came upon them for they strayed from His covenant in the midst of the abundance of everything the Lord had given to them.

We must not imitate the inhabitants of Sodom and the cities around it either, who had pride, fullness of food, and abundance of idleness; neither did they strengthen the hand of the poor and needy (cf. Ezekiel 16:49). You must understand that the whole plain of Jordan – where Sodom and the other cities were - “before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah” was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt. Therefore that plain was fertile and yielded very much; but the inhabitants of those cities, even though they had plenty of food, refused to help the poor and the needy for they were haughty and proud in heart, and God punished them because of their haughtiness and because of all the other abominations they committed in the sight of God. Wisdom says: “Everyone proud in heart is an abomination to the Lord; though they join forces, none will go unpunished” (Proverbs 16:5 – NKJV), and in fact those cities did not go unpunished.

In this country the abundance of everything, which exists today, could end within a short time, for God changes circumstances, they are not always the same. This is what we learn from what happened to Italy and to Europe in the past centuries: years of abundance were interrupted by wars, famines, pestilences and were followed by years of extreme poverty. Remember that many centuries ago in Egypt, in the days of Joseph son of Jacob, came seven years of great plenty first, and then seven years of severe famine. God changes times according to His will; today our country is, by the grace of God, one of the most industrialized and wealthy countries in the world, however within a short time it could be numbered among the poorest nations on the earth. Let us not deceive ourselves; today it is the brethren who live in Africa, in South America and in Asia who receive our offerings, our clothing and our food, but in a short time it could happen the opposite because of a radical change of the circumstances, and then their plenty will supply what we need. Someone may say, ‘What you say can’t happen!’ Listen, know this, that the clouds which swirl around over your head and by the mercy of God water the earth when God commands them to water the earth, could disappear for a long time, and then the waters of the lake on whose shores you walk from time to time (or the waters of the river on whose banks you walk) would dry up at once, and you would see what you have never seen with your eyes or what you thought could never happen in this country. It is written: “If he holds back the waters, there is drought” (Job 12:15 – NIV); this is what our God, who rules the universe, does. According to the Scripture, God has often punished the nations of the earth by commanding the clouds not to water the earth.

Have you ever thought about the earthquakes? Do you know why the earth trembles? The Scripture says that it trembles when God is angry. And why does God shake the earth? Perhaps because He is not good or He is not just? Certainly not! But He shakes the earth because He loves righteousness. Do you think that God has closed His eyes? Know this, that the eyes of God are open and He sees the injustice and the wickedness of men, and He abhors all the perversions and the abominations committed by the inhabitants of this country (as well as by the inhabitants of all the other countries). He does not tolerate their evil works nor does He approve of them, but He abhors them and He punishes those who commit them also by shaking the earth under their feet. And when the earth trembles, the strongest men tremble, the swift of foot does not escape, the most courageous men of might are greatly afraid, the haughty are humbled, and the allies of the proud lie prostrate beneath Him; but at the same time God is exalted and hallowed by His righteousness. In the past whole cities were destroyed by earthquakes, the inhabitants of those cities were decimated, and their strength and their prosperity were destroyed. Therefore let us fear God and, as we have opportunity, let us do what we must do and what we can do toward the poor among the saints. Remember what happened to that rich man who had planned to pull down his barns and build greater in order to store all his crops and
his goods: God did not allow him to do what he had planned, for He said to him: “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” (Luke 12:20 – NKJV)

Brothers, consider how short is our life (Moses said that “we fly away” Psalm 90:10 – NKJV), and consider also that during this short period of time God has granted us to live on the earth, God commands us to supply the needs of the saints. And consider also that God gives us even the means to help the poor among the saints, and in His great mercy He gives us even the opportunity to help them.

Now let us see what the collection for the poor among the saints produces. Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “For the administration of this service not only suplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you” (2 Corinthians 9:12-14).

Brothers, when the poor among the saints receive our offerings they feel relieved because their hearts are refreshed by the love we demonstrate toward them. In addition to this, they give many thanks to God for our obedience to the Gospel, and they pray for us, who long for us because of the exceeding grace of God in us. As you can see, this grace of giving produces many good things.

God is the One who supplies seed to us so that we might sow it, and bread for food. So let us continue to sow righteousness; however let us not observe the wind, for it is written: “He who observes the wind will not sow” (Ecclesiastes 11:4 – NKJV), and when harvest comes we will rejoice and sing for joy to God, for the word will be fulfilled which says: “Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy” (Psalm 126:5 – NKJV).

Beloved, be ready to do every good work, but be also content with what you have; let no one deceive you with those vain words the prosperity teachers speak in order to make you want to become rich and haughty.

To those who are rich in this present age

Now I speak to you who were called by God while you were rich: do not be haughty, that is, do not set your mind on high things but associate with the humble and glory in your humiliation, because as a flower of the field you will pass away. You must not think that you are more important than the poor, for this thought, which is vain and harmful, is an abomination to God. Before God you are just like the poor: He does not favor you over the poor for you too are the work of His hands. He who made you made the poor too. Furthermore, do not glory in your riches, but glory in this, that you know the only true God and His Son Jesus Christ; riches do not endure forever, while the knowledge of God endures for ever; glory in the incorruptible and undefiled inheritance reserved in heaven for you, and not in your riches which soon or later will be corrupted and will vanish away like smoke.

Do not trust in your riches lest you be deceived by them; today you have them, but tomorrow you may find yourselves without them through some misfortune; therefore do not set your eyes on what can vanish away so easily, but look at the things which are not seen and trust in God. He is the Rock of ages and will never vanish away; you can trust in Him for He does not deceive those who trust in Him. Remember that riches cannot deliver you from your distresses, while God can; this is the reason why you must not trust in your riches, as it is written: “If riches increase, do not set your heart on them” (Psalm 62:10 – NKJV), and: “He who trusts in his riches will fall” (Proverbs 11:28 – NKJV). Whereas he who trusts in God will stand when he is tempted; this also should lead you to consider how useless is to trust in riches.

Do good, be rich in good works, ready to give and to share in your goods with those who are in need, so that you may lay up a solid treasure for yourselves in heaven, where thieves do not break in and steal, and where neither moth nor rust destroys. Do not be like Nabal, who was a very rich man yet at the same time a fool. He was not willing to help those who were in need, for
the Scripture says that when David sent ten young men to Nabal to ask him for some of his goods, Nabal reviled them and refused to give them what they had asked. However God did not leave him unpunished for his wicked conduct, as it is written: “Then it happened, after about ten days, that the Lord struck Nabal, and he died” (1 Samuel 25:38 – NKJV).

Be like Barzillai the Gileadite, who was very wealthy, who, after David fled together with his men from Jerusalem for fear of being killed by Absalom, while he was at Mahanaim, brought plenty of food for king David and the people who were with him to eat (cf. 2 Samuel 17:27-29).

Imitate Job, who was a very rich man who shared in his goods with those who were in need, and for this reason he could say in the midst of his sufferings to uphold his integrity: “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me” (Job 29:14 – NKJV).

Many are rich, but not toward God

Let us see now who are those who are not rich toward God even though they are rich in this present age.

Jesus said: “Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:15-21).

As you can see, this rich man, when he saw that his ground produced a good crop, thought of storing all his grain and his goods in new barns, so that he might enjoy them in the following years (he thought he would live for many years on the earth); he did not care about the poor, he did not remember the poor at all, for he wanted to keep all the goods for his enjoyment. He was rich, but he did not have wisdom nor did he fear God, for God called him ‘fool’ because he thought only of laying up treasure for himself. Now Jesus said that he who lays up treasure for himself is not rich toward God. Of course, he is rich in the sight of this world, but not in the sight of God. Therefore, he who is rich in this present age, for God called him while he was rich, and thinks of laying up treasure for himself, he is a foolish man in the sight of God because he rejects Wisdom which says: “Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earth” (Ecclesiastes 11:1-2 – NKJV), and the word which says: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth .... But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:19-20 – NKJV); and consequently he is poor as well, for he does not have any treasure in heaven.

Here is the witness which Jesus witnessed of the angel of the church of the Laodiceans: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:15-17). Now we don’t know the witness which the people of the world witnessed of the angel of the church of the Laodiceans; however we know for certain that it was not the same witness which Jesus witnessed of him, for we know that people judge according to appearance for they look at things according to the outward appearance, while the Faithful Witness who is in heaven does not judge anyone according to appearance for He knows the secrets of the hearts of all men and all their works. Jesus knew the works of the angel of the church of the Laodiceans, and He said to him that he was wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, even though he said that he was rich and he had need of nothing. As you can see, the Lord did not flatter that angel, but He rebuked him sharply. For he, after he believed, forgot that he had been cleansed from his old sins, he desired to be rich and he managed to be rich, but by neglecting the great salvation he
had received, for he was not diligent to add to his faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. The Lord saw this and sent him a letter which contained a reprehension, in which the Lord admonished him and exhorted him to repent. What shall we say? Do we live not in a time in which we see with our eyes the same things the Lord saw in Laodicea? Today many pastors and many sheep, being deceived by the prosperity preachers, are like the angel of the Church of the Laodiceans. They are pleased with themselves, they glory in their riches which they have heaped up by fraud, and they lust for more and more riches. They have forsaken their own Mercy and have begun to regard worthless idols; they have a form of godliness but deny its power; they are esteemed by most people for their riches, but they are poor for they are idle and do not want to share in their material things with those who are in need. They desire to lay up treasures for themselves on earth and not in heaven, showing thus that they do not desire to depart and be with the Lord. In addition to this, at the thought of leaving all their own possessions on earth when they die they are distressed. On the contrary, those who lay up treasures for themselves in heaven show that they believe that there is a place of rest in heaven, called paradise, where after death every believer goes to be with the Lord, and where every believer will reap what he has sown on the earth.

Let me explain some passages of the Scripture quoted by the prosperity preachers to support their message

It was bound to happen that those who began to preach the prosperity message would take some passages of the Scripture to support their doctrine. Let me now explain some of these passages.

- Jesus said: “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life” (Matthew 19:29); “Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting” (Luke 18:29-30). Inasmuch as by these words Christ promised to those who forsake houses or lands for His name’s sake that they will receive on the earth many houses and lands, the prosperity preachers assert that these words of Jesus show that he who forsakes houses and lands for the Gospel’s sake must necessarily become a rich man, that is, a man who owns many houses and lands. Certainly, at first glance it seems that the Lord promised to those who forsake houses and lands for His name’s sake that they will receive on the earth many houses and lands. However, if we examine carefully the promise made by the Lord, we realize that this is not the true meaning of the promise made by Christ. Why? Because these preachers wilfully forget that the Lord said that those who have left brothers will receive many times more; those who have left wife will receive many times more; those who have left children will receive many times more; those who have left sisters will receive many times more; those who have left parents will receive many times more. Therefore, just as we can’t say that he who has left his wife to go to a far country to preach the Gospel will have one hundred wives who will bear him one hundred children, for this would mean that the Lord is in favour of adultery, so we can’t say that he who has left his own house for Christ’s sake will receive one hundred houses, that is, he will own one hundred houses. The words of Jesus mean that he who has left his own house or his land for the Lord’s sake will find many believers who will place their own houses and their own lands at his disposal. If these words of Jesus meant what the prosperity teachers affirm, they would encourage us to lay up treasures for ourselves on the earth rather than in heaven, while the Lord has commanded us not to lay up treasures for ourselves on earth. Furthermore, how can one say that this is the meaning of those words of Jesus when Jesus a short time before said to the young ruler: “Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven” (Mark 10:21 – NKJV)? Notice that the Lord did not say to him: ‘Go your way, sell your houses and your lands and give to the poor, and then you will receive a hundredfold on the earth’. For if
that young man had heard such an answer he would not have gone away sorrowful; because he would have been sure that he would get his own possessions back and he would become richer. However, the point is that Jesus told him to sell his possessions to have a treasure in heaven, and that man did not like His words for he realized that he would become poor and he would not get his own possessions back. At this point, I want to say that we must not give alms thinking that by so doing we will become richer on the earth, nor should we give alms because we want the Lord to give us the same amount of money we give to the poor together with some other money. This is not a right way of thinking, for we must give for the sake of our neighbour, for we are moved with compassion toward our neighbour. Furthermore, who said that we surely will be rewarded on the earth, when there are some brothers who gave and after a short time died, not having received their reward on earth? Jesus said that by selling our possessions and giving to the poor we lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven; He did not say that we lay up new treasures for ourselves on the earth. I confirm this concept by these other words spoken by Jesus: “When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:12-14). As you can see, Jesus said that when we give a dinner or a supper we must not ask our friends, our brothers, our relatives, nor rich neighbours. Why? Lest they also invite us back, and we be repaid. Whom should we ask to dinner then? The poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, that is, all those people who cannot repay us on the earth, for we are sure that we shall be repaid at the resurrection of the dead. God’s wisdom says: “He who has pity on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given” (Proverbs 19:17 – NKJV). However, according to the teaching of Jesus, if we ask the poor to dinner (and this is a pitiful work done to the poor) we will not be repaid during our earthly life but at the resurrection of the just.

Furthermore, brethren, do not forget that the Lord has promised also persecutions to those who have left houses, lands, brothers and sisters, parents, wife, and children for His name’s sake, for in Mark it is written: “With persecutions” (Mark 10:30 – NKJV). It goes without saying that these idle talkers are careful not to speak of the persecutions promised by the Lord, for they, unlike the apostle Paul, do not take pleasure in persecutions: they want to live and to make people live a ‘successful’ life!

- Paul said to the saints of Philippi: “I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Philippians 4:12-13).

Those who preach the prosperity message quote these words of Paul to show that Paul also lived like a King’s son, for he also abounded. You’d better beware of this peculiar interpretation given by these foxes to the above mentioned words of Paul, lest you fall into a trap. Of course, Paul abounded on some occasions; that’s what he himself stated; however, this does not mean that he lived a scandalous life as these preachers do or that he preached the prosperity message. Know this, that when Paul said that he abounded he did not mean that he set his mind on high things or that he was rich. These preachers forget that Paul had learned to be content in whatever state he was. This means that he was content not only when he abounded but also when he suffered need. And this is something that these preachers have not learned or don’t want to learn, for according to their own words they are never content with what they have (for they want to have more and more material goods), to be poor is a shame for a Christian, and their happiness depends on the abundance of the earthly things they possess. Brothers, I say it again, the above mentioned words of Paul do not mean that Paul lived as a prince, for he himself said to the Corinthians: “As poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:10 – NKJV). Now I want you to pay attention to the following thing: when Paul wrote to the Philippians he was in prison because of the Gospel; therefore when he said to the Philippians: “Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having
received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you ....” (Philippians 4:18 – NKJV), he was in a distress. So in this case Paul experienced abundance while he was in prison. Yes, he did abound, but he certainly did not live like a prince in that prison!

- “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8 – NKJV). I consider it superfluous to say that these words do not mean that God has promised to make us rich and to make us live as kings on the earth. These words are addressed to those who sow with a cheerful heart; for God says that He will supply and multiply the seed they have sown so that they may abound in every good work.
- “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Timothy 6:17). God “giveth us richly all things to enjoy” means that God does show His kindness toward us by giving us rain from heaven and crops in their seasons and providing us with plenty of food; it does not mean that God wants us to be rich, nor does it mean that we have the right to buy luxurious houses with the money God has given us or the right to give ourselves over to the pleasures of life.
- “Beloved I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers” (3 John 2 – NKJV). This is the passage about prosperity which the prosperity preachers like the most and on which they preach the most. They never speak of Diotrephes and his evil conduct (verse 9-10), and of the love the beloved Gaius showed toward the brethren, even though they were strangers to him; but they often and willingly quote the above mentioned words of John, for according to them they confirm that God wants Christians to be rich and live like king’s kids wherever they are and in any age they live. However, “I pray that you may prosper in all things” means that John wished that Gaius might lack nothing and God might richly provide him with all the things he needed according to His glorious riches, so that Gaius might abound more and more in every good work.

I want you to notice that in the same epistle the elder said to Gaius these words also: “Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good” (3 John 11 - NKJV). I say to you this so that you may understand that the elder not only wanted Gaius to prosper in all things (thus economically as well) but also wanted Gaius to imitate what was good and not what was evil. That means that Gaius, as he prospered in all things, had to cling to what was good (that is, to continue to do good works) and to abhor what was evil, that is, the pride of life, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes. What I have noticed, instead, is that these preachers want God to make them prosper economically but they do not want to imitate what is good but what is evil, for they – being intemperate and dissolute - delight in wearing costly clothing, in living in luxury and in amusing themselves.

- God said in the law: “And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kineth and the flocks of thy sheep. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store. …. The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. …. And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee. The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow” (Deuteronomy 28:1-5,8, 11-12)

Now God promised that He would bless materially His people if they kept His commandments. Therefore if the Israelites feared God and observed all His commandments they would be
blessed by God. I would like you to pay much attention to the following words: “If thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day” (Deuteronomy 28:1), for ‘all his commandments’ mean that the Israelites, in order to be blessed by God, not only had to flee idolatry and pursue righteousness and mercy and faith in God, but also had to keep the sabbath day, the new moon celebration, the feasts at the time appointed by God, the dietary laws, circumcision, the law of tithe, the law which forbade them to marry people who belonged to the other nations, and the laws concerning the burnt offering, the sin offering and the fellowship offering.

The prosperity preachers quote the above mentioned words of the law to show that God has promised us that He will bless us economically. Now since we cannot do nothing against the truth, we do not dare to set aside these words of the law. However, I would like to remind you of the following things.

1) These promises are part of the Old Covenant and not of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is a better Covenant, “which was established on better promises” (Hebrews 8:6 – NKJV). Therefore let us start saying that the blessings promised to the believers under the New Covenant are more excellent than those of the Old Covenant. Suffice it to consider this promise made by the Lord Jesus: “Most assuredly I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death” (John 8:51 – NKJV), that is, the second death; and the following words of God: “And their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more” (Hebrews 8:12 - NKJV; cf. Jeremiah 31:34), in order to realize that the Second Covenant is superior to the First Covenant.

2) God “has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3 – NKJV), for He has adopted us as sons so that we should be holy and blameless before Him. We as children of God have plenty of joy and peace for in Christ we have the forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

3) We believe that if we keep the commandments of God, God will bless us materially (as well as spiritually) in this world by giving us richly all the things we need. However, when we teach the Word of God we do not put much emphasis on the material blessings (such as money, food, houses, and lands) God gives us, for we know that they are temporary and not eternal blessings. Paul says: “Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them” (1 Corinthians 6:13 – NKJV), and: “The things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18 – NKJV). Therefore why should we extol the abundance of possessions that the Lord gives us in His faithfulness on the earth, when we know that we can enjoy it only in this world and one day it will vanish away for God will destroy it, as it is written: “The earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (2 Peter 3:10 – NKJV)? Bear in mind that when I say that God gives us plenty of material goods, I do not mean that we are rich people, but I mean that we lack nothing and we have something to share with those in need.

3) Inasmuch as we are under grace and not under the law, we must be careful when we quote these words of the law because among the commandments which the Israelites had to observe in order to be blessed materially by God were also those commandments we must not observe lest we be entangled again with the yoke of bondage (that is, the bondage of the law – the Sabbath day, the new moon celebration, the religious festivals, tithe, circumcision, and other precepts of the law).

4) Among the blessings there is also the following one: “You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow” (Deuteronomy 28:12 – NKJV). How is it then that these prosperity preachers (or rather many of them) are deeply in debt for they have borrowed a lot of money from banks? They often say that they have borrowed a lot of money for God’s work, and then they impudently say that it was God who told them to borrow that money! They contradict themselves, because according to the law, those who are blessed by God do not need to borrow any amount of money from anyone!

5) God promised He would curse His people if they did not observe His commandments. These idle talkers never speak of these curses, as if the Lord promised that He would only bless His
people. Here is what God said: “But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee: Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy store. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. The LORD shall send upon thee cursing, vexation, and rebuke, in all that thou settest thine hand unto for to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly; because of the wickedness of thy doings, whereby thou hast forsaken me. The LORD shall make the pestilence cleave unto thee, until he have consumed thee from off the land, whither thou goest to possess it. The LORD shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and with an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with blasting, and with mildew; and they shall pursue thee until thou perish. And thy heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron. The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed….. The LORD will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods, and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. … Thou shalt betroth a wife, and another man shall lie with her: thou shalt build an house, and thou shalt not dwell therein: thou shalt plant a vineyard, and shalt not gather the grapes thereof. Thine ox shall be slain before thine eyes, and thou shalt not eat thereof: thine ass shall be slain before thine eyes, and shall not be restored to thee: thy sheep shall be given unto thine enemies, and thou shalt have none to rescue them….. The stranger that is within thee shall get up above thee very high; and thou shalt come down very low. He shall lend to thee, and thou shalt not lend to him: he shall be the head, and thou shalt be the tail” (Deuteronomy 28:15-24, 27, 30, 31, 43-44).

As you can see, the curses that God promised He would send on the Israelites if they cast His commandments behind their back are many and various. However I remind you that among the commandments the Israelites had to observe in order not to be cursed by God, were the commandments concerning the Sabbath day, the new moon celebration, the religious festivals, circumcision, tithe, sin offerings, burnt offerings, and food, which we must not observe lest we be entangled again with the yoke of bondage. In addition to this, I remind you that we were all under the curse of the law before we turned to the Lord for we did not observe all the commandments of the law, as it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10 – NKJV; cf. Deuteronomy 27:26), but “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13 – NKJV), and through Him the blessing of Abraham has come upon us, who are Gentiles.

We believe that under grace one must speak of the above mentioned curses as well, so that believers might realize that God not only promised He will bless those who fear and observe His commandments, but also that He will punish severely those who, after having known Him, cease to fear Him and to observe His commandments. I know that to hear of the divine blessings is more pleasant than to hear of the divine curses and I know also that some want to hear exclusively of pleasant things, but I will not flatter you; I will tell you how things really are. First of all let me say that when the Israelites forsook God, God struck them with famine, with the plague, with the sword, to destroy them and pluck them from off the good land He had given them. He made them extremely poor; He compelled them to eat even their children; He dried up their throat, their skin and their flesh. He sent against them merciless foreign armies which destroyed their cities, their lands, their houses, and carried them captive to other nations. Yes, brothers, that’s what happened – according to the Scripture - to the Jews who rebelled against God. And today, as for us who have believed in Christ, what will happen to us if we cease to observe the commandments of God as the Israelites did? Certainly God will not continue to bless us, for Jesus said: “If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:6 - NKJV). This is confirmed by the following words written in the epistle to the Hebrews: “For the
earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them
by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God: But that which beareth thorns and briers is
rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned” (Hebrews 6:4-8). As you can see,
if a believer ceases to observe God’s commandments will not be able to bear good fruit for he
will bear only thorns and briers and thus he will be cursed, and eventually he will be cast into the
everlasting fire to be tormented forever! Yes, it is true that we are now blessed children, but it is
also true that if we deny the Lord who bought us we will become accursed children. In his
second epistle, the apostle Peter says the following things about the false teachers who are
among God’s people: “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall
be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the
Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction ... Having eyes full of
adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised
with covetous practices; cursed children” (2 Peter 2:1,14). As you can see, these people also
knew the Lord but afterward they forsook Him and became accursed children. This confirms that
if we deny and forsake the Lord the curses of God will come upon us one after another. If the
Israelites did not go unpunished when they forsook the first covenant, much more shall we not
be punished if we forsake the second covenant.
6) As far as health is concerned, God promised that He would bless Israel, for He said: “If thou
wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his
sight, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of these
diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the LORD that healeth
thee” (Exodus 15:26). However, as you can see, God promised to the Israelites that He would
not bring on them any of the diseases He had brought on the Egyptians, on condition that they
kept the commandments of God. What happened to the Israelites when they forsook God? God
brought on them all kinds of diseases, for He had said to them: “If thou wilt not observe to do all
the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful
name, THE LORD THY GOD; Then the LORD will make thy plagues wonderful, and the plagues
of thy seed, even great plagues, and of long continuance, and sore sicknesses, and of long
continuance. Moreover he will bring upon thee all the diseases of Egypt, which thou wast afraid
of; and they shall cleave unto thee. Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written
in the book of this law, them will the LORD bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed”
(Deuteronomy 28:58-61). Also under grace God strikes with diseases those who refuse to obey
Him and in some cases He puts them to death. This is confirmed by the following incidents
recorded in the writings of the New Testament. Ananias and Sapphira his wife were put to death
by God for they had agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord (cf. Acts 5:1-11); and those
believers of the Church in Corinth who had partaken of the Lord’s supper in an unworthy manner
were struck by God with diseases and some of them were put to death (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:29-
30). Therefore, in the light of what happened to those believers, we’d better be very careful how
we live lest we be struck by God with diseases or put to death.
Brothers, we want to declare to you the whole counsel of God; we keep back nothing that you
must know! We do not flatter the rebels by promising them prosperity, blessing and health. We
proclaim also the terrible divine punishments which will come upon us if we live according to the
flesh.
7) It goes without saying that these idle talkers do not speak of the judgements of God which will
come upon those who rebel against God; they only speak of God’s blessings to flatter them. And
we must admit that by their smooth words and flattering speech they have managed to deceive
many simple believers who attend their meetings. These believers, being devoid of discernment and
not knowing the Scriptures, have turned to them to drink their water, but their water cannot
quench their thirst at all for the water that the prosperity preachers offer is salty; their words are
not words full of grace, seasoned with salt, which impart grace to the hearers, but are words
polluted by deceptions which they have camouflaged with smooth words. Beware of them!
7) “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is
written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come
on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ ..... And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:13-14, 29).

Now, according to the prosperity preachers, these words of Paul mean that since the believers in Christ Jesus are one in Christ Jesus and thus they are Abraham’s seed, God is obligated – because of His covenant with Abraham – to bless them financially as He blessed Abraham. However, things are not so. Why? Because the blessing of Abraham of which Paul speaks to the Galatians is a spiritual blessing, that is, the justification which we who are Gentiles have obtained by faith. For just a short time before Paul said: “Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham” (Galatians 3:6-9). Please notice these words “they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham”, for they make it clear that the blessing of Abraham of which we have become partakers in Christ is a spiritual blessing. Paul is saying that Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness, that is to say, God imputed righteousness apart from works to him because of his faith. And since David describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works, saying: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin” (Romans 4:7-8 – NKJV), we say that Abraham was blessed by God. However God promised Abraham that this blessing would reach all nations (that is, the Gentiles) through his seed, as it is written: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 22:18 – NKJV). Who is the seed of Abraham? It is Christ, for it is through faith in Christ that the Gentiles have received the remission of sins (that is, we have been justified as was foretold by God to Abraham) and thus we are blessed with believing Abraham. As you can see, the prosperity preachers have misinterpreted the words of Paul, and they make Paul say what they want, that is, that the blessing of Abraham was also material or financial. And as it always happens in these cases, they contradict themselves several times. For instance, if Jesus is the seed of Abraham (cf. Galatians 3:16), how is it that God did not bless Jesus on earth materially and financially in the same manner He blessed Abraham? How is it that He lived poor and said to His disciples, who were sons of Abraham for they had faith: “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God” (Luke 6:20 – NKJV)? And what shall we say about the apostles? Were they not one in Christ, and thus Abraham’s seed? How is it then that God did not bless them materially and financially as He blessed Abraham? For Peter did not have silver or gold (while Abraham had silver and gold): Paul said that he and his fellow workers were poor and had nothing (while Abraham could not affirm such a thing). As you can see, the prosperity preachers do not divide the word of truth rightly.

Why these preachers teach this doctrine

Why do these preachers teach this doctrine? What advantage is it to them? The answer to these questions is found in the following words which Paul wrote to Titus: “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain” (Titus 1:10-11 – NKJV). This is then what prompts these preachers to teach this doctrine, which many like to hear and which attracts those who desire to be rich and live in luxury on the earth: the sake of dishonest gain. What must be said about these people is that they speak so much of faith and prosperity, and then when they are invited to preach they do not accept the invitation unless he who invites them promises them that he will give them the amount of money they want or all the offerings which will be collected during the meeting. However, do not expect these preachers to tell you these things for they will never tell you them: but you will get to know about them afterward.
meetings held by these preachers the offering-basket is passed out at least once, and according to the ‘contract’ all the offerings or half of them must be given to these preachers, they are very interested in teaching this doctrine, for they know that the ‘weightier’ are the basket-offerings the ‘weightier’ they will return to their houses. They insistently urge believers to give generously for the Lord’s work for they know that a good part of that money will eventually go into their pockets. They affirm that great blessings will come upon those who give generously (some of them even say how much one must give in order to receive these great blessings!) These preachers are swindlers, they are vultures which are ready to take off when they see a prey which is weak or near to death. According to them, the passing out of the offering-basket in their meetings does not offend anyone. They have the effrontery to say that if the sisters who attend their meetings cover their head with a veil they run the risk of offending the unbelieving people who are present, but they are not ashamed to pass out their long voracious hand among the people who are seated in their meetings. But they don’t care at all if by so doing they offend souls for their aim is to become rich. These people follow the way of Balaam, for they have run greedily in the error of Balaam for profit, but they manage to appear servants of the Lord to many for they manage to put together several passages of the Scripture and to speak of the Gospel with persuasive words of human wisdom. They do not edify you for they mix the sacred with the profane, truth with error; however they devour you if you fall into their hands. Beloved, until the end I will keep urging you to beware of these rebels and to withdraw from them for the sake of righteousness and truth, I will keep proclaiming in your hearing, ‘Listen to the sound of the trumpet, for the enemy has introduced the enemies of the cross among you so that you may be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.’

The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world

Paul said to Timothy: “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Timothy 6:6-10 – NKJV).
Brothers, we brought nothing in this world; I believe this is one of those things on which we should reflect more often. One day Job said: “Naked I came from my mother’s womb ....” (Job 1:21 – NKJV); this is what each one of us must remember and say. No one can say that he brought something into this world, so when he dies he will carry it out of this world. No one will be able to carry anything out of this world, for when a man dies he must leave everything, and I say it again, everything, on this earth. We will leave what we have on earth, whether much or little.
Now we are tested by God continually; we know that we must be content with what we have, as it is written: “Be content with what you have” (Hebrews 13:5 – NIV), however we are tempted not to be content with what we have, for we see around us many people who are never content with what they have. Men want to come into possession – at all costs - of as much money as possible and as many material things as possible. In seeing so many people unsatisfied with what they have, we are tempted not to be content with the state in which we are. What should we do then? We must submit to God and resist the devil lest we fall into temptation.
Paul said that godliness with contentment is great gain, which means that he who pursues godliness being content with what he has gains much. I would like to point out to you that the apostle Paul called the death of a believer gain, for he said to the Philippians: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21 – NKJV). Now we know that the believer who stands firm in the faith till the end and dies in the Lord does not lose anything, but he saves himself, for Jesus said: “By standing firm you will save yourselves” (Luke 21:19 – NIV – The Italian Bible Riveduta Version reads: “Con la vostra perseveranza guadagnerete le vostre
anime” that is, “By your perseverance you will gain your souls”). Therefore no one of those who
died in the Lord has lost his soul or has regretted enduring to the end. Likewise, we can also say
that there is no one who pursues godliness with contentment who can say that he has lost
something or regrets being content with what he has, for godliness with contentment is great
gain.

However, we know that next to the highway in which we walk there is a crooked way, in which
those who are not content with what they have walk. Anyone can walk in that way, for it is
indeed to hand. If you walk in that way you will become rich. Is it worth walking in that way? No,
it isn’t, because that way leads to destruction and perdition. In other words, those who decide to
walk in it will lose their soul. Consider where are at the moment those who walked in that way
and died (they are in Hades tormented by fire, together with that “rich man who was clothed in
purple and fine linen and fared sumptuously every day” Luke 16:19 – NKJV; and they continually
weep and gnash their teeth), and you will realize that it is not worth desiring to be rich in this
world.

Jesus said to the rich: “But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation”
(Luke 6:24 – NKJV), and to His disciples: “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to
enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a
rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:24-25 – NKJV). Now we know that these rich
men are not only those rich men who refuse to repent and to believe in Christ, but also those
who have strayed from the faith in their greediness. I affirm this on the grounds of the following
words of Paul: “Those who desire to be rich fall in to temptation and a snare, and into many
foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9 – NKJV).
Do you think that a believer who desires to be rich can stand firm in the faith? Beloved, do not
deceive yourselves, and do not be deceived by those who want to deceive you into believing
that you can desire to be rich and at the same time you can stand firm in the faith. These men of
corrupt minds tell you how you as a Christian can make money; instead I tell you that you will go
to perdition if you decide to make money. If Paul says that the love of money is a root of all kinds
of evil and some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, you must believe him. Do not
think that the love of money is a good and precious thing, for that is one of the lies conceived by
the devil. The Scripture says: “Keep your lives free from the love of money” (Hebrews 13:5 –
NIV). Therefore anyone who begins to love money breaks the word of God and is rewarded by
his aimless conduct with death and with delusion as well, for he will find himself in the
everlasting fire together with those who have deceived him

Now let us speak of money. Why do many people love money? I will answer this question
through the Scripture. Now we know that on the earth we need to have some money in order to
buy what we need. We can’t help using money and we can’t say that we do not need it.
However, we must keep our life free from the love of money for the sake of our soul. It is clear
that the more money one has, the more material goods he can buy, for “money answers
everything” (Ecclesiastes 10:19 – NKJV). However, the point is that money, besides giving you
the opportunity to buy many things, makes those who have got a lot of money feel safer. I mean
that the devil manages to deceive people into believing that their safety depends on money,
which we know it is not true for one is not safe in the hands of money but in the hands of God.
Outside God’s hands there is no safety, but only anguish, fears, troubles, and despair. “The
abundance of the rich will not permit him to sleep” (Ecclesiastes 5:12 – NKJV), says Solomon;
therefore do not think that if you become rich you will be in safety and you will live a quiet life, for
that’s not true. If you start serving money, you will lose not only your sleep but also your soul. Do
you think you will go unpunished? You are deceiving yourself, for it is written: “He who hastens
to be rich will not go unpunished” (Proverbs 28:20 – NKJV).

Paul said that the love of money is “a root of all kinds of evil”. Consider what he said, so that you
may understand what is the root of many evil things which are committed on the earth. If we
examine many evil deeds and many injustices which are committed on the earth, we can’t help
seeing that their root is the love of money. Consider then how harmful is the love of money! Why
does the love of money drive people to do evil things? For he who begins to love money ceases
to share in his material goods with those who are in need, for he only thinks of heaping up as much money as possible, and he does not want to give some of his money to those who are in need. To him, to give some of his money to the poor is counterproductive for he thinks that to give alms is a waste of money: to him it is counterproductive also to lend money free of interest, for this goes against his own interest. In addition to this, he begins to work out how to make as much money as possible, and you must understand that all the ways followed by a covetous man keep him from doing the will of God. For he does not have time to pray, to read the Word of God, to gather together with the brethren, to do good works, to visit orphans and widows in their trouble. He can’t spend time doing the will of God, for he must spend time working beyond all limits or working out how to extort money from his neighbour. In other words, the Word of God can’t bear fruit any longer in those believers who start loving money, for it is written: “The worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it [the word], making it unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22 – NIV). John says: “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments” (1 John 5:3 – NKJV), but he says also: “If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him” (1 John 2:15 – NKJV); therefore these words of his confirm the words of Christ for they show that if a believer starts loving money he ceases keeping the commandments of God. And if he ceases to keep the commandments of God how can the love of God dwell in his heart? How can he himself abide in God? This is the reason why we are told not to love money; the Scripture does not forbid us to use money but to love money, which is different. God has raised us up with Christ and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ, therefore we must not set out mind on things on the earth, but on things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, so we must not seek to be rich, for anyone who wants to be rich shows that he wants to lay up for himself treasures on earth. If we consider that on earth rust and moth destroy, thieves break in and steal, and the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up, it is not worth desiring to be rich in this world. Wisdom says: “Do not overwork to be rich; because of your own understanding, cease! Will you set your eyes on that which is not? For riches certainly make themselves wings; they fly away like an eagle toward heaven” (Proverbs 23:4-5 – NKJV).

As you can see, the Scripture commands us in various ways not to desire to be rich, therefore we’d better listen to God rather than to the prosperity preachers, who urge believers to desire to be rich and unfortunately many believers have been deceived by their words.

Now let me tell you another thing. The prosperity preachers say that we, as is fitting for king’s kids, must live in the best houses, wear the best clothing, drive the best cars, therefore we must have the most expensive things on the earth. This means that we must set our mind on high things and must not associate with the humble, which is contrary to the Word of God, which clearly says: “Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble” (Romans 12:16 – NKJV). Therefore, these preachers do not consent to the sound doctrine, but they give heed to profane babblings. Know this, that if we lived the kind of life these preachers want us to live we would cease to be meek and humble, and we would become haughty like these preachers. What shall we do then? Shall we conduct ourselves like these men whose minds have been led astray from their sincere and pure devotion to Christ and they now walk according to the stubbornness of their heart? Certainly not. We have in Jesus the perfect example of faith; His words as well as the words of the apostles are our infallible guide, and thus we must not give heed to the smooth and deceitful words of these people nor follow their bad example. These preachers are spoiling the vineyard of the Lord, for those churches who have accepted their false teaching desire to be very rich, not spiritually but materially rich. They seek after prestige in the midst of our modern society; as if believers were called to please this wicked world rather than God. The believers who have given heed to these idle talkers have become corrupt; some of them have become lukewarm, others have become cold, no one of them wants to humble himself, for all of them somehow exalt themselves. They want to attract the world’s attention, and I have to admit that they have succeeded in attracting the attention of the people of this world for they are eccentric and haughty. The light which was in them is now darkness, so they are no longer able to shine as lights in this world of darkness.
Those who preach the prosperity message have succeeded in attracting the world's attention for they commit all kinds of evil things and thus the world is interested in their scandals and the newspapers report them. The life conducted by those who preach the ‘gospel of prosperity’ is a life full of evil things which induce people to blaspheme the doctrine of God. And then they say that they want to live as king's kids! But if they really wanted to live as children of the King of kings, they would see that they live as the Son of the King of kings lived in the days of His flesh. Jesus is the firstborn among many brethren, and we as children of God must see that we imitate Jesus. Therefore, if the One who was with His Father in glory, before the foundation of the world, decided to humble Himself and to live a humble life in the days of His flesh, who are these people who are of the earth like us, and who urge us to conduct a haughty life? They are certainly conceited people.

Many have become rich dishonestly and not because God has blessed the work of their hands

The Holy Scripture teaches that some people have become rich dishonestly, that is, stealing and cheating their neighbour.

God said through the prophet Jeremiah: “For among My people are found wicked men; they lie in wait as one who sets snares; they set a trap, they catch men. As a cage is full of birds, so their houses are full of deceit. Therefore they have become great and grown rich. They have grown fat, they are sleek; yes, they surpass the deeds of the wicked ....” (Jeremiah 5:26-28 – NKJV). Beloved, these words are topical, and, as you can see, according to them, among the people of God are some unscrupulous people, who don’t fear God, who have become great and rich cheating and robbing their neighbour. Yes, they wear soft garments, they are sleek, the have beautiful houses, but all the things they have were obtained by fraud. However, these persons deceive people into believing that the abundance of the things which they possess is a peculiar blessing of God which has come upon them, saying: ‘Surely we have become rich, we have found wealth for ourselves, in all our labors they shall find in us no iniquity that is sin.’ However, God knows their works and witnesses the following witness of them: ‘They multiply lies and violence. They are cunning Cananites! Deceitful scales are in their hands, they love to oppress.’

James, the Lord’s brother, wrote the following words to the dishonest rich who were among the brethren: “Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have heaped treasure together for [in] the last days. Behold, the hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields, which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just; and he doth not resist you” (James 5:1-6). From these words we learn that the face of the Lord is against those who heap up riches and become rich by keeping back by fraud the wages of their laborers. This is confirmed by Paul who, after saying that it is God's will that we should be holy, that we should avoid sexual immorality, that each of us should know how to possess his own body in sanctification and honor, and that no one should defraud his brother in any matter, says: “Because the Lord is the avenger of all such” (1 Thessalonians 4:6 – NKJV). As you can see, the Lord punishes all those who fail to pay their workers their wages or do not give them what is just and fair.

But the dishonest people become rich not only by keeping back by fraud the wages of their workers (breaking thus the commandment which says: “Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or an alien living in one of your towns” Deuteronomy 24:14 – NIV), but also by not paying taxes, that is, by evading taxes (breaking thus the commandment which says: “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's” (Mark 12:17 – NKJV).
Why does the way of the wicked prosper?

The wicked, who are among God’s people, also enjoy good health and prosper materially. The following passages of the Scripture confirm it.

- Asaph said: “But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain: violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them, .... Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches” (Psalm 73:2-10, 12)

- Job said: “Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance” (Job 21:7-11).

- Jeremiah said to God: “Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously? Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou art near in their mouth, and far from their reins” (Jeremiah 12:1-2)

- David said: “Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass” (Psalm 37:7).

As you can see, in the above mentioned Scriptures which refer to the wicked, we find the word ‘prosperity’ and the verb ‘to prosper’. Brethren, pay much attention to these details for they show once more that the fact that one prospers financially does not necessarily mean that he increases his possessions for God blesses the work of his hands because of his upright conduct! That’s what we say to those preachers who speaks so much of financial prosperity! Beloved, we also see in this generation what was seen by Asaph, Job, Jeremiah and David, for we also see that among God’s people are some wicked people who prosper. When I say ‘wicked people’ I refer to people who claim that they are believers and who honor God with their lips, but their heart is far from God and trained in covetous practices. They are well-known, they speak of the Gospel, they are esteemed and praised by many, they prosper for they continually increase their possessions, they are healthy, but their character is this:

They are haughty and proud; when you hear them speak it seems that they know all things and they can do all things. They think they are gods and not human beings: they mouth great swelling words through which they deceive the hearts of many simple believers. They want to be treated as kings, for instead of putting on humility they have put on pride; instead of putting on meekness they have put on haughtiness. They are violent, for they resort to physical violence against those who thwart them; they are men who oppress God’s people in any way to achieve their dishonest aims.

They are greedy for money, for they are unscrupulous businessmen who give themselves over to the commerce of the things of God, who resort to falsehood, craftiness and fraud, in order to make money.

They feel at their ease with thieves and adulterers and with anyone who walks after the flesh; they use bad and filthy language, they curse those who rebuke them. When someone rebukes them they cast the reprehension behind their back.

Yes, brothers, this is the conduct of these ungodly people, who prosper before our eyes. And then it is they who speak so much of prosperity! They never speak of justice, of temperance, of humility, of holiness, but they always speak of prosperity!
What shall we say then? Shall we say that these people please God and the blessing of God is upon them? Certainly not, for we believe that these people, even though they bring their wicked schemes to pass and thus they manage to prosper, are enemies of God, for it is written: “The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:7-8 – NKJV). Jeremiah was right when he said about them that God is “near in their mouth but far from their mind” (Jeremiah 12:2 – NKJV)!

Beloved, may God grant us to be zealous for the fear of the Lord till the end without envying these wicked people who prosper and preach prosperity to many Churches here in Italy as well. I realize that it is not easy to be quiet and to trust in God in seeing the way of the wicked prosper, however it is worth striving to be quiet and to trust in God. Know this, that God allows them to prosper in order to test us, who want to live godly, soberly and righteously on the earth; in order to see whether we love Him with all our heart and with all our soul or not. That’s why they live and prosper!

To you who have become friends of the world

Listen to me, you who have become friends of the world and enemies of God, for you have given heed to the so called prosperity message: which is a very seductive message. You heart is lifted up, for you do not associate with the humble things any longer, but you set your mind on high things. You take pleasure in those things which you should not lust for; you wear soft garments, designer clothes, which are very expensive; through your clothing you show off such a haughtiness that even some people of the world don’t show off. You refuse to be humble and to be dressed modestly, for the prosperity message has entered your heart. You now dislike those who teach that we must be humble; now you also talk about riches and financial prosperity as these unscrupulous idle talkers do. Your words do not edify, they are arid, for they are devoid of salt and of the grace of God. Notwithstanding this you continue to affirm that God has blessed you. How can you say such lies, when you are so lukewarm, so indifferent to spiritual things, so devoid of the Word of Christ, so miserable that I feel pity for you? You have been deceived by smooth words and flattering speeches, for now you are overworking in order to become rich and to be able to say: ‘God wants us to be rich and not poor!’ Tell me this, ‘What do you mean by ‘poor people’? Perhaps people who are content with what they have, who do not desire to be rich, and who lack nothing?’ If you think so, I tell you that you have lost discernment, you are no longer able to distinguish good from evil. Paul said: “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content” (1 Timothy 6:8 – NKJV), while according to your words it seems that one must be rich and haughty in order to be content. We perceive that you have become miserable for when we talk with you we have no fellowship with you. You do not know the Scriptures: you know the books of these vultures, but you do not know the book of the Lord. You are wise in your own eyes and your arguments are not fitting for saints. You have assimilated so well this new doctrine that now according to you he who preaches modesty, purity and humility is a sort of apostate, someone who has departed from the faith and seeks to keep God's people from receiving the Lord’s blessing! Arise from the dead and Christ will give you light, and you will realize that you have given heed to lies and not to the truth of the Gospel.

Now you adorn yourselves with gold, for you say: ‘What harm is there in wearing a thin gold chain round one’s neck, a gold watch, a gold ring with a diamond on it, and a bracelet?’ I answer you, ‘You can’t see the harm which is in it for you have been blinded by darkness. Go your way, throw away your gold and return to the Lord from whom you have gone far, and the Almighty will be your gold.’

You show off you haughtiness also through other things. When one enters your wonderful houses he thinks that he has entered the palace of a prince; when one sees your costly cars parked outside the place of worship he thinks that he is near a club which is attended by millionaires and billionaires. We see horrible things with our own eyes. And who are those who live in these wonderful houses? Who are those who drive these cars? It is you, who, after you
believed, have given place to the deceitfulness of riches, to the pleasures of life and to the desires for other things, and thus the Word of Christ has become unfruitful. It can’t bear fruit, for you have ceased keeping the commandments of God. You will not prosper, for you have cast the commandments of the Lord behind your back. It’s time for you to humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord laying aside your haughtiness; weep and mourn as one mourns for his only son, bow down your head like a bulrush in the sight of God, confess to him the haughtiness of your heart and God will have mercy on you; then He will exalt you and you will become really rich.

If you refuse to listen to the Lord, you will bear your disobedience, for Wisdom says: “If you scoff, you will bear it alone” (Proverbs 9:12 – NKJV). Therefore, do not deceive yourselves, for you will pay for your perverse way of living. You have already received in yourselves part of the due penalty for your error, for you are full of troubles and sorrows (you have ceased trusting in the Lord, and you have put your trust in riches and you have strayed from the faith, you have pierced yourselves through with many sorrows); yes, those troubles and sorrows which will be to those who refuse to heed the voice of the Lord. Examine yourselves; do you not see that you have lost faith in the Lord? Do you not see that to you your help does not come from the Lord any longer, but rather it comes from the huge amount of money you have made, for you have neglected the salvation you obtained from the Lord? Do you not realize that you have lost the peace and the quietness and the true joy which are in the Lord? Do you not see that you do not know the Scriptures? Do you not see that you are not able to pray any longer? Do you not see that the good works done for the sake of those who are in need take the last place in your life, or rather they no longer exist? Have you not brought this on yourselves for forsaking the Lord your God, when He led you in the way? Your wickedness will punish you; your backsliding will rebuke you! Do not harden your heart, you who love the world and its lusts. God exhorts you to return to Him with all your heart and to walk humbly with Him.

Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ

The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians: “Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Philippians 3:17-21 – NIV).

Paul knew that among God’s people there were many who lived as enemies of the cross of Christ, who obviously did not conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel, and thus he exhorted the saints to follow his example and to take note of those who lived according to the pattern he and his fellow workers had given them and not of those who lived as enemies of the cross of Christ. He did not shun to speak of those people, for he spoke of their character and their destiny. I would like you to notice that Paul often spoke to the saints of those people who lived as enemies of the cross of Christ so that they might beware of them, and that when he wrote to the Philippians about the enemies of the cross he wept. Instead, among many Churches today, some believers do not know that there are many who claim to be Christians who live as enemies of the cross of Christ; others know the enemies of the cross for they see that they are bad trees which bear bad fruit, yet they keep silent, for they think that by speaking of them the Church is not edified. Brothers, as for me I will not keep silent, but “I will cry like a woman in labor” (Isaiah 42:14 – NKJV). For you must beware of these men, and you must not follow their example, because they are evil doers, who skilfully hide themselves behind the banner of the Gospel, of which they say they are ministers but this is not true for they serve their stomach and not the Gospel.
We as disciples of Christ must be imitators of Christ and of those who have denied themselves, taken up their cross and followed the steps of Christ. And among those who have denied themselves and carried their cross are the apostles Paul, Peter, Silvanus, Timothy, John and James. It is true that they are no longer in this world, however we have their writings, which show us the way they conducted themselves.

Let me comment now on the above mentioned words of Paul.

● “Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ”
  In order that you may understand what it means to live as enemies of the cross of Christ, I need to speak to you of the cross of Christ. Now we, who are believing people, boast in the cross of Jesus Christ, for by it (the cross) the world has been crucified to us, and we to the world, as Paul said to the Galatians: “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14 – NIV). When I say that the world has been crucified to us, I mean that we who are in Christ “have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24 – NKJV). Now if the world and all that is in it - that is, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life – was nailed to the cross of Christ, how can we still love what was nailed to the cross? Don’t you think that if we loved the world and its lusts we would live as enemies of the cross of Christ? Therefore, all those who, through their example and their words, want to arouse in us the love of the world and its lusts live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Know this, that when a preacher seeks to arouse in his listeners the love of riches, the love of money, the love of the pleasures of life, and somehow he urges them to lay up for themselves treasures on earth rather than in heaven, he speaks as an enemy of the cross. If you read carefully the words of Christ and the words of the apostles, you will notice that Christ first and then the apostles exhorted believers in various ways to live godly and righteously, and to set their minds on things above and not on things on the earth. Therefore anyone who does not exhort you to say ‘no’ to the worldly lusts, but he urges you to love them, is an enemy of the cross of Christ. When we speak of the cross of Christ, we speak of sacrifices, sufferings, persecutions; therefore it is inconceivable that one preaches the cross and at the same time he seeks fame, temporal power, the world’s approval, earthly riches, and he loves the world with its lusts. Thus, if a preacher does not want to deny himself, nor to take up the cross of Christ, but he wants to please the world and he shows by his conduct that he loves the world which Christ has nailed to the cross, I urge you to beware of him, for he is not a friend of the cross of Christ but a very fierce enemy of it.

● “Their destiny is destruction”
  Those who live as enemies of the cross of Christ walk in a way which leads to destruction. Why? Because those who love the world love their life, and we know that “he who loves his life will lose it” (John 12:25 – NKJV). Yes, all those who refuse to deny themselves and to take up their cross, will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

● “Their god is their stomach”
  Now the enemies of the cross of Christ do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their belly, and in order to serve their belly they cause offenses and contradict the teachings of the Word of God. Why do they contradict the Word of truth? Because the Word of God opposes the fleshly lusts and worldly lusts, that is, the things which these people love. Paul exhorted us to beware of these people, saying: “Now I urge you, brethren, note those who cause divisions and offenses, contrary to the doctrine which you learned, and avoid them. For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple” (Romans 16:17-18 – NKJV). Some believers have not yet realized that one cannot seek his own (that is, money, fame, the honor that comes from men) in the work of the Lord and at the same time serve the Lord faithfully and with a clear conscience; for they think that those who preach and seek their own serve Christ, but if things were so, Jesus was wrong for He said: “No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon” (Luke 16:13 – NKJV). I give you some examples so that you may understand that he who serves his own belly cannot serve righteousness. Anyone who takes pleasure in revelry
and drunkenness cannot love the word which says: “Therefore be … self-controlled” (1 Peter 4:7 – NIV), for it opposes his fleshly lusts. Anyone who loves money cannot love the word which says: “Freely you have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8 – NKJV), nor that which says: “Be content with what you have” (Hebrews 13:5 – NIV), for the Word clearly opposes his own interests. This is the reason why those who serve their belly cannot serve righteousness and they oppose the sound doctrine of God with useless wranglings.

• “Their glory is in their shame”

Those who serve their stomach distinguish from those who serve our Lord Jesus Christ for they boast of things which are their shame. Instead of being ashamed of their evil works, they boast of doing them. In hearing them, we realize that they boast of shameful things.

• “Their mind is on earthly things”

The Word clearly says: “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth” (Colossians 3:2 – NKJV), but these people refuse to obey the commandment of the Lord, for they seek at any cost to become rich and famous in the sight of the world.

These people set their mind on earthly things, and such an attitude is contrary to the attitude of a true believer, who desires to depart and be with Christ in the heavenly places. From the things these people say and from their way of life we clearly learn that they do not desire to depart from their body and go to be with the Lord, for they take pleasure in living in luxury and in the midst of their riches.

But as for us, our citizenship is in heaven; we want to go to that place where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God, where God establishes peace, and where one rests from his labors. Whereas the enemies of the cross of Christ look at the things which are seen, we look at the things which are not seen, which are eternal and kept in heaven for us. We now feel attracted by heaven, and not by the earth; by the heavenly things, and not by earthly things which are like a breath; that’s why we are no longer attracted by the things of this world, that’s why we do not desire to become rich and famous, or to wear costly clothing or to live in luxury or to have pleasant palaces. I ask you, ‘If we desired the same things as the people of the world desire, what would be the difference between us and them?’ Brothers, we must show in deed and in truth that we feel like strangers and pilgrims in this world. If we say that we are on the way to heaven we must also show that we want to go to heaven and we can show this by not conforming to the pattern of this evil world. However, if we also conform to the course of this world, we will cease to enlighten darkness, and thus darkness will not be able to see that we are a nation which walks in the light of the Christ of God.

We have taken up our cross, and with that cross we want to continue to walk together with our Lord; surely there will be many sacrifices and tribulations for us who want to live as friends of the cross of Christ; however while we are looking for the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ it is worth enduring them, for at the end of the race we will obtain the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

To God be the glory now and forever. Amen.

The principle of ‘sowing and reaping’

As I showed before, the principle of ‘sowing and reaping’ or ‘giving and receiving’ is in the Bible. We can do nothing against the truth, so we can’t deny that if we give it will be given to us, and that with the same measure we use it will be measured back to us.

However, it must be said that God commands us to give because He wants us to share in our material goods with those who are in need or deserves to be helped so that His name may be glorified in us, and not because He wants us to become rich. Therefore we must give prompted by the love of God toward those who are in need and not by the love of money. In other words, we must give part of our money to the poor or to the ministers of the Gospel not because we want to become rich or richer, but because we want to love them in deed and in truth. If we give because we want to become rich or because we want to receive, we are wrong for as we saw before we must be content with what we have. So brothers share in your material things with
those who are in need or with those who instruct you in the Word, but do this prompted exclusively by the love of God.

I would like to tell you another thing. When you give some money to a minister of the Gospel or to the poor, this does not necessarily mean that God will reward you giving you some other money. In other words, if you give 100 € to God’s work that does not mean that God within a short time will cause someone to give you 200 € or 300 € or more, for nowhere in the Bible we are said that what we reap is exactly according to the kind of what we sow. I give you an example taken from the Bible. Jesus said to His disciples: “And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42 – NKJV). As you can see, Jesus did not say that he who gives a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, will receive ten cups of cold water or one hundred cups of cold water. He just said that he will by no means lose his reward. Likewise, when we give some money to God’s work, we must not expect God to reward us with more money (for God is not bound to give you more money). Nevertheless I do not exclude that God may reward us giving us more money. I recall an accident which happened to me many years ago: at that time I was about twenty years old. One Sunday, before leaving my house for the place of worship, I promised God that during the worship service I would give to His work a certain sum of money (it was not much but I decided to give it with a cheerful heart). Nobody knew of my decision. That night, when the worship service was ended, an elderly brother gave me an envelope. I took the envelope and put it into my pocket. After a short time, while I was with my brother, I opened that envelope, and I found in it a sum of money which was bigger than that I had given to the Lord a short time before. However, this experience of mine has not led me to teach that this is exactly what will happen to you if you give some money to God’s work, for many other times God has rewarded me in other ways. Therefore, when you give a certain sum of money for God’s work don’t expect to receive a bigger sum of money; when you give a pair of shoes, do not expect to receive two or three pair of shoes, and so on. What I mean is this, God will surely reward you, but He will reward you according to His will and not according to your will. God is not your servant, but your Master, remember this always. Do you remember the Shunamite woman? She was concerned for the prophet Elisha, for she said to her husband: “Let’s make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us” (2 Kings 4:10 – NIV). What did she receive from the Lord? She received a child (cf. 2 Kings 4:16-17). Therefore, the Scripture teaches that God rewards us for our offerings, for He is a righteous God, but His reward is not necessarily according to the same kind of the things we gave (money for money, shoes for shoes, houses for houses, etc.). This is confirmed by the following words Paul said to the Philippians after he received from them an offering: “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19 – NIV). What the Bible teaches is that he who helps those who are in need, will be helped by God when he is need; therefore if you meet the needs of someone, God will meet your needs, as it is written: “He who waters will also be watered himself” (Proverbs 11:25 – NKJV). Do you remember the poor widow who lived in Zarephath, who expected to die of hunger, to whom God sent the prophet Elijah? She helped the prophet of God by giving him some food, and God helped her by giving food to her and her son for many days (cf. 1 Kings 17:9-16). In addition to this, a short time after, when her son died of sickness, God raised her son from the dead (cf. 1 Kings 17:17-24). I know by experience that God will never be in debt to us, whatever thing we do for His glory, He will reward us on earth according to His faithfulness and righteousness. Is it not written that “the righteous will be recompensed on the earth” (Proverbs 11:31 – NKJV)? But what I am saying has nothing to do with the ‘prosperity message’ according to which it is God’s will for every son of God to be financially rich and to live as a king’s son on earth. Therefore, brethren, live soberly, righteously and humbly, sharing in your material things with those who are in need, and God in His faithfulness will meet all your needs. Do not desire to be rich, but rather be content with what you have, and God will bless your life.
To ask and receive

Now let me tell you something about the principle of ‘asking and receiving’. God commands us to ask, for Jesus said: “Ask” (Matthew 7:7 – NKJV). However, in order that we may receive from God what we have asked, we must fulfill the following conditions:
We must ask in faith, as it is written: “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:24 – NKJV). Therefore, if we doubt, our prayer will not be answered, “for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:6-8 - NKJV).
We must ask for things which are according to the will of God for us, as it is written: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15 – NKJV). Therefore, if we ask amiss, that we may spend it on our pleasures, our prayer will not be answered: “You ask, and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures” (James 4:3 – NKJV), says James.
We must keep the commandments of God, as it is written: “And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight” (1 John 3:22 – NKJV). Therefore, if we refuse to keep the commandments of God, God will not answer our prayer. Wisdom says: “One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination” (Proverbs 28:9 – NKJV), and the Psalmist says: “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear” (Psalm 66:18 – NKJV).

In the light of the teaching of the Scripture, therefore, in order that our prayer may be answered it is not enough to ask in faith. Therefore we will receive from God the petitions we have asked of Him if we ask in faith, if they are according to the will of God for us, and if we keep God’s commandments. If only one of these conditions is not fulfilled, we will not receive what we have asked. For instance, if you live soberly, righteously and godly, and ask in faith, but what you ask is not according to the will of God for you, your prayer will not be answered. No matter how many times you may confess that thing in prayer, God will not give you that thing. You are not a god who can speak into existence whatever he wants by his words, but you are a human being made of dust and ashes whose ways depend on God. It is God who has full control over your life, and not you. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

Tithing

As we saw before, the prosperity preachers teach that tithing is very important for prosperity. This is the reason why they urge believers to tithe (that is, they command believers to bring them each month one-tenth of their income). To support this they quote the following words spoken by the prophet Malachi: “Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye say, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 3:7-12). Let me tell you, therefore, something about tithing.
Tithing is one of the commandments of the law of Moses we are no longer bound to keep. In other words, it is no longer mandatory under grace, for it is not part of the law of Christ. Christ did not command His disciples to give Him a tenth of all their income in order to support His ministry. It is true that Jesus Christ spoke of tithing, for He said to the scribes and the Pharisees:
“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law; justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23 – NKJV); however, I would like to point out to you that if we quote these words to support the validity of tithing under the New Covenant, we should regard also the Sabbath day and the dietary laws and many others, as commandments to be kept under the New Covenant. Why do I say this? Because – as you can clearly see – Jesus said: “These [the weightier matters of the law; justice and mercy and faith] you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23 – NKJV). And which are the other matters of the law which we should not leave undone? It is very easy to answer this question, for they are the Sabbath day, the dietary laws, the laws concerning the Jewish feasts, circumcision, and many others, which we know were just a shadow of things to come and thus we are not bound to keep them. Please pay much attention to these words of Jesus. So, it is clear that Jesus by those words did not mean that we who are under the New Covenant are bound to tithe as the Israelites were bound under the Old Covenant. What did He mean by those words then? Well, He meant that the scribes and the Pharisees (and not His disciples) were hypocrites for they kept just a part of the law of Moses, while they had to keep all the commandments of the law of Moses, and not only some of them. They tithed but they neglected the weightier matters of the law. That’s why Jesus spoke those words to them.

I have written an exhaustive article which refutes the imposition of tithing under the New Covenant; read it.

Health and sickness

It is wrong to affirm that it is never God’s will for any of His children to be sick, for according to the Holy Scriptures sometimes God allows Satan to strike some of His children with sickness, as in the case of Job who was struck by Satan with painful boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (cf. Job 2.7). The reason why God allows Satan to strike some of His children with sickness is to test them as He tested Job.

Some other times it is God Himself who strikes some of His children with sickness, for they have rebelled against His Word. Many of the saints of Corinth became sick for they had partaken of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:27-30). In this case, therefore, sickness is a punishment God inflicts upon those children of His who despise His Word, and unless they repent of their rebellion they will not be healed or they will die of that sickness.

Some other times, sickness is just the means God has decided to use in order to make His children die and make them pass from this world to heaven. In this case, therefore, the children of God become sick with the illness of which they will die like the prophet Elisha, of whom the Scripture says: “Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die” (2 Kings 13:14 – NKJV).

As far as healing is concerned, it must be said that sometimes it is not God’s will for some of His children to be healed for He has decided to make them die of sickness. As we saw before, the Scripture says that the prophet Elisha become sick with the illness of which he would die, Therefore, no wonder that today many Christians die of sickness. Some other times God does not want to heal His children in order to keep them from becoming conceited because of some great revelations they have received from God, as in the case of Paul (cf. 2 Corinthians 12:7-9; Galatians 4:13-15). Some other times we do not know why they are not healed by God, even though they have faith in God and have pleaded with Him to heal them. Timothy was a man of God, who was sick, for Paul said to him: “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities” (1 Timothy 5:23 – NKJV). Trophimus, who was a servant of the Lord, was left sick by Paul in Miletus (cf. 2 Timothy 4:20). Whatever the Lord pleases He does, says the Scripture. The Lord’s will be done. However, even though sometimes God does not want to heal some people, we firmly believe that God still heals today for He has not changed and therefore we urge the sick to have faith in God in order to be healed. In
addition to this, we urge believers to desire the gifts of healings, so that God may give them the supernatural ability to heal the sick in the name of Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Faith is not a force following unalterable laws

Faith is not a force following unalterable laws. In other words, it is not true that we always get and have in our life what we believe for and say. Know this, that you can have all faith, so that you could remove mountains, but if you plead with God to do something which is not according to His will, you will by no means obtain what you have asked of Him. Let me give you three biblical examples.

Moses was a very humble man of God, he worked many signs and wonders by the power of God both in Egypt and in the wilderness, and his prayers were answered by God. Yet when he pleaded with God to let him enter the land of Canaan, God did not answer his prayer. Here is what Moses said to the Israelites: “And I besought the LORD at that time, saying, O Lord GOD, thou hast begun to shew thy servant thy greatness, and thy mighty hand: for what God is there in heaven or in earth, that can do according to thy works, and according to thy might? I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon. But the LORD was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me: and the LORD said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter. Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see” (Deuteronomy 3:23-28).

Paul was an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, many people were healed through the laying on of his hands or even without the laying on of his hands, yet when he pleaded with God to take the messenger of Satan (whom God had given him to torment him) away from him, God did not take him away from Paul. Here is what he said to the Corinthians: “And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me” (2 Corinthians 12:7-9).

Jesus was the Son of God, He was full of faith and the Holy Spirit, He worked many signs and wonders. He healed a great many sick people, yet when He pleaded with God to take that cup away from Him God did not answer His prayer for it was God’s will for Jesus to die on the cross. Here is what Jesus said to His Father: “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will” (Mark 14:36 – NKJV). Therefore, let no one deceive you with empty words.
Tithing is still mandatory

Many Churches teach that tithing is still mandatory. The Southern Baptist churches: we read in The Baptist Faith and Message (1963) the following statement: ‘God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debt of worship to the whole world, a holy trust of worship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer’s cause on earth. Gen. 14:20; Lev. 27:30-32; Deut. 8:18; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Rom. 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Cor. 8-9; 12:15; Phil. 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19 (XIII. Stewardship). Please note that even though the word ‘tithe’ is not mentioned, the following verses Gen. 14:20; Lev. 27:30-32; Deut. 8:18; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23 are quoted to uphold tithing.

Presbyterian Church: ‘Giving has always been a mark of Christian commitment and discipleship. The ways in which a believer uses God’s gifts of material goods, personal abilities, and time should reflect a faithful response to God’s self-giving in Jesus Christ and Christ’s call to minister to and share with others in the world. Tithing is a primary expression of the Christian discipline of stewardship.” (Book of Order … W5.5004)

The United Methodist Church: ‘Tithing has been the traditional minimum standard of giving for Christians. The United Methodist Church has taken the official position that tithing is the standard for United Methodists, and the practice of tithing is to be actively encouraged in every local church’ (Source: A Dictionary for United Methodists, Alan K. Waltz, 1991, Abingdon Press)

The Church of the Nazarene: ‘The Scriptures teach that God is the Owner of all persons and all things. We, therefore, are His stewards of both life and possessions. God's ownership and our stewardship ought to be acknowledged, for we shall be held personally accountable to God for the exercise of our stewardship. God, as a God of system and order in all of His ways, has established a system of giving that acknowledges His ownership and human stewardship. To this end all His children should faithfully tithe and present offerings for the support of the gospel. (Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:24-34; 25:31-46; Mark 10:16-31; Luke 12:13-24; 19:11-27; John 16:16-27; Romans 12:1-13; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:6-15; 1 Timothy 6:16-19; Hebrews 7:8; James 1:27; 1 John 3:16-18). Storehouse tithing is a scriptural and practical performance of faithfully and regularly placing the tithe into that church to which the member belongs. Therefore, the financing of the church shall be based on the plan of storehouse tithing, and the local Church of the Nazarene shall be regarded by all of its people as the storehouse. All who are a part of the Church of the Nazarene are urged to contribute faithfully one-tenth of all their increase as a minimum financial obligation to the Lord and freewill offerings in addition as God has prospered them for the support of the whole church, local, district, regional, and general’ (From the Manual of the Church of the Nazarene, Part III, Paragraphs 38-38.1)

Most of the Pentecostal Churches teach tithing. Here is what some Pentecostal Denominations teach about tithing.

Assemblies of God: ‘The Assemblies of God has always been a proponent of tithing (or giving one-tenth of one’s personal income to support the work of God). We believe tithing is a recognition that everything we have comes from God. The practice checks our greed, promotes personal discipline and thrift, testifies to our faith, promotes God’s work in the world, and alleviates human need. While we do not believe tithing to be a condition for salvation, we do believe it is a very important biblical model, one which should set the minimal standard for Christian giving for people in all income ranges. Though some people believe tithing was an Old Testament practice not intended for New Testament Christians, the Assemblies of God believes and teaches that tithing is still God’s design for supporting the ministry and reaching the world
with the gospel. Our bylaws state, "We recognize the duty of tithing and urge all our people to pay tithes to God" (Article IX, Section 7a.) It is true there is no direct commandment in the New Testament saying, "You must tithe to God one-tenth of your income"; but there is also no statement declaring the Old Testament plan as no longer valid (From: http://www.ag.org).

The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel: 'We believe that the method ordained of God to sustain His ministry and the spread of the gospel after His command is 'Titheing' and is generally accepted throughout all Foursquare Churches, not only as God's method to take care of the material and financial needs of His Church, but to raise the spiritual morale of His people to the extent that God must bless them. We are commanded in Malachi 3:10 to 'Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it' (Declaration of Faith, XXII).

The Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee): '... Titheing is the paying of one tenth of our increase into the treasury of the Church. It began with Abraham, continued under the law and received Christ's approval. Giving differs from and is in addition to tithing. Both are part of God's plan to finance His work on earth. Read Genesis 14:18-20; 28:20-22; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23; Luke 1 1:42; 1 Corinthians 1 6:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; Hebrews 7:1-21' (From: http://www.thechurchofgod.org/)

Even some sects teach that titheing is still mandatory. Here is what some of them say about titheing.

United Pentecostal Church International (the members of this sect are called also 'Oneness Pentecostals' and 'Jesus only'): 'We believe titheing is God's financial plan to provide for His work, and has been since the days of Abraham. Tithing came with faith under Abraham, Moses' law enjoined it, and Israel practiced it when she was right with God; Jesus indorsed it (Matt. 23:23); and Paul said to lay by in store as God has prospered you. Do not rob God of His portion, viz., tithes and offerings' (UPCI Ministerial Manual, 1995, Articles Of Faith Of The United Pentecostal Church International, pages 19-27).

Seventh-Day Adventist Church: 'The gospel plan for the support of the work of God in preaching the everlasting gospel is by the tithes and offerings of His people. The Seventh-day Adventist Church has followed this plan from its earliest days. The biblical basis for the returning of tithes and giving of offerings will be found in the following references: Lev. 27:30; Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23; 1 Cor. 9:9-14; 2 Cor. 9:6-15. Observe also the following from the Spirit of Prophecy: "The system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth - that God is the source of every blessing to His creatures, and that to Him man's gratitude is due for the good gifts of His providence." - Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 525. "Tithes and offerings for God are an acknowledgment of His claim on us by creation, and they are also an acknowledgment of His claim by redemption. Because all our power is derived from Christ, these offerings are to flow from us to God. They are to keep ever before us the claim of redemption, the greatest of all claims, and the one that involves every other. The realization of the sacrifice made in our behalf is ever to be fresh in our minds and is ever to exert an influence on our thoughts and plans. Christ is to be indeed as one crucified among us." - Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 479. "The tithe is sacred, reserved by God for Himself. It is to be brought into His treasury to be used to sustain the gospel laborers in their work." - Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 249. "He has given His people a plan for raising sums sufficient to make the enterprise self-sustaining. God's plan in the titheing system is beautiful in its simplicity and equality. All may take hold of it in faith and courage, for it is divine in its origin. In it are combined simplicity and utility, and it does not require depth of learning to understand and execute it. All may feel that they can act a part in carrying forward the precious work of salvation. Every man, woman, and youth may become a treasurer for the Lord and may be an agent to meet the demands upon the treasury. Says the apostle: «Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." - Testimonies, vol. 3, pp. 388, 389. "That which has been set apart according to the Scriptures as belonging to the Lord constitutes the revenue of the gospel and is no longer ours. It is no better than sacrilege for a man to take from God's treasury in order to serve himself or to serve others in
their secular business." - Testimonies, vol. 9, pp. 246, 247. "Every church member should be taught to be faithful in paying an honest tithe." - Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 251. "This is not a request of man; it is one of God's ordinances, whereby His work may be sustained and carried on in the world. . . . No one can excuse himself from paying his tithes and offerings to the Lord." - Testimonies to Ministers, p. 307. "God has made the proclamation of the gospel dependent upon the labors and the gifts of His people. Voluntary offerings and the tithe constitute the revenue of the Lord's work. Of the means entrusted to man, God claims a certain portion, - the tenth. He leaves all free to say whether or not they will give more than this." - The Acts of the Apostles, p. 74. "God has given special direction as to the use of the tithe. He does not design that His work shall be crippled for want of means. That there may be no haphazard work and no error, He has made our duty on these points very plain. The portion that God has reserved for Himself is not to be diverted to any other purpose than that which He has specified. Let none feel at liberty to retain their tithe, to use according to their own judgment. They are not to use it for themselves in an emergency, nor to apply it as they see fit, even in what they may regard as the Lord's work." - Testimonies, vol. 9, p. 247 (Church Manual, pages 151-152).

Mormons: 'Verily, thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my church in Zion, 'For the building of mine house, and for the laying of the foundation of Zion and for the priesthood, and for the debts of the Presidency of my Church. 'And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people. 'And after that, those who have thus been tithed shall pay one-tenth of all their interest annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord.' (Doctrine and Covenants 119:1-4).

The followers of Herbert W. Armstrong: “God raised up the CHURCH, not only that its apostles and evangelists go into all the world announcing the GOOD NEWS of the coming Kingdom of God, but also, as the very means for the general body of lay members to develop God's own holy righteous CHARACTER -- by means of GIVING -- giving their continuous prayers for the apostle, giving their encouragement, tithes and offerings!’ (Herbert W. Armstrong, The Incredible Human Potential, 1978 edition, page 120)

Confutation

Now I am going to show you from the Scriptures that tithing is not mandatory for those who are in Christ Jesus, and consequently those who teach tithing are greatly mistaken.

The reason why God commanded the Israelites to give a tenth of their income to the Levites

In the law of Moses it is written: “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord ...... The entire tithe of the herd and flock – every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod – will be holy to the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30,32 – NIV). This is the commandment concerning tithing the Lord gave to Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites. To whom did the Israelites have to give a tenth of their income? According to the law of Moses, they had to give a tenth of their income to the Levites. Let us see, therefore, the reason why God commanded the Israelites to give a tenth of their income to the Levites. In other words, let us see what was the use of tithes under the law.

God, after He brought the Israelites out of Egypt, commanded the Israelites to make a sanctuary for Him. That sanctuary was made just as God had commanded. It consisted of two rooms: the first room was called The Holy place and in it there was the lampstand, the altar of incense, the table, and the showbread; the second room was called The Most Holy Place and in it there was the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat. The Holy Place was separated from The Most Holy Place by a veil. Outside the sanctuary, before the door of the sanctuary, was the altar of burnt offering, and between the sanctuary and the altar there was the laver with water in it for washing (Aaron and his sons used it to wash their hands and feet whenever they entered the sanctuary or approached the altar).
God chose Aaron and his sons that they might serve Him as priests, for He said to Moses: “Have Aaron your brother brought to you from among the Israelites, along with his sons Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, so they may serve me as priests” (Exodus 28:1 – NIV) Aaron and his sons came from the tribe of Levi, precisely from the family of the Kohathites. From Levi came Gershom, Kohath and Merari, and from them came all the Levites. However, while Aaron and his sons were separated from the children of Israel to serve God as priests, the rest of the Levites were separated from the congregation of Israel and given to Aaron and his sons so that they might take care of all the furnishings of the tabernacle of meeting, performing all the duties of the tabernacle. Each family of the Levites had to perform a specific duty, as it is written: “And the LORD spake unto Moses and unto Aaron, saying, .... This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation, about the most holy things: And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it: And shall put thereon the covering of badgers' skins, and shall spread over it a cloth wholly of blue, and shall put in the staves thereof. And upon the table of shewbread they shall spread a cloth of blue, and put thereon the dishes, and the spoons, and the bowls, and covers to cover withal: and the continual bread shall be thereon: And they shall spread upon them a cloth of scarlet, and cover the same with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put in the staves thereof. And they shall take a cloth of blue, and cover the candlestick of the light, and his lamps, and his tongs, and his snuffdishes, and all the oil vessels thereof, wherewith they minister unto it: And they shall put it and all the vessels thereof within a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put it upon a bar. And upon the golden altar they shall spread a cloth of blue, and cover it with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put to the staves thereof: And they shall take all the instruments of ministry, wherewith they minister in the sanctuary, and put them in a cloth of blue, and cover them with a covering of badgers' skins, and shall put them on a bar: And they shall take away the ashes from the altar, and spread a purple cloth thereon: And they shall put upon it all the vessels thereof, wherewith they minister about it, even the censers, the fleshhooks, and the shovels, and the basons, all the vessels of the altar; and they shall spread upon it a covering of badgers' skins, and put to the staves of it. And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation. ... And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, .... This is the service of the families of the Gershonites, to serve, and for burdens: And they shall bear the curtains of the tabernacle, and the tabernacle of the congregation, his covering, and the covering of the badgers' skins that is above upon it, and the hanging for the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, And the hangings of the court, and the hanging for the door of the gate of the court, which is by the tabernacle and by the altar round about, and their cords, and all the instruments of their service, and all that is made for them: so shall they serve. .... As for the sons of Merari, thou shalt number them after their families, by the house of their fathers: From thirty years old and upward even unto fifty years old shalt thou number them, every one that entereth into the service, to do the work of the tabernacle of the congregation. And this is the charge of their burden, according to all their service in the tabernacle of the congregation; the boards of the tabernacle, and the bars thereof, and the pillars thereof, and sockets thereof, And the pillars of the court round about, and their sockets, and their pins, and their cords, with all their instruments, and with all their service: and by name ye shall reckon the instruments of the charge of their burden. This is the service of the families of the sons of Merari, according to all their service, in the tabernacle of the congregation...” (Numbers 4:1, 4-15, 21, 24-26, 29-33). Now, since Aaron and his sons as well as the Levites had to perform the tasks assigned to them by God and they did not do any other work, God provided for them and for their households in this way: to Aaron and his sons He gave all the holy offerings the Israelites gave to God, and to the Levites He gave all the tithes in Israel. Let us now look closely at this right Aaron and his sons as well as the rest of the Levites had.
As for Aaron and his sons, it is written that God said to Aaron: “Behold, I also have given thee the charge of mine heave offerings of all the hallowed things of the children of Israel; unto thee have I given them by reason of the anointing, and to thy sons, by an ordinance for ever. This shall be thine of the most holy things, reserved from the fire: every oblation of theirs, every meat offering of theirs, and every sin offering of theirs, and every trespass offering of theirs, which they shall render unto me, shall be most holy for thee and for thy sons. In the most holy place shalt thou eat it; every male shall eat it: it shall be holy unto thee. And this is thine; the heave offering of their gift, with all the wave offerings of the children of Israel: I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever: every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it. All the best of the oil, and all the best of the wine, and of the wheat, the firstfruits of them which they shall offer unto the LORD, have I given thee. And whatsoever is first ripe in the land, which they shall bring unto the LORD, shall be thine; every one that is clean in thine house shall eat of it. Everything devoted in Israel shall be thine. Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem. And those that are to be redeemed from a month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. But the firstling of a cow, or the firstling of a sheep, or the firstling of a goat, thou shalt not redeem; they are holy: thou shalt sprinkle their blood upon the altar, and shalt burn their fat for an offering made by fire, for a sweet savour unto the LORD. And the flesh of them shall be thine, as the wave breast and as the right shoulder are thine. All the heave offerings of the holy things, which the children of Israel offer unto the LORD, have I given thee, and thy sons and thy daughters with thee by a statute for ever: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the LORD unto thee and to thy seed with thee” (Numbers 18:8-19). Aaron and his sons were anointed to serve God as priests, and thus they had the right to eat what was offered on the altar and the firstfruits the Israelites offered to God as well as the meat of the firstborn of an ox, a sheep or a goat. Bear in mind that God said to Aaron that He gave all those things to him and his sons “by reason of the anointing,” which means that God had given them that right because they had been anointed to serve as priests.

As for the Levites, who had to do the work of the tabernacle, the Scripture says that God said: “And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation” (Numbers 18:21). Therefore the tithes which the Israelites had to pay to God belonged to the Levites. However the Levites on their part had to give a tenth of the tithes to Aaron the priest, for God said to the Levites: “When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe. And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshingfloor, and as the fulness of the winepress. Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD's heave offering to Aaron the priest. ... When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress. And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation” (Numbers 18:26-28, 30-31). As you can see, the children of Israel were commanded by God to give a tenth of their income to the Levites, who, according to the law, had a commandment to receive tithes from the people and to give a tenth of the tithes to Aaron.

To sum up, God gave a wages to Aaron and his sons as well as to the Levites for their work. The wages for Aaron and his sons consisted of the most holy offerings that were kept from the fire which the Israelites gave to God, all the land’s firstfruits, and the firstborn of every ox, sheep or goat, and a tenth of the tithe received by the Levites. Whereas the wages for the Levites consisted of nine tenths of all the tithes paid by the children of Israel. This was the use of the tithes under the law: they were used for rewarding the Levites and the family of the high priest for their work. However, it must be said that the tithes paid by the Israelites were used not only
for supporting the ministry of the priests and the Levites, but also for helping the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who were among the Israelites, as it is written: "At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou doest" (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

According to what the Scripture teaches, when the Israelites ceased to give a tenth of their income to God, God ceased to bless them and cursed them with a curse, sending the devourer to destroy the fruit of their ground. This, because since God had said: “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30 – NIV), withholding tithes was tantamount to robbing Him. This was the reason why God, through the prophet Malachi, said to the Israelites who rebelled against Him: “Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation” (Malachi 3:8-9 – NKJV).

We are not under the law of Moses, but under the law of Christ

Now someone may ask, ‘Now, under grace, that is, under the New Covenant, are we Gentiles by birth, who have believed, bound to pay a tenth of all our income, as the Israelites were under the law?’ The answer is, ‘No’. Someone will ask, ‘Why?’ Let us turn to the Scripture in order to understand the reason why we are not bound to tithe under grace.

It is written: “On the basis of it [the Levitical priesthood] the law was given to the people” (Hebrews 7:11 – NIV); the Italian Bible Riveduta Version reads: “Su quello è basata la legge data al popolo” that is, “On it [the Levitical priesthood] is based the law which was given to the people.” Therefore the law which God gave to the children of Israel was based on the Levitical priesthood (remember that it was the Levites who had to receive tithes from the people). However, since perfection could not be attained through the Levitical priesthood, God raised up for us another Priest according to another order, that is to say, not according to the order of Aaron but according to the order of Melchizedek. Furthermore, you know that this High Priest, that is, Jesus, did not descend from the tribe of Levi, to which the priesthood belonged, but from the tribe of Judah, “of which tribe Moses spoke not anything concerning priesthood” (Hebrews 7:14 – NKJV). The thing to which I want you to pay attention is this: inasmuch as the priesthood has changed (and the law was based on the Levitical priesthood), of necessity there was also a change of the law, as it is written: “For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law” (Hebrews 7:12 – NIV). As a consequence, we are no longer under the law of Moses (which was based on the Levitical priesthood), but under the law of Christ (which is based on the priesthood of Christ), which does not command us to tithe. We are now bound to keep the law of Christ; therefore we must know the commandments of this law concerning giving, yes, because the law of Christ, too, commands us to give. Jesus Christ knew very well the commandment of the law concerning tithing, yet He did not command His disciples to tithe. Someone may say, ‘Did He command to tithe, through His apostles, after He was taken up into heaven?’ No, He didn’t after He ascended to heaven either. Let us see then how much the High Priest of our confession commanded us to give, keeping in mind these things: first of all, “the law made nothing perfect” (Hebrews 7:19 – NKJV) and Christ came to complete it for it was incomplete; secondly, the law of Christ is called “the perfect law of liberty” (James 1:25 – NKJV), for we under the law of Christ are free to give how much we want and are able to give. Brothers, in order to understand why the law of Christ is superior to the law of Moses, we must always remember that the law of Moses was incomplete while the law of Christ is complete.

Jesus said: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye
Brothers, we all disciples of Christ must give. Now Jesus said that with the same measure that we use, it will be measured back to us, which means that it will be given to us according to the measure that we use when we give to the Lord. Under the law of Moses anyone who did not give a tenth of all his income to the Levites (even if he gave just less than one-tenth of his income) was cursed by God for He robbed God (and God had said: “You shall not steal” Exodus 20:15 – NKJV) and did not give according to the measure prescribed and commanded by the law. Now, under the law of Christ, God has not promised He will curse those who give less than one-tenth of their income. How could God curse with a curse all those who don’t keep this commandment of the law, when it is written that “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13 – NKJV)? Of course, Jesus did not state that anyone who doesn’t tithe will be cursed, however it is clear that if we don’t give to the Lord even a tenth of our income we will be rewarded by the Lord according to the measure we use when we give to Him. God cannot be mocked, for He is just and He commits no injustice even when He rewards those who give to Him. That each one of us will reap according to the measure he used when he sowed was confirmed by Paul when He wrote to the Corinthians: “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6 – NKJV). He who is wise knows that in order to reap much he must give much and not little, and thus he beware of covetousness and sows bountifully, for he knows that the Scripture says: “There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty” (Proverbs 11:24 – NKJV). Paul also commanded the saints to give; listen to what he wrote to the saints of Corinth about the collection for the poor among the saints: “Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him…” (1 Corinthians 16:2), “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). As you can see, Paul urged the saints of Corinth to give what they had decided in their heart to give (that is, as they purposed in their heart), according to the prosperity God had given to them. However, he urged them to give not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God does not take delight in a giver who gives to be seen by men or a giver who gives grumbling for he is not glad to give. God loves a cheerful giver, therefore we must give joyfully to please God; and the words of Paul to the Corinthians are in agreement with these, which he wrote to the Romans: “He who shows mercy, [let him do it] with cheerfulness” (Romans 12:8 – NKJV). Notice that Paul did not say that he who sows sparingly will be cursed by God, but only that he will reap sparingly, which is different. When we speak of Paul, brethren, we must never forget that he, according to the flesh, had been a Pharisee, that is, a member of the strictest sect of Judaism, which did not bear those Jews who refused to tithe. Remember that Paul knew very well the commandment concerning tithing, for he knew the law and he had kept it scrupulously when he was a Pharisee, and for this reason he could say to the Philippians that he, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, was blameless; yet nowhere in his epistles did he command the saints to tithe. Paul gave many commandments in his epistles, but among them there is not the commandment concerning tithing. Did he forget to write it, perhaps? Certainly not! Do you know why Paul did not impose this precept of the law on the saints? Because he used the law lawfully and not unlawfully. Jesus gave His disciples also the following commandment: “Sell what you have and give alms; provide yourselves money bags which do not grow old, a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches nor moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” (Luke 12:33-34 – NKJV). And after the Holy Spirit was poured out on His disciples, they put it into practice, for it is written that they “sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:45 – NKJV), and there were no needy persons among them “for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostle’s feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:34-35 – NKJV). One of those who put into practice this commandment given by Christ was Barnabas, who was a good man full of the Holy Spirit and of faith, for it is written: “And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is
translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:36-37 – NKJV). I want you to notice that Barnabas was a Levite, that is, a descendant of Levi. Now every Levite knew very well that according to the law of Moses the Levites had a commandment to receive tithes from the people and to give God a tenth of the tithes they received from the people, and thus Barnabas also knew well the commandment concerning tithing. However, when he sold the field he owned he did not bring just a tenth of the proceeds of the field he sold, but he brought all the proceeds. What Barnabas did indicates very clearly that he – as a Levite who believed in Jesus – did not feel himself bound to tithe any longer. We know that we must lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven and not on earth, for this is what the Lord has commanded us, and we know also that we lay up treasures in heaven by giving alms.

One day a rich young man came and said to Jesus: “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (Matthew 19:16-22). As you can see, at first Jesus said to that young man that if he wanted to enter into life he had to keep certain commandments which were written in the law, and that young man answered that he had kept those commandments from his youth, but he wanted to know what he still lacked, for he asked: ‘What lack I yet?’ (Matthew 19:20) Jesus knew what that man lacked and He said it to him: “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me” (Mark 10:21 – NKJV). These words which Jesus spoke to that young man confirm that He did not come to destroy the law but to complete it. Notice that Jesus told that man what he had to do in order to become perfect, but notice also that when the young man heard what he lacked, he went away sorrowful for he was very rich. That young man could have become perfect and laid up for himself a treasure in heaven, but he refused to keep that commandment of the Master for he had set his heart on his riches and he had no intention of giving up his numerous possessions. Perhaps he would have been willing to keep some other commandment of the law which did not entail the selling of all his possessions, but he was not willing to keep that commandment given to him by Jesus. I am sure that if that man had to pay a tenth of all his monthly income and make some offerings to someone, in order to be perfect, the Lord would have told him and he would not have reacted in that way, but the Lord did not tell him to give up just a part of his possessions but all of them. Jesus Himself gave up all the things He had and became poor for our sakes, therefore He gave us an example even in this. Who can say that Jesus did not leave us an example in certain things? He said: “Learn from Me” (Matthew 11:29 – NKJV), and: “The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master” (Luke 6:40). Let us see then what Jesus did to become an example even in this to all of us. Paul said to the Corinthians: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9 – NKJV). We know that Jesus was very rich in heaven but when He came into this world He became poor for our sakes; and if we now are rich (for we are heirs of the Kingdom of God) it is because Christ became poor. Yes, Jesus, the Son of God, lived poor on the earth for our sakes; no one can say that He was rich materially or that even though He was poor He sought to become rich and He became rich through His ministry. Why then is this commandment of the Lord not taught, while the commandment concerning tithing is taught? Why is what should be taught under grace not taught, while what should not be taught any longer is taught? Why is this commandment of the Lord concerning the selling of our goods much less known than the commandment concerning tithing? Because the commandment
concerning tithing entails a much less sacrifice than the selling of a house or a field. Brothers, let us see that we do not conduct ourselves cunningly toward our neighbour.

Through the above mentioned Scriptures I have showed you that the law of Christ, unlike that of Moses, is perfect and complete.

Those who preach the Gospel have the right in the Gospel to be supported financially and materially.

At this point, since the commandment concerning tithing is imposed by some for they say: ‘The pastor is devoted to preaching and teaching, he has not a secular job, therefore we must give him a wages’ I want to tell you how we should conduct ourselves under grace with regard to this.

The Levites taught the Israelites the law, as it is written: “They shall teach Jacob Your judgements, and Israel Your law” (Deuteronomy 33:10 – NKJV), and they were supported by the people through tithes for God had said: “I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform” (Numbers 18:21 – NKJV). So, under the law, the Israelites had to pay a tenth of their income for God had said: “I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform” (Numbers 18:21 – NKJV). So, under the law, the Levites received their living from the law they taught. In other words, the Levites received their living from the law they taught. Now under grace those who preach the Gospel, that is, the ministers of the Gospel, have the right to be supported financially by the saints, but their right is in the Gospel and not in the law of Moses, for it is written: “Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:14 – NKJV). Brothers, the Lord has commanded those who preach the Gospel to live from the Gospel, therefore He has commanded them to use this right which they have in the Gospel. Let us see now what the Gospel says with regard to this.

When Jesus sent out His twelve disciples to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, He said to them: “Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food” (Matthew 10:9-10 – NKJV), and when He sent out the seventy He said to them: ‘Carry neither money bag, knapsack, nor sandals; and greet no one along the road. But whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the laborer is worthy of his wages” (Luke 10:4-7 – NKJV). As you can see, Jesus Himself said that the laborer of the Lord is worthy of both his food and his wages, which means that he has the right to eat and drink, and also the right to receive a wages in return for the work he performs in the house of God. Paul, speaking about the elders, has confirmed clearly the words of the Lord, for he said to Timothy: “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward” (1 Timothy 5:17-18; cf. Deuteronomy 25:4 and Luke 10:7). In this case Paul has quoted a verse of the law of Moses and a verse of the Gospel to support the right which the elders have in the Gospel. Notice that Paul stated that the elders who labour in the word and doctrine are to be counted worthy of double wages.

It is obvious that if on the one hand those who preach the Gospel and teach the Word of the Lord have this right, on the other hand there must be someone who, according to the Gospel, is bound to give them the food they need and the wages of which they are worthy, and this ‘someone’ is the one who is instructed, for Paul said to the Galatians: “Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor” (Galatians 6:6 - NIV). As you can see, he who benefits from the service of the minister of the Gospel is bound to share in all his good things, and not just a part of them (such as a tenth of them), with the minister of the Gospel. This is confirmed also by the passage of the Scripture which says: “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain” (Deuteronomy 25:4 – NKJV); for in this case also he
who benefits from the work of the ox must not muzzle the ox which treads out the grain, so that the ox may eat part of the grain it is treading out. The system is the same as that which was under the law, however there is a difference for under grace believers are bound to share in all their good things, and not just part of them (a tenth part of them), with those who have been appointed by the Lord to teach the saints. Therefore, they are bound to give to their instructors more than what the Israelites were bound to give to the Levites according to the law.

It is evident therefore that if those who are instructed in the Word refuse to share in all their good things with their instructor, they commit a sin, for by so doing they muzzle the ox while it treads out the grain; in other words, they ride roughshod over the right that those who teach the Word have in the Gospel. Remember that it is true that the elders are bound to do several things on behalf of the church they shepherd, but it is also true that the Church is bound to do several things on behalf of the elders, and one of these things is to meet their needs so that they may lack nothing.

Therefore he who preaches the Gospel has the right to receive wages from the Church. However, pay attention to this: that does not mean that he has the right to impose tithing on the saints, for his wages must be formed of money which is given freely and cheerfully by the saints, as it is written: “So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7 – NKJV), and not of money extorted from the saints playing on the commandment concerning tithing (saying to the saints that those who tithe will be blessed by God, whereas those who refuse to tithe will be cursed) in order to compel them to give one-tenth of their income (and thus to keep them from giving less than a tenth of their income) and thus to secure at least their tithes.

Let us see now what Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the right of support from the saints he and Barnabas had too, and why Paul and his fellow workers did not use that right at Corinth and Thessalonica.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “Have we not power to eat and to drink? …. Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:4, 6-14). As you can see, Paul said to the Corinthians that he and Barnabas had the right of support from the saints. However he and his fellow workers did not use their right. Listen to what Paul said about the right that the ministers of the Gospel have: just as one does not go to war at his own expenses, for he is paid by him who enlisted him as a soldier, and just as he who plants a vineyard has the right to eat of its fruit and he who tends a flock has the right to drink of the milk of the flock, so he who preaches the Gospel while on the one hand is bound to sow spiritual things, on the other hand has the right to reap the material things which belong to the saints. This right that the ministers of the Gospel have is confirmed also by the law, which says: “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain” (Deuteronomy 25:4 – NKJV), and also states that those who ministered the holy things ate of the things of the temple which were offered to God, and those who were appointed to kill the animals to offer them to God ate of the things which were put on the altar. Obviously, he who uses this right has the right to refrain from working in order to devote himself exclusively to preaching and teaching. So Paul and his fellow workers had this right in the Lord for they were called by God to preach the Gospel. However, as I said before, he and his fellow workers did not use this right at Corinth; yes, because Paul, the
apostle who could say to the Corinthians: “For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Corinthians 4:15 – NKJV), refused to be supported financially by the saints of Corinth. Why? We find the answer to this question in the following words he wrote to the Corinthians: “I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man: for that which was lacking to me the brethren which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself. As the truth of Christ is in me, no man shall stop me of this boasting in the regions of Achaia. Wherefore? because I love you not? God knoweth. But what I do, that I will do, that I may cut off occasion from them which desire occasion; that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we” (2 Corinthians 11:8-12). Let me explain to you these words of Paul. In the Church of Corinth there were some false apostles, who were not a burden to any member of the Church and they boasted of the fact that they were not a burden to anyone; so Paul, in order to keep those false apostles from boasting that they were not a burden to anyone, decided not to be a burden to anyone at Corinth (even though he had the right to be a burden to the saints of Corinth) giving up his right of support from the saints of Corinth, so that those false apostles might be considered equal with him and his fellow workers in the things they (the false apostles) boasted about. The saints of Corinth did not ride roughshod over Paul’s right as an apostle, for it was Paul who decided not to use that right of his at Corinth, and for this decision he had taken he asked the saints of Corinth to forgive him, for he wrote them: “How were you inferior to the other churches, except that I was never a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!” (2 Corinthians 12:13 – NIV). As you can see, Paul, by deciding not to be a burden to the Corinthians, put them in a position of inferiority because while on the one hand he had decided to be a burden to other churches on the other hand he had decided not to be a burden to the Church of Corinth, and for this reason he asked them to forgive him that wrong. I would like you to notice that according to what Luke says, at first Paul in Corinth worked with his hands to meet his needs, for it is written: “So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them [Aquila and Priscilla] and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers” (Acts 18:3 – NKJV), but afterward, when Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, he ceased to work in order to devote himself exclusively to preaching, as it is written: “When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 18:5 – NIV). When Paul said to the Corinthians: “And when I was with you and needed something, I was not a burden to anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed” (2 Corinthians 11:9 – NIV), he referred to the second part of his stay at Corinth, when, even though he did not work, Silas and Timothy who had come from Macedonia supplied his needs. Paul did not use the right to refrain from working at Thessalonica either, and he explained to the Thessalonians the reason why he did not use his right: “For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone’s food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow” (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9 – NIV). Paul, Silas and Timothy were not a burden to the saints of Thessalonica, not because they did not have the right to be supported financially by them, but simply because they did not want to use their right to refrain from working. They worked day and night with their hands in order to make themselves an example of how the Thessalonians should follow them. In order to keep those who did not want to work from thinking that they had the right to refrain from working and to be busybodies, the apostles decided not to use the right to refrain from working they had. They gave up their right lest they should hinder the Gospel. This is the reason why Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:12 – NKJV). Obviously Paul had a reward, for he said to the Corinthians: “What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it” (1 Corinthians 9:18 – NIV).
Pay attention to this: not always Paul gave up his right, for he took wages from some churches so that he might devote himself exclusively to preaching; he makes this clear when he says to the Corinthians: “I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you” (2 Corinthians 11:8 – NKJV).

Let us now see how Jesus (and His apostles), in the days of His flesh, after He left His work in order to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom, used this right which is in the Gospel. Luke says: “After this, Jesus travelled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod’s household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means” (Luke 8:1-3 – NIV). As you can see, Jesus also used the right to refrain from working so that He might devote Himself exclusively to preaching and teaching; the Master also lived from the Gospel when He began to preach the Gospel, for many women followed Him, providing for Him and His apostles from their substance. In the conduct of those women we see the fulfilment of the Word which says: “Anyone who receives instruction in the word, must share all good things with his instructor” (Galatians 6:6 – NIV).

Let me explain those verses of the New Testament which refer to tithing

At this point I want to explain those verses of the New Testament which refer directly or indirectly to tithing, so that you may understand, by the grace of God, that these verses cannot be quoted to say to the saints: ‘You must tithe, for if you do not tithe you rob God and you will be cursed with a curse’ (as some do among the congregations of the saints because they are deceitful workers or because they do not know the Scriptures), for they do not support the imposition of tithing under grace.

● The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says: “And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: … And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth” (Hebrews 7:5,8).

First of all, it must be said that those mortal men who receive tithes (Hebrews 7:8) were Levites (therefore they were Jews by birth) who, at that time were still receiving tithes from the other Jews in obedience to the commandment of the law of Moses. Therefore, since we are not Jews by birth and among us Gentiles there are no descendants of the tribe of Levi, the fact that the Levites received tithes does not concern us. Perhaps someone will say, this passage says: ‘Here men that die receive tithes; therefore if the verb is present that means that even under grace the saints in Christ had to pay tith’! I answer you by saying that the verb is present not only when the Scripture speaks of tith, but also when it speaks of the gifts and the sacrifices which were being offered (at that time) in the earthly sanctuary in Jerusalem by the Jewish priests, for it is written: “For if he [Jesus] were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount” (Hebrews 8:4-5) and again: “And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” (Hebrews 10:11). Furthermore, note the expression “according to the law” because it refers to the law of Moses and not to the law of Christ, for the Levites received tithes from the people, and the priests offered gifts and sacrifices in the temple according to the law of Moses. But remember that those who did those things were Jews by birth, who were still under the law and had not yet been set free from the law, while we have been set free from the law by Jesus Christ. Then, since the verb is present even in relation to the sacrifices of goats offered by the Jews for their sins, shall we also offer upon an altar in an earthly sanctuary dedicated to the worship of God sacrifices of
fat animals for our sins? Certainly not, for it is written again: “Which was a figure for the time then present, in which [the earthly sanctuary] were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience” (Hebrews 9:9) and also: “For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect” (Hebrews 10:1) and: “We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (Hebrews 13:10). Therefore, the fact that the priests and the Levites offered sacrifices for the sins and received tithes from the people, even after Jesus was taken up into heaven, does not mean that the Gentiles, under grace, were doing or had to do (at that time) the same things, even though these things were done by them in accordance with the law God gave to Moses for all Israel.

We who are Gentiles in Christ Jesus, who have turned to God, are not a people without law, who live as we like or according to the law of Moses, but we are a people who live according to the perfect law of Christ.

I give you an illustration: in this country we must keep the Italian law, that is, the law of the country in which we live and of which we are citizens, and according to this law we have rights and duties. Now it is clear that between the Italian law and the law of another country there are some differences, even if there can be some laws which are the same. However, the fact that there are some laws which are the same in both legislations, does not mean that the Italian citizen in his country must keep all the laws of the other country. He takes note of the fact that even in the other country the law is the same or very similar with regard to a certain thing, but he takes also note of the fact that all the other laws of that country are very different and apply only to the citizens of that country.

Now, between the law of Christ (according to which we must live) and the law of Moses (according to which all the unbelieving Jews live) there are some laws which are the same; I mean that there are some commandments in the law of the Jews which we who are Gentiles by birth must keep, for they are still valid for us who are under grace. I refer to the following commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind …” (Matthews 22:37 – NKJV; cf. Deuteronomy 6:5); “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39 – NKJV; cf. Leviticus 19:18); “Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them …. “ (Leviticus 19:31 – NKJV); “You shall not hate your brother in your heart” (Leviticus 19:17 – NKJV); “You shall not take vengeance” (Leviticus 19:18 – NKJV); and many others which I do not mention one by one. However, there are many other right laws which God gave to the children of Israel which we Gentiles in Christ Jesus are not bound to keep lest we become slaves of the law of Moses, from which we have been delivered; I refer to the law of circumcision, the law concerning the observance of Sabbaths and New Moon and feasts, the dietary laws, the laws concerning the sacrifices and also the law concerning tithing.

● Jesus said to the scribes and the Pharisees: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23.23 – NKJV).

Jesus said these words to the scribes and the Pharisees, who sat in Moses’ seat, who whereas on the one hand paid tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and on the other hand neglected the weightier matters of the law, that is, justice and mercy and faith. These words of Christ show that according to the law of Moses, to pursue justice and mercy and faith was more important than to tithe; nevertheless Jesus did not say to the scribes and the Pharisees that it was wrong for them to tithe, but He told them that they should have practiced the more important matters of the law (justice, love of God and faith), without leaving the others undone. “The others” include also tithing, for in addition to tithing there are other things which the Jews did not have to neglect. For according to the law, neither the Sabbath day, nor the Jewish feasts, nor circumcision, nor the dietary laws, nor many others could be neglected. If I said to you: ‘Brothers, we must pursue the justice and the love of God and the faith of which the law speaks’, I would tell you to do what is
right for us also who are Gentiles in Christ Jesus to do; but if I added: ‘Without neglecting the other things of which the law speaks’, I would make a mistake, for in this way I would impose on you the circumcision of the flesh, the observance of the Sabbath day, the Jewish feasts, the dietary laws, tithing and other precepts, and thus I would use the law unlawfully. Why? Because Jesus said that “the Law and the Prophets were until John” (Luke 16:16). For this reason we must neglect certain things of the law, lest we be entangled again with the yoke of bondage, that is, lest we be ensnared by the law again (from which law we have been delivered), and we fall away from grace. Furthermore, provided that Jesus endorsed tithing, He certainly did not urge His disciples, who were Jews by birth, to tithe to Him!! For even though at that time the commandment concerning tithing was in force, it was the Levites who had to collect tithes from the Jews. Jesus had no right to collect tithes from the people – in that He was not a Levite nor was He ministering in the temple. Thus if He had urged the Jews to tithe to Him, He would have violated the law.

The apostle Paul said to the saints of Ephesus that Christ has destroyed the wall which separated the Jews from the Gentiles, for he said to them: “For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations” (Ephesians 2:14-15 – NIV), and he said to the saints of Colosse: “Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross …” (Colossians 2:14 – NKJV). Brothers, what was that middle wall of separation which divided the Jews from us who are Gentiles? Consider the burnt offerings, the fellowship offerings, the sin offerings, the Sabbath day, the New Moons, the Jewish feasts, the circumcision of the flesh, the dietary laws which forbade the Jews to eat certain foods, tithing, the commandment which forbade a Jew to marry a Gentile: Were not these precepts together with many others written in the law the middle wall of separation, which was between the Jews and the Gentiles, and the enmity? Of course, they were the enmity which was between us and the Jews. But Christ, through His death, abolished the enmity in that He nailed all these precepts to the cross. Yes, He destroyed the middle wall of separation! Tell me this, ‘How could some Jews eat, drink, and worship and sing to God together with us who are Gentiles by birth and uncircumcised in the flesh, if that middle wall of separation had not been destroyed? It would be impossible! But thanks be to God through Christ Jesus for He, when the fullness of the time had come, broke down the middle wall of separation!

However, it must be said that though Christ broke down the middle wall of separation, afterward some Jews tried to rebuild it, for some Pharisees who believed said in the presence of the apostles and the elders at Jerusalem (around 50 after Christ): “The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses” (Acts 15:5 – NIV). But the apostles and the elders realized that if they had commanded the Gentiles to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses, they would have built again the things which Christ had destroyed and they would have made themselves transgressors; and thus they did not yield submission to those Pharisees, so that the truth of the Gospel might remain with us.

Therefore, we have come to the conclusion that since at Jerusalem the apostles and elders did not impose tithing on us who are Gentiles (for they did not consider it to be so necessary and so important, unlike some preachers of the Gospel who are Gentiles who are among the saints), and since Paul, the apostle and teacher to the Gentiles, in all his epistles did not command expressly the saints to tithe to support the work of God, no minister of the Gospel has the right to impose tithing on the saints. Anyone who has decided to impose tithing on the saints, has decided to go beyond what is written and to command what the apostles did not command to the churches of the Gentiles. For sure those who impose tithing on the saints bind a heavy burden, hard to bear, and lay it on the shoulders of the saints. Do you know why? Because they compel the saints to be ensnared by one of “the weak and beggarly elements” (Galatians 4:9 – NKJV).

● Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?” (1 Corinthians 9:13 - NKJV)
This passage also refer to the tithe, for the tithes under the law were brought into the temple and were eaten by those who ministered the holy things in the temple. However, we can’t affirm that these words mean that we who are Gentiles are commanded by God to keep the commandment concerning tithing. By these words Paul remembered the Corinthians that even under the law, those who were called by God to perform a holy task in His house, lived on the material things which were offered by the people to God. He explained to them thus that we should not be surprised that under grace God has commanded that those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel, for under the law also those who ministered the holy things in the temple of God lived on the things which were offered in the temple.

Furthermore, if these words of Paul meant that we must tithe, what did Paul mean when he said: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it” (1 Corinthians 9:24 – NKJV)? Did he mean perhaps that we must go to the stadium to run in a race in order to obtain the prize? Certainly not! For by those words Paul remembered the Corinthians that they had to run the race that was set before them in such a way that they might obtain the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus, and in order to remember them that thing he spoke of those who ran in a race for he knew that the Corinthians would understand that comparison at once.

Let us explain those verses of the Old Testament which refer to tithing

Let us examine now the verses of the Old Testament which are quoted by those who impose tithing on the saints, in order to understand whether it is right to quote them to urge the saints to tithe.

● In the book of Genesis it is written: “And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all” (Genesis 14:18-20).

This incident took place after Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings. Now provided that Abraham did a right thing in the sight of God in giving a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek, who was priest of the Most High God (this incident is mentioned in the epistle to the Hebrews as well); and provided that the tithe Abraham gave to Melchizedek was received in heaven by the One who lives forever and ever; it must be said that it is wrong to quote this passage in order to impose tithing on the sons of Abraham. Why? Because if we take the fact that Abraham tithed to Melchizedek in order to impose tithing on the saints, we must take also the fact that Abraham was circumcised in the flesh at God’s command in order to impose the circumcision of the flesh on the saints. We know that it was God who commanded Abraham to be circumcised, for it is written: “Every male child among you shall be circumcised” (Genesis 17:10 – NKJV). What shall we do then? Shall we let ourselves be circumcised in the flesh, for Abraham was circumcised in the flesh? Certainly not! Do you not know that Paul said to the Corinthians: “Each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him …. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised” (1 Corinthians 7:17,18 – NIV)? How is it that Paul did not impose the circumcision of the flesh on those believers who were uncircumcised? Why did he not impose circumcision? Paul knew that it was God who commanded Abraham to be circumcised, yet he said that “circumcision is nothing” (1 Corinthians 7:19 – NIV). Paul knew that it was God who wanted Abraham to be circumcised, yet he said that he who was uncircumcised when he was called by God, should not be circumcised. Why? Because he used the law lawfully and divided rightly the word of truth. He did what many today do not want to do. That’s why we should not be surprised that Paul did not impose tithing on the saints playing on this incident which took place during the life of Abraham, or that Paul did not impose circumcision on the Gentiles taking the circumcision received by Abraham as an example. We respect both the fact that Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils to Melchizedek, and the fact that he was circumcised, but we refuse to conclude that it is lawful to impose tithing and
circumcision, for we know that this persuasion does not come from Him who has called us to liberty.

- It is written in the book of Genesis: “And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee” (Genesis 28:20-22).

Jacob made this vow as he journeyed to Padan Aram, precisely after he had a dream at Bethel. Now provided that Jacob did no wrong when he promised he would give the tenth to God if God was with him and kept him in that way he was going, and gave him bread to eat and clothing to put on so that he came back to his father's house in peace, we say that it is not lawful to take the vow made by Jacob in order to impose tithing on the saints, for Jacob made a vow and was not commanded by God to tithe. Rather the vow made by Jacob should be quoted to teach that under grace it is lawful to make a vow, through which we promise to God that we will give a tenth of our income. Yes, for we believe that there is nothing wrong with promising to give God a tenth of one's income to support a specific ministry in the house of God (to help the poor, the widows, the orphans, or a minister of the Gospel). However, I want to make it clear that if a believer makes this specific vow for all his life, he will be bound to keep his word for all his life lest he be judged by God, for it is written: “When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. …. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth” (Deuteronomy 23:21,23).

- After the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, Nehemiah and the leaders of the people and the Levites made a covenant before God through which they bound themselves with a curse and an oath to follow the law of God given through Moses and to obey carefully all His commandments. Here is what Nehemiah wrote about that covenant: “And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it. Now those that sealed were, Nehemiah, the Tirshatha, the son of Hachaliah, and Zidkijah, Seraiah, Azariah, Jeremiah, Pashur, Amariah, Malchijah, Hattush, Shebaniah, Malluch, Harim, Meremoth, Obadiah, Daniel, Ginnethon, Baruch, Meshullam, Abijah, Mijamin, Bilgai, Shemaiah: these were the priests. And the Levites: both Jeshua the son of Azaniah, Binnui of the sons of Henadad, Kadmiel; And their brethren, Shebaniah, Hodeliah, Kelita, Pelaiah, Hanan, Micha, Rehob, Hashabiah, Zaccur, Sherebiah, Shebaniah, Hodeliah, Bani, Beninu. The chief of the people; Parosh, Pahath-moab, Elam, Zattu, Bani, Bunni, Azgad, Bebai, Adonijah, Bigvai, Adin, Ater, Hizkijah, Azzur, Hodeliah, Hashum, Beza, Hariph, Anathoth, Nebai, Maspia, Meshullam, Hezir, Meshezabeel, Zadok, Jaddua, Pelatiah, Hanan, Anaiah, Hoshea, Hananiah, Hashub, Hallohash, Pileha, Shobek, Rehum, Hashabnah, Maaseiah, And Ahijah, Hanan, Anan, Malluch, Harim, Banaah. And the rest of the people, the priests, the Levites, the porters, the singers, the Nethinims, and all the rest that had separated themselves from the people of the lands unto the law of God, their wives, their sons, and their daughters, every one having knowledge, and having understanding; They clave to their brethren, their nobles, and entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, which was given by Moses the servant of God, and to observe and do all the commandments of the LORD our Lord, and his judgments and his statutes; And that we would not give our daughters unto the people of the land, nor take their daughters for our sons: And if the people of the land bring ware or any victuals on the sabbath day to sell, that we would not buy it of them on the sabbath, or on the holy day: and that we would leave the seventh year, and the exaction of every debt. Also we made ordinances for us, to charge ourselves yearly with the third part of a shekel for the service of the house of our God; For the shewbread, and for the continual meat offering, and for the continual burnt offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moons, for the set feasts, and for the holy things, and for the sin offerings to make an atonement for Israel, and for all the work of the house of our God. And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the
houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the LORD our God, as it is written in the law: And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the LORD: Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, into the treasure house. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God” (Nehemiah 9:38; 10:1-39).

We have nothing against the decision which was taken by Nehemiah, the priests, the Levites and the rest of the people, rather we are glad to read that after the children of Israel came back from the captivity they decided to walk according to the law given by God through Moses on Mount Sinai. For sure what they did was written for our learning and it serves as an example to us, but we can’t take the same decisions as they took, lest we be enslaved by the law (that is, lest we be burdened again by the yoke of bondage). As you can see, the Jews bound themselves not only to bring a tithe of their crops to the Levites, but also to buy nothing on the Sabbath or on any holy day according to the law; so if we were to return to the Lord as the Jews did at that time, not only should we give a tenth of our income but we should also keep carefully the Sabbath. But thanks be to God for we are no longer under the law, therefore we are not bound to tithe nor to keep the Sabbath. Fear not, brothers, for just as we are not commanded to keep the Sabbath (for it is – together with the feasts and the new moons and the dietary laws - a shadow of the things that were to come), so we are not commanded to tithe either. Those who quote the above mentioned words of Nehemiah in order to impose tithing on the saints do not use the Scripture lawfully.

● In the book of the prophet Malachi it is written: “Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 3:7-12).

God had said to Israel that a tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruits from the trees, belonged to Him, therefore when the children of Israel kept the tithes for themselves and did not bring them to the house of God, God accused them of robbing Him. It must be said that the accusation was absolutely right for the commandment concerning tithing is very clear. However, God not only accused the Israelites of robbing Him, but also cursed them sending locusts and worms to devour their trees and the crops of their land. For God had said to the Israelites that if they refused to keep His commandments He would destroy their trees and crops: “You will sow much seed in the field but you will harvest little, because locusts will devour it. You will plant vineyards and cultivate them but you will not drink the wine or gather the grapes, because worms will eat them” (Deuteronomy 28:38-39 – NIV). So when the Israelites followed the stubbornness of their hearts and did not pay their tithes to God, God cursed them as He had promised He would do. Now, those who under grace quote these words of God to affirm that anyone who does not give a tenth of his income to God is cursed by God, wilfully
forget the following things, of which I want to speak to you so that you may understand that the above mentioned words spoken by the prophet Malachi cannot be applied to us who are under grace:

1) The Israelites were cursed with a curse not only when they refused to bring their tithes to the house of God, but also when they refused to keep the Sabbath day, for Jeremiah said to the Israelites that if they did not hallow the Sabbath they would be punished, as it is written: “But if you will not heed Me to hallow the Sabbath day, such as not carrying a burden when entering the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath day, then I will kindle a fire in its gates, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched” (Jeremiah 17:27 – NKJV). Therefore, shall we be punished by God if we do not hallow the Sabbath day the way the law of Moses commands? Certainly not, for the Sabbath day was a shadow of what was to come, and thus we are not bound to keep it.

2) If these people affirm that those who do not tithe are cursed with a curse for they rob God, then are cursed with a curse even those who receive the tithes but do not offer to God a tenth of the tithes, for they too rob God. Yes, they too rob God, for God said to the Levites: “When you receive from the Israelites the tithe I give you as your inheritance, you must present a tenth of that tithe as the Lord’s offering” (Numbers 18:26 – NIV). How is it then that these people never speak of this commandment which is closely linked with tithing?

3) If the supporters of tithing wished to keep carefully all the things which the law says about tithing, they should teach various things which are written in the law about tithing. First of all they should teach that the saints must give a tenth even of the fruits of the ground, such as fruits, vegetables, grain and other products (if a believer has an orchard or a vegetable garden), and a tenth of the herd and flock they have, and a tenth of every income which is not part of the salary (offerings or other income). As you can see, if we imposed these things on the saints we would lay heavy burdens, hard to bear, on their shoulders, for they would begin to think continually of the tithe they must pay and to keep in mind or to record all their income, of whatever kind they are, for fear of robbing God (as it is said to them by the supporters of tithing). One of the other things which they should teach, if they wished to keep the commandment concerning tithing, is this: “At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shall lay it up within thy gates: And the Levite, (because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee,) and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied; that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hand which thou dost” (Deuteronomy 14:28-29). How is it then that they do not speak of this precept of the law? How is it then that they do not say that at the end of every third year the tithe of that year must be used in this way? Is it not because they want to speak of the things which are convenient for them and which they like the most? Is it not because they themselves realize how hard it would be for the saints to keep all the precepts about tithing?

4) The apostles knew very well these words written in the book of Malachi, and if they had believed that God will curse all those believers who give less than a tenth of their income, they would have written it and would not have omitted to teach the saints, whether by word of mouth or by letter, such an important thing. How is it then that there is no verse in all the epistles (thus, not only in the epistles of Paul) which clearly affirms that we must tithe as the Israelites tithed under the law? Do you think that God forgot to say to us through the apostles that we must tithe? I believe that if not one of those five sparrows sold for two copper coins is forgotten before God, God could not forget to tell us such an important thing. Let me tell you another thing: the supporters of tithing think that God uses them to remind us to tithe, but they are greatly mistaken, for we believe that if tithing had been mandatory under grace the apostles would have reminded the saints to tithe. For sure, when the apostles and elders met at Jerusalem to consider the matter which arose, that is, whether the Gentiles had to be circumcised and required to obey the law of Moses, the apostles could have confirmed that we who are Gentiles are bound to tithe as the law of Moses commands. However, on that occasion it didn’t seem good to the Holy Spirit and to the apostles and elders to impose tithing on us. They were Jews by birth, at least twelve of those who were present had been with Jesus, they knew the law, they
wanted to spread the Gospel and believed that the ministers of the Gospel must be supported financially by the saints, yet they did not think it right to impose tithing on us. But unfortunately, and I say it again, unfortunately, some Gentiles, who refuse to use the law lawfully, have thought it right to impose tithing on the saints!!!

5) We were all under the curse of the law before knowing God, but now in Christ we have been redeemed from the curse of the law. Why were we under the curse of the law? Because God said: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10 – NKJV; cf. Deuteronomy 27:26), and we were among those who did not keep all the commandments of the law, the commandment concerning tithing included. However, now we are no longer among those who seek to be justified by the works of the law (therefore we are no longer under the curse of the law), but we are among those who believe that they have been justified by the grace of God (therefore we are blessed with believing Abraham) and they will be saved from the wrath to come by the grace of God and not by the works of the law. If we seek to be justified by the works of the law, we will fall under the curse of the law, for we will return to rely on observing the law. But we can’t say that if a believer gives less than a tenth of his income, he will be cursed by God, for we are no longer under the law but under grace.

6) Paul said: “If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed” (1 Corinthians 16:22 – NKJV); he did not say: ‘If anyone does not tithe, let him be accursed.’ And we know that those who do not love the Lord are those who refuse to keep the words of Christ, for Jesus said: “He who does not love Me does not keep My words” (John 14:24 – NKJV), and not those who refuse to keep the law of Moses.

7) Paul said: “If anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:9 – NKJV). Therefore we know that those who preach another Gospel are accursed too.

We know those who are accursed according to the Scriptures of the New Testament, and since among them are not those who do not tithe, no one has the right to frighten the saints and to oppress them with the above mentioned words of the prophet Malachi.

A word of exhortation to those who impose tithing

I have showed you from the Scripture that it is not lawful to impose tithing on the saints, so I hope you will stop imposing tithing. If you are not yet convinced that it is wrong to impose tithing, I say to you the following things.

If you impose tithing for lack of knowledge, I say to you to search the Scriptures carefully and not superficially in order that the Scripture itself may convince you. I myself have been convinced by the Scripture of the fact that it is not right to impose tithing under grace. Therefore, since I am convinced that the Lord still opens the understanding of His disciples, that they might comprehend the Scriptures, I am sure that if you set your heart on seeking the truth about this subject, He will make you understand what many have already understood.

If you impose tithing for you are afraid you will close the balance of the Church with a loss at the end of each month, I say to you this: your fear does not justify what you do. Are you afraid that if you do not impose tithing on the saints they will give less than a tenth of their income? Fear not, have faith in God, for He will provide for you the money you need to pay the place of worship’s rent and to do every good work. If you learn not to impose tithing on the saints, you will see that some believers will give much more than what they are giving now, and you will realize how weak the commandment concerning tithing is. Furthermore, your fear indicates that you have a little faith in God. Jesus, in the days of His flesh, did not impose tithing on anyone for if He had commanded the people to pay their tithes to Him He would have transgressed the law, for according to the law it was the Levites who had a commandment to receive tithes from the people and He was not a Levite, yet He lacked nothing. Do you not believe that God can meet all your needs without you imposing tithing?
If you impose tithing for you are an extortioner and a lover of money I say to you: ‘Repent of your wickedness. God is the One who searches the hearts and minds, and He cannot be mocked. You can deceive the simple, who lack discernment, but you can by no means deceive God, who will punish you for your evil works if you keep oppressing the saints of the Lord with the words of the prophet Malachi concerning tithing. You are like the Pharisees, who lived in the days of Jesus, who sat in Moses’ seat; they taught the people to tithe (it was lawful for them to teach the people to tithe) and they themselves tithed, but they loved money, as it is written: “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, also heard all these things, and they derided Him [Jesus]” (Luke 16:14 – NKJV). However, Jesus rebuked them sharply for their evil works. They paid tithe of mint and anise and cummin, but they neglected the love of God, faith and justice; and you neglect the same things as they did, for you are greedy for money. In addition to this, you are full of the ‘mania for greatness’ of which is full the heart of some who preach the Gospel. You also are seeking ‘temporal power,’ you also want to build wonderful cathedrals, you also want to appear great men of God to most people. You know how to achieve your aims; you conduct yourselves like those who looked out for their own interests in the days of the apostles. You refuse to humble yourselves; you are of the opinion that Jesus was a man who lost the occasion to become a highly respected man as well as a rich man like you; you are greatly mistaken. You are losing the occasion to become rich and great in the sight of God. You are spiritually poor; do not be deceived by the flattering words of your followers who consider you to be great men of God, for the facts are bitter. You prefer to have vast revenues without justice rather than to have a little with the fear of God. Why? Because you are not willing to humble yourselves before God and to renounce craftiness and the hidden things of shame. God is longsuffering toward you, do not despise His longsuffering nor His forbearance, or you will be punished by Him as you deserve to be punished.

A final word of exhortation

The reason why I have decided to show you that it is not lawful to impose tithing on the saints under grace is that I know that the imposition of tithing gives rise to disputes among the brethren, and not because the saints do not want to give, but because they think that the fact that some pastors have decided to take away from them a specific part of their income by imposing tithing on them is really annoying and oppressive. Some of these pastors even examine the pay packet of the saints to see if they have given exactly a tenth part of their salary: that’s a shameful and scandalous conduct!

Now I want to close this writing of mine with an exhortation, for I want to urge you to give, as did Jesus and the apostles. Brothers, it is true that no one has the right to impose tithing on you, but it is also true that you must beware of covetousness. John said: “By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” (1 John 3:16 – NKJV). These words show that we are commanded to give all for the brethren; yes, we must give our life, as Jesus gave His life for us while we were still sinners. How much did Jesus give for us? How much did He give for the work of God? The answer is, ‘All!’ What can we say about the example Jesus left to us? Only that it is a perfect example, so let us imitate the Teacher, that is, the One whom we call Lord. How shall we imitate Him? Conducting ourselves as Paul conducted himself toward the saints, as he said to the Corinthians: “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls” (2 Corinthians 12:15 – NKJV). Let us lay down therefore our life for the good cause of the Gospel; let us employ what we have on the work of the Lord; let us share in our material things with the poor; remember those who instruct you in the Word sharing in all your material things with them so that they may lack nothing, for they are worthy to be supported materially and financially by you.

The apostle Paul, after saying to the Corinthians: “‘So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver’” (2 Corinthians 9:7 – NKJV), said to them: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all
sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8 – NKJV); we trust these words; we have experienced them and we are sure that we will continue to experience them if we give with a cheerful heart.

Finally, remember that each one of us will reap what he has sowed, and that when the harvest comes no one of us will be able to say to God, ‘You have made me reap less than what I sowed,’ for God is right and commits no injustice.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for His righteousness, which is very high. Amen.
REVIVALS

Toronto Blessing

Introduction

The so called Toronto Blessing is a movement which originated in Toronto, Canada, in 1994, at the Airport Vineyard Church (now called the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship - TACF). In case you aren’t familiar with this term ‘Vineyard Church,’ a Vineyard Church is a fellowship that belongs to the network of churches which look to the late John Wimber as their founder. Wimber was an American charismatic preacher who became well-known in the 1980's for his emphasis on miraculous healing and on signs and wonders as a necessary part of effective evangelism. The Toronto Blessing has spread in many Churches all over the world. There are adherents of this movement even here in Italy.

The reason why this movement is called Toronto Blessing is that its adherents put emphasis on a ‘blessing’ which manifested in Toronto in 1994, whose hallmarks are these: 1) falling to the ground; 2) shaking and trembling, twitching and convulsive bodily movements; 3) uncontrollable laughter (also called ‘holy laughter’); 4) apparent drunkenness; 5) animal sounds. All these physical characteristics are regarded as signs of the spiritual renewal or revival which God has sent in these last times.

The origins of the Toronto Blessing

At the root of the Toronto Blessing with its peculiar manifestations there are two men. The former is a South African Pentecostal evangelist called Rodney Howard-Browne, who was an associate pastor of Rhema church in Johannesburg, before moving to the United States in 1987. Among other things, he preaches the prosperity message, that is, that message which substantially affirms that poverty is a curse and Christians must be rich materially for this is the will of God (this message is preached also by Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland and his wife, and many others). Rodney calls himself the ‘Holy Spirit bartender,’ for he claims to be the vessel chosen by God to serve ‘the new wine’ (that is, the Blessing) to the saints and to invite them to drink! Without any doubt the fact that this man calls himself the ‘Holy Spirit bartender’ shows that he is an arrogant man. His words are rash words. However, there are other rash words Rodney has spoken, for he has said to his critics: ‘But I’d rather be in a church where the devil and the flesh are manifesting than in a church where nothing is happening because people are too afraid to manifest anything. Every time there is a move of God, a few people will get excited, go overboard, and get in the flesh. Other believers will get upset, saying that couldn’t be of God. Don’t worry about it, either. Rejoice, because at least something is happening. ... and if the devil manifests, don’t worry about that, either. Rejoice, because at least something is happening ... If someone comes in the meeting, rolls around on the floor, laughs in the Holy Spirit, or does it in the flesh, at least he’s not getting drunk or taking dope’ (Howard-Browne, The Coming Revival. Louisville, KY: R.H.B.E.A. Publications, 1991, p. 6, 8). In addition to this, Rodney Browne says to those who search the Scriptures in order to see whether his methods he uses to conduct his meetings (which methods induce people to laugh uncontrollably, to fall to the ground, to make animal noises, and so on) are scriptural or not: ‘You can’t understand what God is doing in these meetings with an analytical mind. The only way you’re going to understand what God is doing is with your heart.’ As you can see, these words also are a proof of his arrogance, but also of his folly. Yet this man is at the root of the Toronto Blessing, and he is invited by many pastors to
preach to their churches. His way of doing things and of speaking has influenced many pastors all over the world. This man tells a lot of jokes and rattles off one-liners before encouraging people to let the spirit flow ‘out of the belly’ in holy laughter.

The latter is Randy Clark, who is the founding pastor of the Vineyard Church in St. Louis, Missouri. According to Bill Jackson’s account of how the Toronto Blessing began, after years of seeing little fruit and power in his ministry. Randy Clark became desperately hungry for God. Hearing of unusual manifestations of God's presence (tremblings, uncontrollable laughter, animal noises, people who fell to the ground, etc.) through the ministry of South African evangelist Rodney Howard-Browne, Randy attended one of Rodney's meetings in Tulsa Oklahoma (at a pastors conference put on at Kenneth Hagin’s Rhema Bible College). Randy was powerfully touched and, in going home, began to see a similar outbreak of the Spirit among his people. That was in August 1993. So the ‘anointing’ and the spiritual phenomena linked with it, which had been going on for some time under Rodney Howard-Browne, were now transmitted to Randy Clark. Having received the blessing himself, Randy Clark then passed it on to the Toronto Airport Vineyard, at the invitation of its pastor John Arnott, in January 1994. The meetings that Clark held in Toronto lasted 90 days, and were so powerful that the movement took off within the Vineyard network of churches, and acquired the nickname ‘the Toronto Blessing.’ The Toronto Blessing was given huge publicity, and Pentecostals from all over the world began flocking to Toronto to see what God was doing, to catch the blessing and take it back to their own churches. The Toronto Blessing swiftly became a global phenomenon, striking roots in Britain, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, India, everywhere.

The physical characteristics of the Toronto blessing

Let us speak now in detail of the physical characteristics of the Toronto Blessing, and let us see what the proponents of the Toronto Blessing say to support biblically these signs. However, first of all I want to say a few words about the meetings in which the Toronto Blessing is preached. During these meetings tongues are used (however, very often the following Scripture is violated, which says: “If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret” 1 Corinthians 14:27 – NKJV); and some prophesy. Some songs are sung (usually they are contemporary songs, and not hymns), and some prayers are addressed to God and even to the Holy Spirit (please note that praying to the Holy Spirit is a practice without Biblical support). A sermon is preached, whose purpose is to defend biblically this Blessing and to persuade the sceptics who are present to accept this Blessing. The church leaders put much emphasis on the manifestations of the Blessing. Often the Gospel is not preached, even when unbelievers are numerous. Often, a few scattered Bible verses are used as proof texts of the physical manifestations which are part of the Toronto Blessing, but no coherent Bible teaching is given. The Word is being marginalised, it is not preached as it should. All are in search of these so called manifestations of the Spirit, therefore there is no place for the preaching of the Word of God. Then there is a time in which those who have already experienced the Blessing give their personal testimony about the Blessing, and finally there is a time called ‘ministry time’ during which attenders are instructed to stack their chairs around the edges of the room, and during which the members of the ‘ministry team’ pray over or for those who wish to receive the blessing. Then one can see the following manifestations, which are regarded as the work of the Holy Spirit.

1) **Falling to the ground.** People start to sway, fall, or their legs weaken and crumple, and they drop back into the arms of strategically-placed ‘catchers’. This experience is described by those who fall to the ground as ‘falling under the weight of God’s glory, being ‘overcome by the Spirit’ so that they may ‘rest in the Spirit.’ While people are on the floor, some roll or flail about, some move their bodies rapidly and rhythmically, even erotically, some twitch, some sob, and some laugh hysterically. People often report that that they feel physically anaesthetised, weighted-down or, sometimes, weightless, unable to get up, sometimes for hours, even when they try.
This experience is generally considered pleasurable. How is this experience supported biblically by the adherents of the Toronto Blessing? The biblical passages quoted to support this experience are the following ones:

- “As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD. And when I saw it, I fell upon my face …” (Ezekiel 1:28);
- “Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground” (Daniel 10:9);
- “And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid” (Matthew 17:6);
- “And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead” (Revelation 1:17);
- “And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?” (Acts 9:3-4).

2) **Trembling and shaking.** Before or after the person falls, or independently of this, their body may twitch or shake uncontrollably. Sometimes this may resemble an epileptic seizure. The biblical passages quoted to support this experience are these:

- “Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness” (Jeremiah 23:9);
- “The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble” (Psalm 99:1);
- “Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob” (Psalm 114:7);
- “When I heard, my belly trembled; my lips quivered at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself, that I might rest in the day of trouble: when he cometh up unto the people, he will invade them with his troops” (Habakkuk 3:16);
- “Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold” (Acts 7:32).

3) **Uncontrollable laughter.** Those who claim to receive the Blessing start to laugh uncontrollably. The biblical passages quoted are these:

- “Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them” (Psalm 126:2);
- “Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.” (Psalm 16:11);
- “The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.” (Isaiah 9:2-3);
- “And the disciples were filled with joy, and with the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 13:52).

4) **Animal sounds.** Sometimes the Blessing involves a person making animal sounds. People roar like lions, bark like dogs, and even bray like donkeys. To support biblically the ‘roaring lion’ phenomenon the advocates of the Toronto Blessing affirm that Jesus is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (cf. Revelation 5:5) and they quote this passage written in the book of the prophet Hosea: “They shall walk after the LORD: he shall roar like a lion: when he shall roar, then the children shall tremble from the west” (Hosea 11:10).

5) **Apparent drunkenness.** Some people just feel a little giddy, others lose control of their limbs, as if drunk, and are unable to walk in a straight line or even stand. Some are unable even to speak. The signs of this spiritual drunkenness are supported biblically in this way. Paul said to the Ephesians: “Do not be drunk with wine …. but be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18 – NKJV), which means that we must get drunk with the Spirit, for the Holy Spirit is compared to the new wine which must be put into new wineskins. Therefore, this apparent drunkenness is the
work of the new wine, that is, the Holy Spirit. Even the apostles experienced the signs of this apparent drunkenness, for on the day of Pentecost some Jews said: “They are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13 – NKJV). Many conclude from this passage that the reason why those Jews said those words about the apostles was that they saw that the apostles were acting like drunks, that is, were unable to walk, to stand and to speak!

Confutation

Now I am going to refute the physical characteristics of the Toronto Blessing.

1) Falling to the ground. The falling to the ground which occurs in these Churches is not of God because it is not the same phenomenon recorded in the Bible. Let me explain to you why. Ezekiel, Daniel, the disciples of Jesus, John and Saul of Tarsus fell to the ground after they had a heavenly vision.

Particularly, I want you to notice that Ezekiel and Saul fell to the ground before they heard the voice of the Lord, while Daniel and the disciples of Jesus on the holy mountain fell to the ground when they heard a voice (as for the vision that Daniel had, we are not told who was the heavenly being who appeared to Daniel and spoke to him, while the voice that was heard by the disciples of Jesus on the holy mountain was God’s voice). Concerning John, the Scripture says that he fell to the ground not when he heard behind him a loud voice speaking with him, but after he turned and saw the Lord. Therefore, we must not be surprised at the fact that today those who have such visions fall to the ground, for in these circumstances the power of God is so great that they have no strength left, their legs begin to tremble and shake, they breathe with difficulty and it is impossible for them to stand. So I believe that before such visions a believer may fall or rather will fall to the ground by the power of God.

However, I am talking about people who fall to the ground because of visions, that is, because of things that come from heaven, things that come from the Holy Spirit, which are therefore unforeseeable because they can occur all of a sudden. For you can have a heavenly vision from God while you are in the countryside, at home, while you are praying, while you are standing, but that is a glorious phenomenon that comes from God. However, with regard to the fall to the ground which occurs in these Churches, we have to say that it does not come from God for people fall to the ground because they are influenced by preachers who are present at the meetings or because they are pushed and so they fall to the ground (the preachers lay their hands on their heads or their shoulders and in the meantime they push them, so many people think that what they do is biblical). But let us look closely at the atmosphere which is in these meetings. People are introduced to the idea of the blessing by means of introductory talks by the leadership and personal testimonies by recipients of the experience, therefore the hearers have been already told that they will fall to the ground; so those who attend these meetings expect to fall to the ground in order to receive the ‘Blessing’, that is, ‘to rest in the Spirit’. In some places of worship chairs are removed before people are called forward to receive the ‘blessing’ (while many are standing to receive the blessing or have already fallen). It really seems that those who attend these meetings must fall to the ground – whether they like or not – as a result most of the people who attend these meetings know that during the service they must expect to fall to the ground!!! After the introductory talks by the leadership and personal testimonies by recipients of the experience, people are called forward where there are several pastors or elders or preachers who are ready to lay their hands on people to let them receive ‘the blessing.’ What happens at this point? It happens that those who lay their hands on people begin to pray. However, it must be said that very often the laying on of hands is nothing but a push, as a result suddenly those who are looking for ‘the blessing’ begin to fall to the ground one after the other!! However, they don’t fall on their faces as it happened to Daniel, Ezekiel and the disciples of Jesus, but they fall to the ground backward, and their fall is controlled by some assistants who are behind them to help them to fall carefully especially if they have back problems, pregnancy or fear of falling.
We can't help saying that these behaviours are not supported by the Word of God, rather they are condemned by it. This phenomenon of ‘falling’ is the result of the power of suggestion exercised over people; and since people – including many believers – are easily influenced, no wonder that many of them fall to the ground. Therefore we cannot say that they fall to the ground under the weight of God’s glory, but we must say that they fall to the ground because of the craftiness of astute and unscrupulous preachers in their deceitful scheming. It may happen that some fall to the ground because of the excitement caused by these unscrupulous preachers but the fact is that they don’t fall to the ground by the power of God. So this fall to the ground is not a manifestation of the power of God.

I say it again, in order to avoid misunderstandings: I am convinced that when God manifest Himself with power, it may happen that some believers or even some unbelievers fall to the ground. Sometimes they fall to the ground because God strikes them for some sins they have committed. Yet, between this fall to the ground and the fall to the ground which occurs in these churches there is a big difference because the former occurs without any form of suggestion while the latter occurs by the power of suggestion (or by hypnotic induction) exercised by some unscrupulous preachers: the former is true, while the latter is false.

I want to tell you the testimony of a sister who many years ago told me personally what had happened to her during a meeting in Switzerland conducted by one of these preachers who lay hands on people and they fall to the ground. Since she wanted to quit smoking, after she heard from this preacher that the Lord can set man free from all sorts of vices (the paradox is that this preacher is slave of smoking, but at that time this sister did not know it) she went forward to ask him to pray over her. While she was in line, she saw that many fell to the ground. When her turn came, it came to pass that this preacher – who is quite tall – put his hand on her head and while he was praying for her he began to push her with his long fingers to make her fall to the ground (those who were present at that meeting could not perceive that he was pushing her because he was pushing her cunningly) and his pressure was so strong that at a certain point she found herself on her heels and she was on the point of falling to the ground, but she did not fall to the ground. Yet this preacher is considered by many a powerful preacher!! However, his push was not seen by those who were present, but there are some preachers whose pushes can be clearly seen by everybody and sometimes these preachers even slap people. Obviously, their fellow workers are behind people to help them to fall to the ground and so to prevent them from hurting themselves!!! Furthermore, there are preachers who breathe on people to make them fall to the ground and many people fall to the ground!! How could we believe that all these things are the work of the Holy Spirit? You must be really blind to believe such a thing!

Therefore beware of all those preachers who push people and breathe on them to make them fall to the ground. Beware of this fashion which has become a dogma in many churches, so many have come to the conclusion that if in a Church nobody falls to the ground that means that the power of God is not in that Church!!!

2) **Trembling and shaking.** As for trembling, we are convinced that God can make people tremble, whether they are believing people or not; He is the One who ought to be feared, the Fear of Isaac, the Almighty, and He makes people tremble when He wishes. In the Scripture we find clear examples of how God makes people tremble. I will cite just one of them. The apostle Matthew wrote: “And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of him, and became like dead men” (Matthew 28:2-4 – NKJV).

However, we can’t take the biblical examples of people who trembled because they saw a wonder or a vision of God in order to make a doctrine from them, as the adherents of the Toronto Blessing have done. For this trembling also is one of the signs of the Blessing; as if in order to be blessed by God one must begin to tremble. Of course, one can begin to tremble while God blesses him, there is nothing to be surprised at. But far be it from us to think that trembling or shaking is one of the signs by which one realizes that a person has received the
Holy Spirit or that the Holy Spirit has come upon him, as the adherents of the Toronto Blessing affirm, for this is not scriptural. As for the trembling, too, present in the Toronto Blessing it must be said that it is caused mainly by suggestion and in certain cases by evil spirits.

3) **Uncontrollable laughter.** No doubt God fills us with joy, for it is written: “For You, Lord, have made me glad through Your work” (Psalm 92:4 – NKJV). Jesus Himself rejoiced in the Spirit in seeing that His Father had revealed the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God to babes and hidden them from the wise and prudent (cf. Luke 10:21). We can say together with the Psalmist that in the presence of the Lord is fullness of joy (cf. Psalm 16:11). However, when we speak of the joy which the Lord gives to us, we must always keep in mind that it is the fruit of the Holy Spirit, and therefore it is a true joy, and that when the saints gather together to worship the Lord they must rejoice with trembling, as it is written: “Rejoice with trembling” (Psalm 2:11 – NKJV), which means that we must rejoice with self control. On the other hand the fruit of the Spirit is self-control, so if one rejoices in the Spirit he must have self-control. The place of worship is not a theatre, nor must it become a theatre; the saints must rejoice when they hear about the wonders of God or see God work signs and wonders, but they must not exceed the right measure, because the Scripture affirms: “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Corinthians 14:40 – NKJV). Disorder and excess do not proceed from God but are just carnal manifestations. During the meetings held by the Toronto Blessing’s preachers this uncontrollable laughter does not build up but rather it grieves the Holy Spirit. Why then should one laugh in seeing that these Churches and their leaders have made peace with the world. Ah, in these days so difficult for the Church, in these days on which many church leaders do not restrain the people of God who plays the harlot with the world and as a consequence those who are led by these leaders are salt which has lost its flavour, the message which must be preached to these rebellious believers is not ‘Rejoice’ but rather “Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom” (James 4:9 – NKJV). On the contrary, these rebellious Christians laugh. Laugh, laugh, rebels, but know this, that your laughter is like the crackling of thorns under a pot. Instead, as for me, I will weep in seeing your laugh or in hearing you laugh for I know that this laughter is false.

4) **Animal sounds.** What shall we say about the lion’s roar which is uttered by some of the Toronto Blessing’s adherents. Of course, we believers are sons of the living God who roars from Zion, but the Scripture does not say that we should roar or that when the Spirit of God comes upon us He causes us to roar. The passage of the book of Hosea which is quoted to confirm this manifestation does not indicate that it is right for us to roar like a lion or that when the Lord blesses us we should start roaring like a lion. The way this passage of Hosea is interpreted by the Toronto Blessing’s preachers indicates that those who want to introduce strange doctrines into the Church manage through all kinds of misinterpretation to pass a false teaching off as a biblical doctrine. Therefore we refuse to accept the roar of the lion as a sign attesting the blessing of God upon the believer. The same thing must be said about the sounds of the other animals (dogs, donkeys, wolves, ducks, etc.) which are uttered in the meetings held by the Toronto Blessing’s preachers: they are improper manifestations which have nothing, and I say it again, nothing, to do with the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Have these people forgotten that the Spirit of God is holy? How do they dare to attribute these strange behaviours to the Holy Spirit? Brothers, let no one deceive you with empty words; these sounds come from the flesh and not from the Spirit.

5) **Apparent drunkenness.** We firmly believe that in the light of the Holy Scriptures this apparent drunkenness cannot be accepted as something which comes from the Holy Spirit. First of all Paul says: “Be filled with the Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18 – NKJV), and not: ‘Be drunk with the Spirit’. The fact that Paul, before saying that we must be filled with the Spirit, affirms: “Do not be drunk with wine” is not by chance for the apostle means that a believer, instead of being filled with wine which leads to debauchery, must be filled with the Spirit who leads him to sing and
make music in his heart to the Lord. Therefore Paul uses these expressions to show us how much better is to be filled with the Spirit than to be drunk on wine. Furthermore, I want to say that it is not true that those Jews said that the disciples were filled with new wine for they saw that they were acting like drunks, that is, for they saw that the disciples were unable to walk, to stand and to speak, for the words “They are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13 – NKJV) were sneering words the Jews spoke against the disciples of the Lord, for they, knowing that the disciples of the Lord were Galileans, could not understand how they could speak in other tongues and thus, not knowing what that phenomenon was, attributed their speaking in tongues to drunkenness. But Peter, immediately after he heard those foolish words, stood up straight and spoke fluently (and he was full of the Holy Spirit), and told those Jews that what they had seen was not the result of drunkenness but it was the fulfillment of the words of the prophet Joel. Therefore the Toronto Blessing’ adherents, in attributing their acts of apparent drunkenness to the Holy Spirit saying that they are 'drunk on the Spirit', are greatly mistaken for the term drunk is a negative term which indicates that a person has drunk too much and as a consequence he cannot control himself and as a consequence it cannot be applied to a person full of the Holy Spirit for the fruit of the Spirit is self-control. I mean it is absolutely wrong to use the expression 'to be drunk on the Spirit' to say that a believer is full of the Holy Spirit for in this way one defines a person full of the Spirit as a drunk person and thus as a person which is led to behave in a strange way because there is too much Spirit in him. By saying so I do not mean that the people of this world will not say of us that we are drunk; for many, in seeing the manifestation of the Spirit in our midst, will say that we are drunk; but the point is that they certainly will not say that we are drunk on the Spirit (for they do not know Him nor do they receive the things of the Spirit) but rather they will say that we are drunk on wine. Why then should some believers who know the Spirit say, ‘We are drunk on the Spirit’ rather than, ‘We are full of the Spirit’? When the Scripture describes a person who was filled with the Spirit or was full of the Spirit it uses the expressions ‘was filled with’ or ‘was full of’ or the like; here are some examples: “Then Jesus being filled with the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness” (Luke 4:1 – NKJV); “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit” (Luke 1:41 – NKJV); “Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied ….” (Luke 1:67 – NKJV); “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them ….” (Acts 4:8 – NKJV); “… and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ….” (Acts 4:31 – NKJV); “And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit ….” (Acts 2:4 – NKJV). So let us speak like the Scripture speaks.

Conclusion

In conclusion I want to speak some words to those who attend these meetings where the Toronto Blessing is preached as well as to those who have never attended these meetings. Brothers, you who have been caught up in the whirl of the Toronto Blessing for you have been deceived with the empty words of these skilful preachers, stop attending these meetings for in them confusion is celebrated, and God is not a God of confusion but of peace; and besides this, in these meetings are practiced suggestion and autosuggestion, and certainly many believers, having ceased to watch and pray, have fallen under the influence of seducing spirits; yes, because one of the things that the Toronto Blessing’s preachers tell believers is that they must not examine what they see and hear in the light of the Scriptures nor should they try to understand what they see and hear in the light of the Scriptures, but they must accept it with all their heart without any hesitation (as we saw before, Rodney Browne has affirmed: You can't understand what God is doing in these meetings with an analytical mind. The only way you're going to understand what God is doing is with your heart.), and they also tell believers not to pray for prayer hinders believers from receiving these manifestations. Here is what John Arnott, pastor of the Toronto Vineyard, says: "Another thing that hinders is people pray all the time. Praying in English or even praying in tongues. Mention the Holy Spirit and they start prayers in tongues, you know. Our experience is that that will hinder substantially your ability to receive. And so I say to people, 'Look don't pray.' It's hard to pour out and to pour in at the same time.
It's like a bucket that's got a hole in it because you are pouring out in prayer. Stop and receive and let the Holy Spirit fill you. Be like a sponge and desire the Lord with everything that's within you. Every case that does that, they are on the floor receiving. People pray for you, that's your time to receive. Pray on the way out, you can pray later. Don't take control, you can take control later. The whole deal is, you lose control, He takes control. He gets you out of your comfort zone, makes you feel vulnerable, right? You can analyze it later can't you?" (John Arnott, at Holy Trinity Brompton, England, February 14, 1995). So in this way it is much easier for these preachers to induce believers to accept the strangest manifestations and the most carnal experiences as things coming from God, for it is only by watching and praying that believers are restrained from accepting strange doctrines and practices. Know this, brothers, that every time believers cease to watch - and thus they cease to examine the Scripture to see if what is preached or practiced is true, that is, to see if what is preached or practiced must be accepted or rejected - and pray, the devil takes advantage of this situation and introduces the strangest and most destructive practices and doctrines into the Church. Therefore, brothers, I urge you with all my heart to stop following these manifestations of the flesh, which are the fruit of the human foolishness and in many cases the work of the devil. They are all manifestations which are not supported by the Scripture, for as we have seen all the biblical passages quoted to support the Toronto Blessing are simply quoted out of their context and misinterpreted. And furthermore they discredit the way of truth. What do you think unbelievers say when they see some Christians making animal sounds? Don't you think they say that they are crazy, they have lost their mind? And bear in mind that what unbelievers say in this case cannot be put on a same level with what unbelievers say when they enter a place of worship and see all believers speak in other tongues, for in the latter case speaking in tongues is from God but their conduct is wrong for the Scripture says: “If anyone speaks in a tongue, let there be two or at the most three, each in turn, and let one interpret” (1 Corinthians 14:27 – NKJV); therefore it is not the phenomena (that is, the speaking in tongues) in itself which is wrong but the way believers speak in tongues (that is, all together and not two or at the most three each in turn). But as for the animal sounds, the uncontrollable laughter, and so on, they are not of God in that they are carnal phenomenon, the fruit of human foolishness.

Instead, I say to you brothers who fear God and have never attended these meetings even if you have been invited to them: know this, that by not attending these meetings you are missing nothing, that is to say, you are not missing any blessing, but you are just avoiding confusion, for going to these meetings is like going to the theatre, rather it is probably worse than that. If you should go to one of these meetings you would be troubled in the spirit and you would return home sad and downcast. And you would run the risk of being caught up in the whirl of the Toronto Blessing, from which it is not easy to come out. I assure you that you are doing well to avoid this so called Blessing. I urge you to expose it through the Scripture so that it may stop spreading about all the more. Watch and pray; see to it that you divide the word of God rightly, lest you be confused like the preachers of the Toronto Blessing, and see that you test what you see and hear. Do what the believers of Berea did, that is, search the Scripture to see if what you see and hear is from God and you will be blessed for your biblical research (which is well pleasing to God) will keep you from accepting strange doctrines and practices, which unfortunately exist among the Churches, which are passed off as true when they are untrue. And who are those who pass off false things as true? All those teachers who live according to their desires, who don’t endure sound doctrine and have turned their ears away from the truth and turned aside to fables (cf. 2 Timothy 4:3-4). Be very careful, therefore, do not lower your guard, times are difficult, and there are many idle talkers and seducers of minds among the Churches, who, by smooth words and flattering speech, deceive the hearts of the simple.
MARRIAGE

The imposition of celibacy on the Catholic clergy

The Roman Catholic Church imposes celibacy on its priests and deacons. Here is what the Code of Canon Law affirms: ‘An unmarried candidate for the permanent diaconate and a candidate for the presbyterate are not to be admitted to the order of diaconate unless they have assumed the obligation of celibacy in the prescribed rite publicly before God and the Church or have made perpetual vows in a religious institute.’ (Can. 1037), ‘Clerics are obliged to observe perfect and perpetual continence for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and therefore are bound to celibacy which is a special gift of God by which sacred ministers can adhere more easily to Christ with an undivided heart and are able to dedicate themselves more freely to the service of God and humanity.’ (Can. 277 §1).

The following biblical passages are cited to support the imposition of celibacy on the clergy: Jeremiah 16:1-2; Luke 23:28-29; and 1 Corinthians 7:32-33

A brief history of celibacy in the Roman Catholic Church

In the early Church celibacy was not imposed on bishops or deacons; rather one of the necessary qualifications both for the position of a bishop and the position of a deacon was that the candidate had to be the husband of one wife and had to rule his own house well. However, inasmuch as with the passing of time within the Church many people accepted the doctrine according to which the Lord’s Supper was the repetition of the sacrifice of Christ, and thus the belief that when the presbyters celebrated the Lord’s Supper they offered to God the immolated victim (the body of Christ) for their own sins and for the sins of the people, the Church began to teach that the married presbyters had to abstain from having sexual intercourse with their wives so that they might be pure at the Lord’s Supper. This teaching was supported with the example of the Levitical priests under the Old Testament, who were not allowed to go near the holy things while they had uncleanness upon them, as it is written: “Say unto them, Whosoever he be of all your seed among your generations, that goeth unto the holy things, which the children of Israel hallow unto the LORD, having his uncleanness upon him, that soul shall be cut off from my presence: I am the LORD. …. The soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his flesh with water. And when the sun is down, he shall be clean, and shall afterward eat of the holy things; because it is his food.” (Leviticus 22:3, 6-7). It is evident that when the Lord’s Supper began to be celebrated every day, the Church ended by forbidding the presbyters who were married to have sexual intercourse with their wives. This is evident from two canons (can. 18 and can. 33) of the Council of Elvira which took place in Spain around 306. Afterward pope Gregory VII imposed celibacy on the clergy in 1073. However, it must be said that Gregory VII did not impose celibacy for theological reasons but for economic and financial reasons, that is to say, for he did not want the priests to leave the Church lands to their wives and children.

The first written law forbidding the clergy to marry was finally handed down at the first Lateran Council (1123), which stated: ‘We absolutely forbid priests, deacons, subdeacons, and monks to have concubines or to contract marriage. We decree in accordance with the definitions of the sacred canons, that marriages already contracted by such persons must be dissolved, and that the persons be condemned to do penance’ (Canon 21). The Second Lateran Council in 1139 confirmed this law. And about four centuries later the Council of Trent stated as follows: “If any one saith, that clerics constituted in sacred orders, or Regulars, who have solemnly professed chastity, are able to contract marriage, and that being contracted it is valid, notwithstanding the
ecclesiastical law, or vow; and that the contrary is no thing else than to condemn marriage; and, that all who do not feel that they have the gift of chastity, even though they have made a vow thereof, may contract marriage; let him be anathema: seeing that God refuses not that gift to those who ask for it rightly, neither does He suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able” (Council of Trent, Session 24, Canon IX)

The imposition of celibacy on the clergy was confirmed by pope Paul VI through the encyclical Sacerdotalis coelibatus (June 1967), and by the late John Paul II on many occasions.

Confutation

Celibacy is a gift of God, thus it cannot be imposed

Paul said to Timothy: “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils [demons]; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry…..” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Therefore the doctrine which forbids the bishops, the priests and the deacons, to marry is a doctrine of demons. Why? Because celibacy is a gift of God and not something which some men are allowed to impose on other men, for Jesus said: “Not everyone can accept this teaching”, - that is, the teaching which says that it is better not to marry – “but only those to whom it has been given” (Matthew 19:11 – NIV), and Paul said: “For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that” (1 Corinthians 7:7 – NKJV).

What is the result of the imposition of celibacy on the roman catholic priests? This, that the priests give themselves over to uncleanness and fornication, offending thus people. On the other hand, Paul said very clearly why a man must get married: “Because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife ….” (1 Corinthians 7:2 – NKJV). No wonder then that those on whom celibacy is imposed give themselves to uncleanness and fornication. We have come to this conclusion, that since Paul says to the unmarried: “If they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (1 Corinthians 7:9 – NKJV), for the Roman Catholic Church it is better to burn than to marry! (Bear in mind that a Roman Catholic priest who commits fornication is not considered a good priest, yet he can continue to fulfil his office within the roman catholic church; however should he marry he can no longer be a priest). As you can see, the roman catholic church contradicts the truth!

The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on celibacy is contradictory, for on the one hand the Catholic Church affirms that celibacy is a gift of God (they call it the gift of chastity), but on the other hand it affirms that the Church requires the gift of chastity from all those who want to become priests and have entered the priesthood. But if celibacy is a gift why do they impose it? Why don't they consider it optional? To impose a gift of God on someone, as the roman curia does with its sophisms, is an absurdity; it is like saying to someone who has not the gift of working miracles that he must work miracles!! It is like saying that a believer who does not have the gift of prophecy must prophesy for this is a gift of God! However Paul said to the Romans: “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith ….” (Romans 12:6 – NKJV), therefore if we don't have the gift of prophecy we can't prophesy! Likewise, if one has the gift of celibacy let him not marry, but if he does not have this gift let him marry lest he commit fornication.

Let me say another thing concerning the gift of celibacy. This gift is not given to some people because they have asked God for it, but apart from their will because God has determined that they must not marry. However, let us suppose that one asks God for the gift of celibacy, who can affirm that God will surely give him this gift? The Scripture says that “this is the confidence that we have in Him, 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 the petitions that we have asked of Him” (1 John 5:14-15 – NKJV). Therefore, even if a believer asks God for the gift of celibacy, his
prayer will be answered if this is the will of God for him. However, the Roman Catholic Church does not teach so, for it affirms that God won’t refuse him the gift of celibacy. However, the falsehood of this statement is evident, for the catholic priests have entered the priesthood thinking that they had the gift of celibacy for God had given it to them in order to fulfill their priestly tasks, and afterward they have realized that they did not have this gift. That proves that what the roman catholic church teaches on celibacy is untrue.

In the Church of God the bishops and deacons must be married

Now let us examine in the light of the Scriptures what the roman catholic church affirms in order to support the imposition of celibacy on the clergy. The catholic church affirms that the priests need to be unmarried or rather they must be unmarried in order to serve God faithfully and saintly.

First of all I want to say that the roman catholic priests don’t serve God for they teach heresies and are idolaters and superstitious. Secondly, I want to say that the Scripture teaches that not only unmarried people but also married people can serve God in the Church in a manner worthy of the Gospel. If married people were not able to serve God faithfully and saintly in the Church, Paul would not have said to Timothy that both bishops and deacons must be the husbands of one wife and must rule their own houses well (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2,4,12 - so they must be married). But there is another thing to be said: Paul said to Titus that a bishop (or an elder) must be not only the husband of one wife but also just, holy and self-controlled (cf. Titus 1:6,8); that means that marriage does not keep a bishop from being just, holy and self-controlled. Undoubtedly, if a bishop were to be unmarried in order to be just, holy and self-controlled, Paul would not have said those things to Titus. To confirm what I have just said I remember you that when Paul mentions the qualifications of a bishop and of a deacon he says: “But let these also [the candidates for the diaconate] first be tested: then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless” (1 Timothy 3:10 – NKJV), which means that the (married) candidates for the presbyterate and for the diaconate, after they have been tested for a certain period of time, can be found blameless, even though they are married and have children. What Paul says makes it clear that marriage does not distract a believer to the point that he can’t live a just, holy and self-controlled life and consequently he can’t become a bishop or a deacon in the Church of God, for as we have seen if the (married) candidates are found blameless after they have been tested they can serve as bishops and as deacons in the Church of the living God. Furthermore the apostles also (except Paul and Barnabas) were married, for Paul says to the Corinthians: “Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?” (1 Corinthians 9:5 – NKJV) That Peter was married is confirmed by Matthew when he says: “Now when Jesus had come into Peter’s house, He saw his wife’s mother lying sick with a fever. So He touched her hand, and the fever left her.” (Matthew 8:14-15 – NKJV). Yet the apostles were holy men who perfected holiness in the fear of God and gave no offense in anything!

Many holy men of God under the Old Testament were married

Now I want to speak of some people who lived under the Old Testament in order to confirm that one can be a married person and at the same time he can be a faithful and holy servant of God. Noah, whom Peter calls “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Peter 2:5), was “a just man, perfect in his generations” (Genesis 6:9 – NKJV); yet he was married and had some children. Moses, who was a prophet and of whom the Scripture says that he “was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward” (Hebrews 3:5 – NKJV), was married and had some children. Aaron, the high priest, was married, as it is written: “Aaron took to himself Elisheba, daughter of Amminadab, sister of Nahson, as wife; and she bore him Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar, and Ithamar” (Exodus 6:23 – NKJV).
The prophet Isaiah was married, for it is written: “Then I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son” (Isaiah 8:3 – NKJV).

The prophet Hosea also was married, for it is written: “When the Lord began to speak by Hosea, the Lord said to Hosea: ‘Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry and children of harlotry ….” (Hosea 1:2 – NKJV).

The prophet Ezekiel was married, as it is written: “So I spoke to the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died ….” (Ezekiel 24:18 – NKJV).

Let me say also this: the Curia affirms that the Roman Catholic priests are in a certain sense like the Levitical priests under the Old Testament, but they wilfully forget that the Levitical priests also, who offered sacrifices for the people, were married and were allowed to marry. Concerning the levitical priests, I remember you that Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was a priest of the division of Abijah, and his wife Elizabeth was of the daughters of Aaron, and “they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless” (Luke 1:6 – NKJV). As you can see, he was a priest under the Old Testament, he was married, yet he walked in all the commandments of God blameless.

Some biblical passages cited by the Curia to support the imposition of celibacy explained

Now let me explain to you some biblical passages quoted by the Curia to support the imposition of celibacy.

● God said to Jeremiah: “Thou shalt not take thee a wife, neither shalt thou have sons or daughters in this place.” (Jeremiah 16:2).

First of all it must be said that it was God who forbade Jeremiah to marry, and not the high priest of the temple or someone else; and secondly it must be said that God gave him that specific commandment for the following reason: “For thus saith the LORD concerning the sons and concerning the daughters that are born in this place, and concerning their mothers that bare them, and concerning their fathers that begat them in this land; They shall die of grievous deaths; they shall not be lamented; neither shall they be buried; but they shall be as dung upon the face of the earth: and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their carcases shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth.” (Jeremiah 16:3-4). Therefore God commanded Jeremiah not to marry nor to have children for He wanted to spare him many afflictions.

● Jesus said: “Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck.” (Luke 23:28-29).

By those words Jesus did not forbid the virgins to marry nor did He call blessed those women who were barren, for according to the law the woman was free to marry and any woman who was barren was not blessed. Jesus simply meant that when Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Roman army, since those women who had borne children would lose their children, those women who were barren would be called blessed for they would not lose their children.

● Paul said to the Corinthians: “He who is unmarried cares for the things of the Lord – how he may please the Lord. But he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife” (1 Corinthians 7:32-33 – NKJV).

By these words Paul simply meant that he who is unmarried is without all those cares which on the contrary any married person has, and thus he can dedicate more time to the things of the Lord, not having a wife and children to take care of. That’s why he counselled the unmarried to remain as they were: for he wanted believers to be without care. Now let me explain to you what it means to be without care. For instance, a preacher who is unmarried when he takes a journey because of the Gospel is more free than a preacher who has got a wife and some children; and when he is persecuted he must not worry about his wife and his children; however this difference does not make an unmarried man holier or more happy than a married man. Paul counselled the unmarried to remain unmarried for this reason also: he wanted to spare them trouble in the flesh, for he said: “Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have
not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you” (1 Corinthians 7:27-28 – NKJV). However it must be said that the trouble in the flesh which the married people have does not make marriage less important than celibacy. Far be it from us to think that marriage is to be despised because it causes married people to have trouble in the flesh or because “he who is married cares about the things of the world – how he may please his wife” (1 Corinthians 7:33 – NKJV), for it is also written: “Marriage should be honored by all ...” (Hebrews 13:4 – NIV). Therefore also the marriage of God’s ministers, of bishops and of deacons, should be honored by all. To conclude, the point is that Paul does not impose celibacy on anybody, but he tells those who have received the gift of celibacy not to marry, and he tells those who burn with passion and feel that they don’t have the gift of celibacy to marry assuring them that by so doing they will not commit any sin, as it is written: “But even if you do marry, you have not sinned” (1 Corinthians 7:28 – NKJV).

The true reasons why celibacy is imposed on the clergy

Last of all, it must be said that the celibacy of the clergy has always been a subject for discussion within the roman catholic church, for not all think that it should be imposed. There are many prelates who would like the pope to make celibacy optional. However till now the position of the pope on celibacy has not changed, even though the imposition of celibacy has caused all kinds of scandals within the roman church. So what do many priests do, who are forced to live unmarried against their will? They ask for the dispensation in order to marry, choosing rather to marry and thus to leave the catholic priesthood than to continue to give themselves over to fornication and uncleanness. Between 1963 and 1969, during the papacy of Paul VI, more than eight thousand priests asked for dispensation from their vows, while about three thousand priests left the priesthood without waiting for the dispensation. Also during the papacy of John Paul II many priests have left the priesthood in order to marry. In the past 25 years, 110,000 priests throughout the world left the priesthood to marry.

Now why does the Curia continue to impose celibacy, in spite of all the offences caused by the priests (many of them have a concubine) and in spite of the fact that every year many priests ask for dispensation from their vows and many others leave the priesthood without asking for dispensation from their priestly vows? Is not this attitude of the Curia harmful to the Roman Catholic Church? Of course it is, but you should not forget that through the imposition of celibacy the Roman Catholic Church defends its economic and financial interests. Have you ever wondered why the roman catholic church tolerates a priest who lives with a concubine allowing him to continue to be a priest, but it does not allow a priest who marries to continue to be a priest? The reason is that the concubine of a priest cannot inherit what belongs to the priest, while his wife and his children can. Therefore the roman catholic church forbids the priests to marry in order to keep the priests from leaving what they have to their wives or their children. When one looks at the history of celibacy in the Catholic Church, it soon becomes apparent that this state of life became mandatory due to financial considerations, not because priests were supposed to emulate Christ by remaining single. In other words, it was the concern of the loss of Church lands to heirs of priests, and not the desire that the priests should be consecrated wholly to their office, which led to the imposition of the celibacy rule.

There is another reason why the Curia imposes celibacy on the clergy, which is this: the papacy, being a absolutist system, needs obedient subjects wholly submissive to their superiors, and celibacy assures that unconditioned obedience the pope requires from the priests. In other words, an unmarried priest can be controlled more easily than a married priest; an unmarried priest is more loyal to the pope than a married priest. Therefore, the fact that the Curia says that priests need to be unmarried so that they might live a holier life is just a pretext, for celibacy is imposed for control reasons.
Celibacy must be rejected

Mormons reject celibacy. ‘Celibacy, the deliberate renunciation of marriage, is foreign to LDS life. Like other forms of ascetic withdrawal, it may deprive the participant of crucial life experiences. Spiritual maturity and exaltation in the highest degree of the Celestial Kingdom require marriage (D & C 131:2-3). The norm of Latter-day Saint teaching and practice is for individuals to marry, procreate, and foster righteous living in their families as indicated in the scriptures: “Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:28). “Marriage is honourable in all” (Heb. 13:4). “Whoso forbiddeth to marry is not ordained of God, for marriage is ordained of God unto man” (D & C 49:15). Those who are unable to marry in a temple in mortality through no fault of their own will receive compensatory blessings later (D & C 137:5-8). The practice of celibacy was not widespread among the Christian clergy until centuries after the death of the apostles. “Forbidding to marry” was, for Paul, a sign of apostasy (1 Tim. 4:3). Because ancient and modern revelation endorses marriage and because most religious leaders in the Old and New Testaments were married, Latter-day Saints reject attempts to interpret the Bible as advocating celibacy (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, Vol. 1, page 260). That’s why they teach that even Jesus Christ got married, for if Jesus had not got married He could not have attained the highest degree of glory in the celestial kingdom!!

Jews also reject celibacy: ‘In post-Biblical literature Jewish opinion stands out clear and simple: marriage is a duty, and celibacy a sin. "The world was created to produce life: He created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited" (Isa. xlv. 18; Git. iv. 5 = "Eduy. i. 13). "Be fruitful, and multiply" (Gen. i. 28) is taken as a command; marriage with a view to that end is a duty incumbent upon every male adult (according to some the duty devolves also upon woman; Yeb. vi. 8; Maimonides, "Yad," Ishut. xv.; Shulhan Aruk, Eben ha-'Ezer, 1, 13)... "He who is without a wife is without joy, without blessing, without happiness, without learning, without protection, without peace; indeed, he is no man; for it is written (Gen. v. 2), 'Male and female created He them, and called their name Man [A. V., "Adam"]' (Yeb. 62b, 63a; Shulhan Aruk, l.c. l. 1, note). "He who is not married is, as it were, guilty of bloodshed and deserves death: he causes the image of God to be diminished and the divine presence to withdraw from Israel" (Yeb. 63b, 64a)’ (Jewish Encyclopedia, ‘Celibacy’)

Confutation

The Holy Scripture advocates celibacy, that is, the voluntary abstention from marriage. What the Scripture does not advocate is the imposition of celibacy, for it says that those who forbid people to marry teach a doctrine of demons (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-3). The apostle Paul – who was unmarried - wrote to the Corinthians: “Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman …. For I wish that all men were even as I myself. But each one has his own gift from God, one in this manner and another in that. But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am; but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion. …… Now concerning virgins: I have no commandment from the Lord; yet I give judgment as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy. I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress – that it is good for a man to remain as he is: Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife. But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you” (1 Corinthians 7:1, 7-9, 25-28 - NKJV). As you can see, Paul taught that celibacy is a gift given by God to some men (v. 7); he affirmed that if the unmarried cannot exercise self-control they must marry (v. 9), this means implicitly that if they are able to exercise self-control it is good for them to remain unmarried or to remain as they are (v. 8). He says also that those who are loosed from a wife should not seek a wife. So Paul does not reject celibacy, rather he urges the unmarried to
remain as they are for it is good for a man not to touch a woman (v. 1). Nevertheless, he also urges the unmarried who cannot exercise self-control to marry, lest they commit fornication, as it is written: “Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Corinthians 7:2 – NKJV). He clearly says that it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

**Polygamy**

On July 12, 1843, Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon Church, had a ‘revelation’ through which he established polygamy among Mormons. Here is what he said ‘in the name of the Lord’: ‘Abraham received concubines, and they bore him children; and it was accounted unto him for righteousness, because they were given unto him, and he abode in my law; as Isaac also and Jacob did none other things than that which they were commanded; and because they did none other things than that which they were commanded, they have entered into their exaltation, according to the promises, and sit upon thrones, and are not angels but are gods. …. And again, as pertaining to the law of the priesthood, if any man espouse a virgin, and desire to espouse another, and the first give her consent, and if he espouse the second, and they are virgins, and have vowed to no other man, then is he justified; he cannot commit adultery for they are given unto him; for he cannot commit adultery with that that belongeth unto him and to no one else. And if he have ten virgins given unto him by this law, he cannot commit adultery, for they belong to him, and they are given unto him; therefore is he justified.’ *(Doctrine and Covenants, 132:37, 60-62)*. However, Mormons do not teach nor practice polygamy any longer. They discontinued polygamy in 1890. Some schismatic Mormon groups, however, still teach and practice polygamy.

**Confutation**

Even though the law of Moses allowed the Israelites to have more than one wife, it must be remembered that from the beginning it was not so, for at the beginning God made one woman and gave her to Adam, that is to say, God established monogamy. Here is what is written in the book of Genesis: “And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. And out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof. And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field; but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” *(Genesis 2:18-24)*. Note that God said that man ‘shall cleave unto his wife’ and not ‘shall cleave unto his wives.’ So an unmarried man is allowed to marry one woman.

Should a believer try to establish polygamy in your midst, therefore, I urge you not to give heed to him. Stop his mouth, and withdraw from him, for he lies against the truth and wants to deceive you.

You may ask me now, ‘What about those Christians who live in those nations where people are allowed to have more than one wife?’ Well, they also should marry only one wife, for this is the will of God for man. However, if a man married several women before his conversion, then he is allowed to keep all his wives. But he can’t become a bishop or a deacon, for those who desire
the position of a bishop or the position of a deacon must be the husbands of one wife (cf. 1 Timothy 3:2,12).

As for the ‘revelation’ of Joseph Smith concerning polygamy, I would like to say also these things: first, the reason why Abraham and Jacob had concubines was not because God commanded them to take concubines; second, Isaac did not have more than one wife for he had only one wife, nor did he have any concubine; third, it was faith that was accounted to Abraham for righteousness and not the fact that Abraham took concubines and they bore him children. As you can see, this so called ‘revelation’ proves to be false in the light of the Scripture for these reasons also.

The pope can dissolve the bond of marriage in certain cases

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the pope – that is, the head of the Roman Catholic Church - can dissolve the bond of marriage. Here are some of the causes for which the pope can dissolve the bond of marriage.

Unconsummated marriage: ‘For a just cause, the Roman Pontiff can dissolve a non-consummated marriage between baptized persons or between a baptized party and a non-baptized party at the request of both parties or of one of them, even if the other party is unwilling.’ (Code of Canon Law, Can. 1142) Impotence is one of the ‘just causes’: ‘Antecedent and perpetual impotence to have intercourse, whether on the part of the man or the woman, whether absolute or relative, nullifies marriage by its very nature.’ (Can. 1084 §1)

Sacred orders: ‘Those in sacred orders invalidly attempt marriage.’ (Can. 1087). That means that if a married man becomes a priest, his marriage becomes unlawful and as a consequence is dissolved by the pope.

Perpetual vote of chastity: ‘Those bound by a public perpetual vow of chastity in a religious institute invalidly attempt marriage.’ (Can. 1088). Therefore if a man becomes a Franciscan or a Dominican or a Capuchin friar, his marriage is dissolved.

In favour of the faith of the party who has received baptism: ‘A marriage entered into by two non-baptized persons is dissolved by means of the Pauline privilege in favor of the faith of the party who has received baptism by the very fact that a new marriage is contracted by the same party, provided that the non-baptized party departs.’ (Can. 1143 §1). This so called Pauline privilege is based on 1 Corinthians 7:12-15. Therefore if one of the non-baptized spouses becomes a member of the Roman Catholic Church, and the other party does not want to turn to the Catholic Church or to live peacefully with the ‘converted’ party, the pope can dissolve their marriage so that the converted party may marry a catholic person.

Confutation

Jesus said: “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6 – NKJV). As you can see, Jesus made it clear that no one can separate what God has joined together. Is it not enough clear? The Son of God, who spoke the words of God, said: “What God has joined together, let not man separate,” while the pope claims that he has power to dissolve a marriage in the name of Christ! Which of the two tells the truth? The pope? Certainly not, for he lies against the truth as his predecessors did. The pope has not received any power to dissolve the bond of marriage for Christ cannot deny Himself. Christ, after He was taken up into heaven, did not change His mind on the indissolubility of marriage, nor did He reveal to Peter that he had the power to loose even marriages in certain cases and he had to hand down that power. That’s
why we reject the catholic teaching according to which the pope has power to loose the bond of marriage on account of the divine authority he has received from Christ; for this teaching contradicts the truth. The bond of marriage is dissolved only by death, this is what the Holy Scriptures teach. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

If a man marries a woman, and, after marriage he finds she is not a virgin -- that she committed fornication before marriage to him -- he is allowed to put her away

Herbert W. Armstrong taught that if a man marries a woman, and, after marriage he finds she is not a virgin -- that she committed fornication before marriage to him -- he is allowed to put her away: "The basic Scriptures on the subject of marriage and divorce are these, in addition to those given above: "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I [Jesus Christ] say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery," (Matthew 5:31-32 -- part of Jesus' sermon on the Mount). "The Pharisees also came unto Him, tempting Him, and saying unto Him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? And He answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be ONE FLESH? Wherefore they are no more twain, but ONE flesh. What therefore GOD hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery," Matthew 19:3-9. Before quoting the other Scriptures, let us examine these more closely. Here are the ONLY TWO places in the New Testament where any exception whatsoever is given. Here, then, is stated the ONLY "BIBLE GROUNDS" for a second marriage (except, of course, after the death of a mate). Notice, in speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus went back to the very beginning of creation for HIS AUTHORITY for the laws of God respecting marriage. The man-ordained laws in the nation Israel were contrary, and NOT BINDING TODAY. But He did make one exception: "except it be for FORNICATION." What is "fornication?" Is it the same thing as adultery? NOT AT ALL! "Fornication" and "adultery" are two altogether different things. Here is the Webster Dictionary definition: "Fornication -- Illicit sexual intercourse on the part of an UNMARRIED person." "Adultery -- Voluntary sexual intercourse by a married man with another than his wife or by a married woman with another than her husband." "Fornication" is committed BEFORE marriage, and only by an Unmarried person. "Adultery" is UNFAITHFULNESS to a husband or wife. Why did Jesus make this explanation about "except it be for fornication?" He was speaking to the strict, legalistically minded hypocritical Pharisees. They were questioning Him so closely about the laws of marriage in an effort to trap Him. They were familiar with every detail of the law. So to be explicit and legally exact in answering them, Jesus here referred to the laws as recorded in Deuteronomy 22:19 regarding marriage. These laws provided that, if a man married a woman, and, after marriage found she had not been a virgin -- that she had committed fornication BEFORE marriage to him - - he was allowed to put her away. It was not actually a divorce but rather an ANNULMENT -- a canceling out of the marriage. The man had been tricked -- deceived -- the victim of a fraud. He had no way of knowing this until after the marriage ceremony. The assumption is that God, having known it, NEVER JOINED TOGETHER this man and woman at all. They are not bound
in God's sight -- the ceremony is nullified, just as if it never had taken place. The man is left in the status of not having been married at all. He is, then, free to marry, just as if this fraudulent ceremony, now erased, had never occurred. This is NOT strictly speaking a divorce, at all! It is not a separation, divorcing, or putting asunder of a couple joined as ONE FLESH by God, for in this case God never had joined them as one. WHAT God has actually joined together as ONE FLESH, God will not, and commands man not to separate. That is the principle.’ (Divorce and Remarriage, by Herbert W. Armstrong, circa 1953)

Confutation

The only Bible grounds for a second marriage is the death of a mate. Neither fornication – no matter whether it is committed by a woman before or after marriage – nor adultery allows the husband to remarry. If a woman commits fornication or adultery, her husband is allowed to send her away, but he is not allowed to remarry as long as she is alive. That’s the teaching of the New Testament.

Now let me say some important things about the case of a woman who is not found virgin by her husband after marriage. First of all, it is not true that under the Old Testament if a husband found that his wife was not a virgin he was allowed to put her away, for actually he did not have to write her a certificate of divorce and send her out of his house. The law says that the young woman had to be brought to the door of her father’s house and the men of her city had to stone her to death with stones, for she was regarded as a prostitute (cf. Deuteronomy 22:13-21). Therefore the man was free to remarry for in the sight of God he was single or rather a widower. In other words, he was free to remarry for the bond of marriage had been dissolved by the death of his wife. So, it was not the sin of fornication committed by his wife that allowed him to remarry, but the death of his wife. Secondly, we can’t apply that rule of the law to the New Testament, for nowhere in the New Testament we are told that if a man finds that his wife is not a virgin, his wife must be brought out to the door of her father’s house and stoned to death with stones. What must he do then according to the New Testament? Well, he must keep his wife with him, for his wife committed fornication before marriage and not after marriage, that is to say, for when she committed fornication she was not yet married. Undoubtedly she committed a sin, but she was not yet married. You may ask me now, ‘Do you mean that when Jesus said, “Except it be for fornication”, He referred to the sin of fornication committed only after marriage?’ Yes, that’s what I mean. Nevertheless, as I said before, even if a wife commits fornication after marriage, her husband is not allowed to remarry for he is allowed only to send her away. For Jesus said: “Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery ....” (Luke 16:18).

So, in the light of the words of Jesus, it is wrong to say that fornication is committed only by an unmarried person, for even a married person can commit fornication. Paul also confirms this, for when he warns the saints of Corinth against fornication, saying: “Flee fornication” (1 Corinthians 6:18), he says to them also the following words: “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?” (1 Corinthians 6:15-16 – NIV). So if a married man has sexual intercourse with a prostitute (who is unmarried) he commits fornication. Likewise, if a married woman has sexual intercourse with an unmarried man who prostitutes himself, she commits fornication. Of course, a woman commits fornication not only when she lies with a man who prostitutes himself, but also when she lies with any other unmarried man.

That by fornication – when Jesus said “except it be for fornication” – Jesus meant adultery is confirmed by what Jesus said to the angel of the Church in Thyatira concerning Jezebel and those who lay with her: “Nowwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her
children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts: and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.” (Revelation 2:20-23). Note that first Jesus said that Jezebel taught His servants to commit fornication and then He said that they committed adultery with her. Thus – inasmuch as Jezebel and the servants of Jesus were married – we conclude that in certain cases when the Bible speaks of fornication it refers to the sin of adultery committed by married people.

**The marriage bond is dissolved not only when one of the spouses dies, but also when one of them commits fornication or adultery, and when an unbelieving partner departs**

Most Protestant Churches have taken the following position on divorce and remarriage.

If a married woman is unfaithful to her husband, her unfaithfulness (that is, her fornication or adultery) dissolves the bond of marriage, thus her husband has the right not only to send her away but also to remarry. The Biblical passages taken in order to support this teaching are Matthew 19:9: “Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery,” (NKJV) and Matthew 5:32: “Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery” (NKJV).

If an unbelieving spouse is no longer willing to remain in the marriage, and he (or she) leaves the believing partner, the believing partner must be considered set free. Thus, since it is the unbelieving partner who determines to go and initiate a divorce, the believing partner is free to remarry. The Biblical passage taken to support this teaching is 1 Corinthians 7:15: “But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases.” (NKJV)

**Confutation**

One day the Pharisees asked Jesus this question: ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?’ and Jesus answered them saying: “Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate” (Matthew 19:4-6 – NKJV). After Jesus answered them, the Pharisees asked Him another question: ‘Why then did Moses command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?’ and Jesus answered them: “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (Matthew 19:8-9 – NKJV).

According to the words of Jesus, therefore, it is not lawful for a man to put away his wife for any reason, except for fornication, that is, except for marital unfaithfulness. His words complete the law, which says: “When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house ....” (Deuteronomy 24:1 – NKJV), for according to the precept of the law a man was allowed to send away his wife not only for sexual immorality but also for other reasons. Note that the law did not specify the reason for which a man was allowed to send away his wife, but it stated that it was lawful for a man to send away his wife if she found no favor in his eyes for he had found some uncleanness in her. Jesus did not say to the Pharisees that a man was allowed to send away his wife for any reason, as many teachers of the law taught in his days, but He said to them that a man was allowed to send away his wife for one reason, that is, for fornication, confirming thus that He came to complete
the law, as He said to His disciples some time before: “It has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery … “ (Matthew 5:31-32 – NKJV). Note the expression ‘but I say to you,’ which indicates that Christ came to complete the law and that the law of Christ is superior to the law of Moses. Therefore, according to the words of Jesus, it is not lawful for a man to send away his wife if she is taken seriously ill, or if she is not good at cooking, or if one of her members is amputated, or if she loses one of her eyes or all her hair, or if she is barren and can’t bear any children to her husband, or if he finds a woman who is more beautiful than his wife, for if he sends her away he causes her to commit adultery. But if she commits fornication or adultery it is lawful for her husband to send her away, for she has been unfaithful to him. However, the fact that he has the right to send away his wife does not mean that he has the right to marry another woman. Why? Because whether he sends away his wife for she has committed fornication (therefore lawfully) or he sends away his wife for any other reason (therefore unlawfully), if he marries another woman he commits adultery, for Jesus said: “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery” (Luke 16:18 – NKJV) against her (cf. Mark 10:11). As you can see, in the light of these words of Jesus recorded by Luke the expression “except for sexual immorality” (or ‘except for fornication’) which we find in the Gospel of Matthew does not mean that if a man sends away his wife for marital unfaithfulness and marries another he does not commit adultery, for in Luke it is written that whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery. Obviously if a woman puts away her husband and marries another man, she also commits adultery, for Jesus said: “And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery” (Mark 10:12 – NKJV). But there is something else to be said: anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery too (no matter if she divorced from her husband for marital unfaithfulness or for some other reason), for Jesus said: “Whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery” (Luke 16:18 – NKJV). ‘Whoever’ means anyone, thus whether he is unmarried or a divorced man, if he marries a divorced woman he commits adultery. Someone may ask me at this point: ‘Do you mean then that both spouses don’t have the right to remarry even if one of them commits adultery, and that as long as both spouses are alive they are bound by the law to one another and if one of them remarries commits adultery?’ Yes, that’s what I mean. The following passages of the Scripture confirm what I have just said:

● Paul says to the Romans: “For the woman who has a husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he lives. … So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress” (Romans 7:2,3 - NKJV). As you can see, Paul states that a married woman is bound by the law of God to her husband (even if he has deserted her and lives with another woman) as long as he lives, and she is not allowed to marry another man, for if she marries another man she commits adultery. The reason why Paul said those words is that the two have been joined together by God and they are one flesh.

● Paul says to the Corinthians: “Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or to be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife” (1 Corinthians 7:10-11 – NKJV). As you can see, even if a woman does depart from her husband, she is commanded to remain unmarried or to be reconciled to him. These other biblical verses, therefore, confirm that neither partner is free to remarry as long as both of them are alive.

To sum up, if a married woman marries another man, while her husband is still alive, she commits adultery; and if a married man marries another woman while his wife is still alive she commits adultery. However, if the husband of a woman dies, then she has the right, according to the law of God, to marry another man, for Paul says: “A wife is bound by law as long as her husband lives; but if her husband dies, she is at liberty to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 7:39 – NKJV), and again: “But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man” (Romans 7:3 – NKJV). Obviously a man also is free to marry another woman if his wife dies.
We saw before that the words of Jesus “It has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery .... “ (Matthew 5:31-32 – NKJV) do not allow a man, whose wife has committed fornication, to send away his wife and to remarry, but they solely allow him to send her away. Now let us examine closely 1 Corinthians 7:15: “But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But God has called us to peace” (NKJV) to see whether this verse allows a man to remarry if his unbelieving wife departs from him. To begin with, however, let me quote the three preceding verses: “But to the rest I, not the Lord, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy” (1 Corinthians 7:12-14 – NKJV). Now, according to many Protestant Churches, the expression ‘But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases’ means that if a brother or a sister is deserted by his unbelieving spouse he or she is free to remarry. However, they are wrong, for that expression means another thing, that is, the Christian is not bound to fight in order to preserve togetherness. Paul is saying that a deserted partner is not ‘bound to make war’ on the deserting unbeliever to get him or her to stay. The peace God has called us to – of which Paul speaks in verse 15 - is the peace of marital harmony. Therefore, if the unbelieving partner insists on departing, then the believing partner is not bound to live in perpetual conflict with the unbelieving spouse, but is free and innocent in letting him or her go. So Paul did not allow the deserted believing partner to remarry. If Paul had allowed a deserted believing partner to remarry, he would have contradicted not only himself but also Jesus.
MORALITY

Homosexuality is not a sin

Many pastors, bishops, theologians and Churches all over the world support homosexuality, for they believe that homosexuality is not a sin but a lawful choice that man is free to make. Therefore, in their opinion, homosexuals who profess Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, are welcome to be or become full members of the Church. They must not be rebuked for their behaviour nor should they be urged to repent, rather they should be encouraged to remain homosexuals, for there is no harm in homosexuality. A Christian man can be a gay, while a Christian woman can be a lesbian, for God does not detest homosexuality.

In 1988, the United Church of Canada, the largest Protestant denomination in Canada, passed a resolution which affirms ‘A) That all persons, regardless of their sexual orientation, who profess Jesus Christ and obedience to Him, are welcome to be or become full member of the Church. B) All members of the Church are eligible to be considered for the Ordered Ministry.’ Therefore, according to this resolution homosexuals are welcome in the church and the ministry.

In 1994 more than 60 Italian protestant pastors and theologians signed a statement supporting the civil ‘marriage’ between homosexuals. Here is the statement: ‘We appreciate and welcome with interest the recommendation of the [European] Parliament in Strasbourg to recognize in the national legislations the rights of the permanent cohabitations between citizens who are homosexuals, by comparing them with the permanent cohabitations among heterosexuals, in order to assure both of them of equal rights and duties; we invite our society to have a confrontation of such proposal with serenity and a spirit of equity, developing an ethical reflection which takes note of the development of the custom which is going on in the western societies, safeguarding the respect of the people involved in their human specificity and their choices of life, and safeguarding together the times which are indispensable for a development and maturity of the consciences in the face of the changes which are going on; we hope that in this matter neither rigid positions nor preconceived condemnations will arise, even in the name of a Christian ethics which has been lived historically in different ways, and that the respect of the human being, created in the image of God and loved and redeemed by God, may remain in its centre; finally, in this context we suggest that the word ‘marriage’ (which has produced the sense of an unnecessary provocation) should be forsaken in favour of the words ‘permanent cohabitation’ or ‘civil union’, which are more suitable’ (NEV, 2 March, 1994, year XV, number 9, page 1). This declaration was signed by 33 Waldensian pastors, 17 Baptists, 7 Lutherans, 7 Methodists and a Reformed woman pastor. Among the signers we find Giorgio Bouchard (Waldensian, former President of the Italian Federation of Evangelical Churches); Sergio Aquilante (Methodist), Franco Scaramuccia and Massimo Apriile (Baptists); Hans Gerch Philippi (the Lutheran Doyen); Paolo Ricca, who is the Dean of the Waldensian Theological Faculty, and Bruno Corsani, Daniele Garrone and Ermanno Genre, who are teachers at the same faculty, as well as Giorgio Girardet, who is emeritus professor.

In 1997 in the United States of America more than 60 pastors from the Madison, Wisconsin, area signed a statement supporting homosexuals. Following are some excerpts from this statement: - Madison Affirmation On Homosexuality and Christian Faith - “Jesus Christ calls us to love God and our neighbor as ourselves. As Christian clergy we embrace gay and lesbian persons as our neighbors. From our reading of scripture and from our pastoral experiences, we believe there is sufficient evidence to conclude that homosexuality is neither sickness nor sin. For too long, homosexual persons have been condemned and mistreated by the followers of Jesus Christ. Sadly, the Bible has been misused in support of this condemnation. This abuse of scripture must end. Heterosexual and homosexual persons are children of God, created in God's
We believe it is time to eliminate all policies and practices which create barriers and restrictions to the full participation of gay and lesbian Christians in all of the privileges and responsibilities of church membership. Recognizing that our churches still speak and act out of our longstanding prejudices: "We hope and pray that we will acknowledge our sin and be forgiven for our ignorance, fear, arrogance and self-righteousness; ... "We rejoice in the refusal of many gay and lesbian Christians to abandon or be forced out of their church homes; ... "We consider these sisters and brothers to be a unique, holy and precious gift to all of us who struggle to become the family of God" (Wisconsin State Journal, May 13, 1997). The statement was signed by "clergy" representing American Baptist, Episcopal, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Quaker, Moravian, United Methodist, Presbyterian Church (USA), and United Church of Christ. Signers included the following -- Paul Kittlaus, senior minister, First Congregational United Church of Christ; John Fetterman, rector of Grace Episcopal Church; Harvey Peters, pastor, Luther Memorial Church; David Lyons, pastor, First United Methodist Church; David Michael, pastor, Lake Edge United Church of Christ; Frederick Trost, minister of the Wisconsin Conference of the United Church of Christ; Michael Schuler, pastor, First Unitarian Society.

The United Reformed Church in Britain has agreed to accept "practising homosexuals" as ministers in churches which choose to elect them. The decision, labelled Motion 19, was made at the general assembly on July 9, 1997, by a vote of nearly two to one. It was part of a package of motions presented by a task force which had studied the question of "human sexuality" for more than two years. Motion 19 also allows churches to refuse to call homosexual pastors. The resolution also "provided that candidates for the URC ministry cannot be rejected for training purely on the grounds of being in a homosexual relationship" (ENI, July 9, 1997). Of the 513 Reformed churches which responded to an official survey, 48 stated they would accept a homosexual pastor.

The Episcopal bishop of Chicago, William Persell, believes churches should formally bless homosexual unions. Persell, who was consecrated at a ceremony in Chicago in March, 1999, was dean of Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, Ohio, from 1991 to the end of 1998. Persell says churches should honor homosexuals who have long-term relationships. "I think we're in a time when we have to learn and accept each other. ... Every church I have been in has had a large gay and lesbian membership. How do you say to people they're second-class, even though God created them as gay and lesbian?" (Ecumenical News International, Jan. 15, 1999).

In 2001, the Archbishop of York, David Hope, the second highest official in the Church of England, commissioned a new catechism that treats homosexuality as a blessing from God. This Anglican catechism says: "Homosexuality may well not be a condition to be regretted but to have divinely ordered and positive qualities. Homosexual believers should be encouraged to find in their sexual preferences such elements of moral beauty as may enhance their general understanding of Christ's calling."

The Metropolitan Community Church is a Protestant denomination with churches throughout the United States with a mostly, but not exclusively, gay membership. Acceptance of homosexuality is an important part of its theology.

The Uniting Church in Australia allows for the membership and ordination of homosexual people.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture clearly teaches that homosexuality is a sin, as it is written: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22 – NKJV), and again: “If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them” (Leviticus 20:13 – NKJV). Therefore homosexuals are sinners, for they break the Word of God.

Homosexuality is a sin against nature, for Paul wrote to the Romans: “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against
nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due” (Romans 1:26-27 – NKJV). As you can see, according to the Scripture, both gays and lesbians are people who give themselves over to vile passions for they have exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. They commit what is shameful in the sight of God.

In the light of what the Scripture teaches, therefore, ‘homosexual marriages’ are to be abhorred. Know this, that a man has no right to marry another man, and a woman has no right to marry another woman, for Jesus said that God “at the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Matthew 19:4-5 – NKJV).

Unbelieving homosexuals must be urged to repent of their sins and to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, bearing fruits worthy of repentance. Therefore they must be exhorted to forsake immediately their homosexual practices. While the so called believing homosexuals (that is, those Christians who have become homosexuals) must be expelled from among the congregations of the saints, as it is written: “Put away from yourselves the evil person” (1 Corinthians 5:13 – NKJV).

Homosexuals will not inherit the Kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9). After death they go to hell, and on that day they will rise again to be judged according to their works and cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. Remember that the men of Sodom were homosexuals, and that God punished Sodom by raining brimstone and fire on it (cf. Genesis 19:4-5, 24-25).

Let no one deceive you, brethren, with empty words. Cling to what the Holy Scripture teaches, and refute all those who support homosexuality.

**It is lawful for Christians to fornicate, to commit adultery, and to practice homosexuality and child adult sex**

David Berg (also known as Moses David, who was born in 1919 and died in 1994), founder of The Children of God (also known as The Family, and Family of Love), taught a doctrine called ‘flirty fishing’. According to this doctrine, which is still taught and practiced by his followers, it is acceptable for a Christian woman to have sexual relations with outsiders in order to lead them to the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is what David Berg taught and how he tried to justify this doctrine: ‘Do you really believe that ’to the pure all things are pure’ (Titus 1:15), and that ’all things are lawful unto you’? (1 Corinthians 6:12). ’Would you do it for Jesus? -- Then why not for others? ’If a brother or sister be naked and destitute of daily food (including sex?), and one of you say unto them, ’Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body (sex?), what doth it profit?’ (James 2:15,16). ’What better way to show them the Love of God than to do your best to supply their desperately hungry needs for love, fellowship, companionship, mental and spiritual communication, and physical needs such as food, clothing, shelter, warmth, affection, a tender loving kiss, a soft warm embrace, the healing touch of your loving hands, the comforting feeling of your body next to theirs -- and yes, even sex if need be! ’What greater way could you show anyone your love than to give them your all in the bed of love? How much more can you show them the Love of God than to show them His Love to the uttermost through you? How much more love can you show them than this?’ There's no amount of love that could possibly be illegitimate to try to win a soul! There's no sin in love to begin with, and there's no 'sin' so great that God would condemn you for it when it's done in love, ... because when it's love it can't be sin.' ‘The only price that's worth it is an immortal undying soul! That's the price we'd even go to bed for!: The salvation of an eternal soul! -- And that is worth it!’ "The greatest need of man is love, so the greatest service to man is love! That's why FFing [Flirty Fishing] is such a service. It is the greatest, most sacrificial service that
anyone can possibly give, outside of actually dying, because it is laying your life on the line. You are laying down your life or your wife for love, love of the Lord. Unselfish love! I'm not just talking about fleshly gratification, but for the love of someone, sacrificial love, even risky love, dangerous love!' ‘Any price is not too big to pay to save a soul! ... Jesus gave His life, and we should be willing to give ours.’ (Taken from the official site of the Children of God).

‘Flirty Fishing’ is just part of the ‘Law of Love’, a peculiar doctrine taught by David Berg, which is still taught and practiced by his followers, according to which whatever is done in pure love, the Love of God, unselfish love, for God or others, is lawful. Here are some statements made by David Berg about the ‘Law of Love’: ‘When Jesus came, He abolished all other laws but Love! He gave only one law which fulfills all the laws of the Bible, both old and new, and that is Love! -- For God and fellow man!’, ‘Jesus said the Law of Love is all the law, as well as all the prophets! (Matthew 22:37-40). That's pretty broad coverage! That takes in the entire Old Testament, the law and the prophets. .... [J]esus said that’s the whole works, the whole Bible, that's all the law -- love.’ Among the things which are allowed according this so called law of love, are fornication, adultery, female homosexuality, sex between children and sex among teenagers and even incest and child adult sex. Here is what David Berg wrote: ‘“Is sex a sin? Well, if there's anything I've tried to preach and tried to show the world, we're one of the few, if not the only religion of the world which doesn't teach that sex is sinful! Think of that! Isn't it horrible to think that nearly every other religion -- even if it doesn't actually directly teach so -- gives the impression by their practice that sex is sinful and somehow wicked?” ‘Adam and Eve enjoyed sex before they ever fell, and before the Fall they were commanded to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the Earth, and were created with sexual organs to do so in the very beginning! -- So how could sex be sinful, if they were commanded to do it before the Fall?’ ‘Sex was created and instituted by God in the very beginning, and [was] the subject of His first commandment: ‘Be fruitful and multiply!’ (Genesis 1:22)’ ‘Jesus said [in Matthew 22:37-39] this is all the law, the only law -- love! Therefore, whatever is done in pure love, the Love of God, unselfish love, sacrificial love, for God or others, is lawful, according to God's Word and Law of Love! As long, therefore, as it is in love with mutual consent and hurts no innocent one, it is lawful, according to God's Own Word and His Own Son, Jesus Christ! ‘he Apostle Paul also says, ‘Against such (love) there is no law’ (Galatians 5:23). Against this pure kind of love, the Love of God, the unselfish sacrificial Love of God and your fellow man, there is no law of God! According to the Scriptures there is therefore no longer any law against sex that is done in love, God's Love, and hurts no one.’ ‘So enjoy yourself and enjoy life! Enjoy the pleasures and senses and the sensual pleasures of life which God has given you to enjoy as much as you please and as much as you need. Just don't enjoy them more than Him and more than His love. Don't worship the creation more than the Creator. Be sure that you put God first, and then you can have all this and Heaven, too!’ (Taken from the official site of the Children of God)

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that fornication, adultery, homosexuality and child adult sex are sins in the sight of God, and thus every Christian must abhor and flee them. Concerning fornication – that is, sex between unmarried people -, the Scripture says: “Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body.” (1 Corinthians 6:18). Fornicators will not inherit the Kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9). God will judge fornicators (cf. Hebrews 13:4). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were reduced to ashes because their inhabitants gave themselves over to fornication (cf. Jude 7). According to the law of Moses, if a man married a woman and when he came to her he found she was not a virgin, the woman had to be put to death for she played the harlot in her father's house (cf. Deuteronomy 22:13-21). In the light of the above mentioned passages, therefore, sex between children and among teenagers is fornication, for both children and teenagers are unmarried.
Concerning adultery, that is, the act of being unfaithful to one’s wife or husband by voluntarily having sexual intercourse with someone else; the Scripture says that those who commit adultery will not inherit the Kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9). God will judge adulterers (cf. Hebrews 13:4). According to the law of Moses, both the adulterer and the adulteress (who were caught in adultery) had to be put to death (cf. Deuteronomy 22:22).

Concerning homosexuality, that is, sexual intercourse between people of the same sex; the Scripture defines it as a sin against nature, for Paul wrote to the Romans: “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due” (Romans 1:26-27 – NKJV). As you can see, according to the Scripture, both gays and lesbians are people who give themselves over to vile passions for they have exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. They commit an abomination in the sight of God. Male and female homosexuals will not inherit the Kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9). The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were punished for they gave themselves over to homosexuality (cf. Jude 7). The law of Moses makes it clear that homosexuality is a sin: “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination” (Leviticus 18:22 – NKJV). According to the law of Moses, homosexuals had to be put to death, as it is written: “If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them” (Leviticus 20:13 – NKJV).

Concerning child adult sex, God condemns it just as it condemns fornication, adultery and homosexuality, for according to God sex is permissible only within the bond of marriage between a husband and wife. Incest and adult-child sex are specifically prohibited in Leviticus 18:9-17. All those men and women who have ‘a sexual orientation’ toward children and have sex with them commit an abomination in the sight of God. These people are perverted, and thus they will certainly be turned into hell. When Jesus said: “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!” (Matthew 18:6-7 – NKJV), He referred also to these perverted people who sexually abuse children to give vent to their vile and deceitful passions.

Brothers, I urge you to beware of the Children of God, for they hold and practice doctrines of demons. Let no one of them deceive you with empty words. They lie against the truth, they hate the truth, they trample the truth under their feet. Rebuke them, refute them, warn them, and urge them to turn from their evil ways to the Lord.

In certain cases theft is not a sin

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that in certain cases theft is not a sin. Here is what the Catholic Encyclopedia says: ‘.... Thus one in danger of death from want of food, or suffering any form of extreme necessity, may lawfully take from another as much as is required to meet his present distress even though the possessor's opposition be entirely clear. Neither, therefore, would he be bound to restitution if his fortunes subsequently were notably bettered, supposing that what he had converted to his own use was perishable. The reason is that individual ownership of the goods of this world, though according to the natural law, yields to the stronger and more sacred right conferred by natural law upon every man to avail himself of such things as are necessary for his own preservation. St. Thomas (II-II: 66:7) declares that in such straits what is taken becomes, because of the dire need experienced, one’s very own, and so cannot be said to be stolen. This doctrine is sometimes expressed by saying that at such a time all things become common, and thus one reduced to such utter destitution only exercises his right.’
According to this teaching, a person is allowed to help the person in need with the goods of another person. In other words, if I see a person in need, and I do not have anything to share with him, I am allowed to rob someone of something in order to help the person in need (cf. Jean-Marie Aubert, *Compendio della morale cattolica* [Compendium of the catholic morals], Cinisello Balsamo, Italy, 1989, page 405).

**Confutation**

The Scripture says: “You shall not steal” (Exodus 20:15 – NKJV). The Scripture gives this command to the poor as well as to the rich, to the wise as well as to the unwise, to the Jews as well as to the Gentiles. Therefore, even those people who are in need are commanded not to steal and if they steal they commit a sin for sin is the transgression of the law (cf. 1 John 3:4). Of course, the Scripture says that “people do not despise a thief if he steals to satisfy himself when he is starving” (Proverbs 6:30 – NKJV), however – pay attention to this – it does not justify him, for immediately after it says: “Yet when he is found, he must restore sevenfold; he may have to give up all the substance of his house” (Proverbs 6:31 – NKJV). That means that even the conscience of a thief who has stolen out of necessity accuses him of theft. Why must he restore sevenfold and may he have to give up all the substance of his house when he is found? Is it not because his conscience accuses him of doing an evil thing? Does Wisdom not say: “Bread gained by deceit is sweet to a man, but afterward his mouth will be filled with gravel” (Proverbs 20:17 – NKJV)? Therefore even those who steal some bread in order to satisfy their hunger, are accused by their conscience, for they have sinned against God and the wages of sin is death. Therefore, according to the Scripture, a man is not allowed to steal even if he is starving.

Neither is a man allowed to rob someone of something in order to help those who are in need, for the command not to steal is mandatory in all circumstances of our life. We are not allowed to rob someone of something in order to help those who are in need for the Scripture says: “He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need” (Ephesians 4:28 – NIV). Note that we must meet the needs of the poor by working with our own hands and not by stealing. The apostle Paul says in another place that “if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have” (2 Corinthians 8:12 – NIV) nor according to what he has stolen. In other words, if we are willing to help those who are in need, our willingness will be acceptable in the sight of God according to what we have and also according to what we have obtained honestly. If according to the law no one was allowed to bring the wages of a harlot to the house of God for it was defiled by sin (in this case by the sin of fornication), how could God take pleasure in an offering we make to the poor using money or goods we have stolen? Therefore, according to the law of God the end does not justify the means. Do you want to help your neighbour? Do it honestly, using your own goods. Do not rob anyone of his own goods, for if you do this you will break the word of God and your offering will be an abomination in the sight of God. Remember that “love does no harm to a neighbour” (Romans 13:10 – NKJV).

**It is lawful for a Christian in certain cases to kill a human being**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that a Christian in certain cases can kill a human being. Here is what the Catholic Encyclopedia states: ‘For the protection of one's own or another's life, limb, chastity, or valuables of some moment, it is agreed on all sides that it is lawful for anyone to repel violence with violence, even to the point of taking away the life of the unjust assailant, provided always that in so doing the limits of a blameless defence be not exceeded.’
Confutation

Jesus Christ said to His disciples: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two” (Matthew 5:38-41 – NKJV). Therefore, we as disciples of Christ cannot resort to violence against those who intend to harm us, for such a behaviour opposes the words of Jesus Christ as well as the example He left us (for Jesus did the things He commanded His disciples to do). For the Scripture says that “He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearsers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7 – NKJV). Jesus did not resort to violence against those who assailed and persecuted Him. When one of the officers struck Jesus with the palm of his hand (cf. John 18:22), He did not render violence for violence to his enemy; nor did He render violence for violence when the soldiers of the governor struck Him on the head (cf. Matthew 27:27-31). In addition to this, He did not allow His disciples to fight for Him, for in the Gethsemane, after Peter drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, He said to Peter: “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52 – NKJV). Therefore, let us keep the words of Jesus Christ and follow His example in order to honor His words and that Noble Name by which we are called.

In certain cases we are allowed to lie

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that in certain cases we are allowed to tell a lie. Here is what we read in the Catholic Encyclopedia: ‘According to the common Catholic teaching it is never allowable to tell a lie, not even to save human life. A lie is something intrinsically evil, and as evil may not be done that good may come of it, we are never allowed to tell a lie. However, we are also under an obligation to keep secrets faithfully, and sometimes the easiest way of fulfilling that duty is to say what is false, or to tell a lie. Writers of all creeds and of none, both ancient and modern, have frankly accepted this position. They admit the doctrine of the lie of necessity, and maintain that when there is a conflict between justice and veracity it is justice that should prevail’ (Mental Reservation).

Confutation

The Scripture says: “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbour,’ for we are members of one another” (Ephesians 4:25 – NKJV), and again: “Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord” (Proverbs 12:22 – NKJV). Therefore a Christian is never allowed to tell a lie. The doctrine of the lie of necessity is a doctrine of demons. The right thing to do in order to keep secrets is to keep silent.

A doctor should be allowed to practice euthanasia

Euthanasia (from the Greek euthanathos, eu ‘well’ + thanathos ‘death’) is defined as ‘the painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable disease or in an irreversible coma’. In other words, euthanasia is a death hastened by doctors with the permission of the sufferer or his relatives.
In 1998 the Waldensian Churches in Italy, at their annual meeting in August, approved a statement supporting euthanasia and assisted suicide. The document called for legislation which would legalize euthanasia, such as that which passed in the Netherlands in 1994. The document said: ‘Every human being is responsible for his own life and can decide if it is still worthy to be lived. ... [A doctor] has the duty to use all his knowledge and skill to maintain a patient’s life, but on the other hand, he cannot elude the imperative of avoiding the useless suffering of a patient who does not have any prospect of recovery’ (Religious News Service, August 31, 1998).

Confutation

Euthanasia is murder in God’s eyes. He who has the power to kill and to make alive is God alone (1 Samuel 2:6). Therefore, if the country where you live permits euthanasia and one of your relatives is in a hopeless condition from a medical point of view, because according to the doctors he is condemned to die after unspeakable sufferings without any chance of recovering, you must not give the permission to let him die in advance (before time) in order to put an end to his sufferings or to make him suffer less, because if you give such a permission you will share in a murder. And then who said that that man will surely die? The doctors, thus human beings who can’t lengthen the life of men and who have a limited knowledge like all the other human beings. Therefore they do not have the last word, for it is God (the Omnipotent, the Omniscient and the Omnipresent) who has the last word in the life of men. It is God who decides when a man is going to die and what kind of death he will die. Thus what counts is His decision, is what God says.

So, let us suppose that one of our relatives is dying of an incurable disease and is suffering terribly. How should we cope with such situation? Well, first of all, we should ask: ‘What did God determine to do? Did He determine to let him live or die?’ Nobody knows (unless God reveals His will by a word of wisdom). Therefore we must plead with God to heal that person who is dying of an incurable disease. For we must never give up hoping in God, for our God is able to raise up a man the doctors say he’s done for or a man who thinks he is done for. Job is a clear example of how God can change the most desperate situation. Job was suffering terrible pains, his flesh was wasting away from sight and his bones clung to his skin and to his flesh, he thought that he would soon depart from this world, and his wife was waiting for his death; but God healed him and made him prosperous again. Another eloquent example of what God can do when there is no more hope from a human point of view is that of king Hezekiah, who was taken ill and in the midst of his illness thought that he was a dead man, but God heard his prayer and saw his tears and added to his days fifteen years. “I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years. I shall be taken away from the habitation of men, and from the tabernacles of sons of men. Mine age is wasted away, and my horror shall not be hid: I said, Neither shall I see the habitation of the Lord, neither the dwelling place of the Almighty with men. Therefore are mine eyes turned back, and mine days to heaviness; my expectation is ever from the Lord; mine honour is from him. He is the voice of my substance; thou hast ordained me at the womb. I will now praise thee: not now, for since my youth hast thou been my song, and my inheritance to evermore. For thou hast been my counsellor, and therefore I am made glad because of the excellency of thine counsellings. I love them, and thy laws are my delight. I am a stranger upon earth, and more in trouble: help me against mine enemies.Draw me not away into the deep: nor spread abroad upon me the net which they have hid. Selah. My soul is closely wrapped up in trouble: and the Lord shall hear me. I am sore distressed: save me from my enemies. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: and save me out of the depths of waters. Teach me to do good with mine heart to keep thy commandments with my reins. For I was made dumb, I held my silence, and was holden as one dumb. I made my teeth as for an empty house: I set my mouth like the dead. I seemed as one that had no strength; and as one not of good report among men.

The above mentioned examples show us clearly that God can change the most desperate circumstances in the life of men, for both Job and Hezekiah were ‘terminally ill,’ but God healed them. Knowing this, therefore, let us pray for our relative who is terminally ill so that God may heal him, and God will surely heal him if it is His will to heal him. Do not lose heart, with God nothing is impossible. But not only can God heal incurable diseases, which lead to death, if it is His will; but He can also raise the dead. Therefore He can act on behalf of a man even after his death. So he can allow a man to die of an incurable disease in order to raise him from the dead before or during of
even after his funeral. The resurrections which are recorded in the Scripture confirm this concept. So it is lawful for us to plead with God to raise a dead person, and obviously if it is God’s will to raise him from the dead, it will come to pass that that man will rise again in answer to our prayers.

But what shall we say if God has determined to let him die of that incurable disease but not to bring him back to life? We will say: ‘The will of God be done.’ If the dying person is a believer, when he dies he will go to heaven to be with the Lord; if he is a sinner, he will go to Hades (hell), where he will be tormented with fire, and thus he will continue to suffer in another world, and we know that the sufferings in Hades are greater than any suffering on the earth.

I would like to point out that many of those who die in severe pain are people who have been struck by the rod of God for their wickedness. For God makes them reap the evil they have sowed. The Scripture says that God struck king Jehoram with an incurable disease because of his wickedness, as it is written: “After all this the Lord struck him in his intestines with an incurable disease. Then it happened in the course of time, after the end of two years, that his intestines came out because of his sickness: so he died in severe pain” (2 Chronicles 21:18-19).

You may ask me now: ‘Does God strike with incurable diseases even Christians, for certain sins which they have committed?’ Yes, He does, for God is no respecter of persons. Know this, that some Christians have been struck by the rod of God because they take pleasure in committing adultery and fornication, in murdering, in getting drunk, in keeping back by fraud the wages of their labourers, and in other serious sins. They walk after the flesh, God gave them time to repent of their wickedness, but they did not repent, and thus they were struck by God. I realize that it is painful to see these people suffer on their bed of illness, yet we have to admit that it is right that God should make them suffer in that way for their iniquities. Nevertheless, we, who are not glad to see people suffer, must have compassion on them and pray for them, so that God may grant them repentance that leads to salvation and thus after death they may go to heaven.

**Birth-control must be regarded as legitimate in certain cases**

Many Protestant Churches teach that Christians are allowed to practice birth control, that is, Christians can limit children or even decide not to have children, using various methods of birth control.

I would like to point out that when I speak of various methods of birth control I refer to those birth control methods that function to hinder conception (such as the condom, vaginal foams, creams, and suppositories, diaphragm, the rhythm method, etc.) as well as to those methods of birth control which destroy a fertilized egg (such as the pill and abortion). In addition to this, I would like to point out that not all the Churches which allow birth control approve those methods which destroy a fertilized egg.

For instance, the Assemblies of God (U.S.A.), which is in favour of birth control, rejects ‘any birth control method that functions to destroy a fertilized egg, rather than actually preventing conception.’

**Confutation**

God at the beginning said to man and woman: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth …..” (Genesis 1:28 – NKJV). Therefore birth-control is contrary to the will of God for husband and wife. Every attempt to hinder conception is a sin. No matter if husband and wife use ‘natural’ or ‘unnatural’ methods to hinder conception, what they do opposes the will of God for them.

Paul said to Timothy that women will be saved in childbearing if they continue in faith, love and holiness, with self-control (cf. 1 Timothy 2:15), confirming thus that it is the will of God that the
woman should bear children. Obviously she will bear as many children as God has decided to give to her and her husband.

Some Christians affirm that they are afraid to have many children for they are afraid they might not be able to provide for their future. However this fear is of the devil for he who has put his trust in God believes that God will take care of all the children God gives to him, keeping them and meeting all their needs.

If not one sparrow is forgotten before God, how can God forget the children He gives to a married couple who fears His name? If God provides food for the raven when its young ones cry to God, if He hunts the prey for the lion, how much more will He provide food for His children who trust in Him!

I conclude by quoting the following words written in the book of Psalms: “Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one’s youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate” (Psalm 127:3-5 – NKJV), so that you may understand how precious are children.

So I urge all Christian married couples to have children.

Abortion must be regarded as legitimate in certain circumstances

Abortion is the deliberate termination of a human pregnancy. Many who claim to be Evangelical Christians all over the world countenance abortion in certain circumstances.

The Presbyterian Church U.S.A. (which is the largest Presbyterian denomination in America, with roughly 3,000,000 members in 11,500 churches), is a member of the Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights, which seeks 'to encourage and coordinate support for safeguarding the legal option of abortion.' Its 1985 Assembly reaffirmed its support for the right to abortion.


The Italian Waldensian-Methodists Churches in 1978 (at their annual meeting which took place at Torre Pellice, Turin) approved a statement supporting abortion.

Evangelist Billy Graham in The Billy Graham Christian Worker’s Handbook (1997 edition) writes: ‘We should accept abortion in these cases: rape or incest or if the delivery of the child is a threat to a mother’s life.” (page 19). In the 1996 revised 2001 edition he writes: ‘Even sincere Christians may differ on whether or not abortion is ever justified, especially in difficult situations such as rape or incest, or when tests reveal that the unborn child has severe abnormalities’ (The Billy Graham Christian Worker’s Handbook, page 21)

Interarsity Press published a book in 1985 called Brave New People by Gareth Jones. Here are some quotes from this book: ‘If abortion is contemplated, a reasonable decision will take into account the fetus, and also the parents and siblings” (p. 157); ‘In this instance it has to be decided whether abortion will benefit the fetus’ (p. 158); ‘No biblical passage speaks of humans possessing personhood before birth’ (p. 169); ‘I am prepared to admit there may be circumstances where, very regretfully, even Christians may have to contemplate an abortion” (p. 173); ‘Unfortunately, some families cannot cope with such a challenge, and a compromise must be reluctantly adopted, namely, termination of the pregnancy [abortion] ... God's love for the weak ... requires comparable concern for the abnormal and for those likely to be rejected by society’ (p. 179).
Confutation

Abortion is never legitimate, not even when the woman has been raped or has committed incest or when the delivery of the child is a threat to a mother's life, for abortion is a murder in the sight of God. Did God not say: “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13 – NKJV)? Why then should abortion, which is the killing of a human being, be regarded as legitimate in certain cases? Someone may ask me, ‘Why do you call the embryo (the product of conception in the first eight weeks from conception) and the fetus (the product of conception more than eight weeks after conception) a human being?’ I call both the embryo and the fetus a human being, for according to the Holy Scripture human life begins at conception, therefore the moment the sperm unites with the egg, a new human life has begun. Every pregnant woman has got a child, that is, a human being, in her womb; no matter how long she has been pregnant, her womb contains a human being whom no one – except God – has the right to put to death. God gave the following commandment to the Israelites, which makes it clear that in the sight of God the product of conception is a child or a human life, no matter how long it has been in the womb of the woman: “If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman’s husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” (Exodus 21:22-24 – NKJV). Notice that the man who struck a pregnant woman had to be punished if the pregnant woman gave birth prematurely but no harm followed, but also if any harm followed. However, while in the former case the punishment consisted of a fine which the striker had to pay, in the latter case it would consist of his death if the child was born dead. ‘Life for life’ was the law. Now notice that the law calls the product of conception, which is in the womb of a pregnant woman, ‘life’ regardless of the time it has been in the womb of the woman. This proves that in the sight of God every pregnant woman has a human life in her womb, and that life is sacred. In other words, whether a woman is two weeks pregnant or three months pregnant or eight months pregnant, that ‘thing’ which is in her womb is a human life which must be recognized as a child and has the same rights as all other children.

In addition to this, it must be said that according to the Holy Scripture it is God who forms the child in the womb of his mother. For David said to God: “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:13-16 – NKJV), and Job, when he compared himself with his servants, asked, “Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?” (Job 31:15 – NKJV). Therefore, to abort a pregnancy is to abort the work God is doing. Do you want to destroy God’s work? Know this, that if you decide to destroy the work of His hand God will not leave you unpunished for you will bear the consequences of your rebellion against God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, brethren; fear God.

If a Christian smokes just a cigarette, he commits no sin

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that a Christian is allowed to smoke, for we read in the Catechism of the Catholic Church: ‘The virtue of temperance disposes us to avoid every kind of excess: the abuse of food, alcohol, tobacco, or medicine.’ (CCC 2290) As you can see, the Catholic Church teaches that one must avoid the abuse of tobacco and not the use of tobacco. That’s why even many priests and friars smoke cigarettes. Amatulli Flaviano, Founder and
General Director of the Ecclesial Movement ‘Apostoli della Parola’ (Apostles of the Word) in his book *La Chiesa Cattolica e le sette protestanti* (The Catholic Church and the protestant sects) says that ‘insofar as smoking harms one’s health, it is a sin. To say that one cannot smoke even a cigarette is an overstatement which only ‘favours one’s pride’’ (Amatulli Flaviano, *La Chiesa Cattolica e le sette protestanti*, Putignano, Italy, 1991, page 182. The book has the Imprimatur. Translated by myself).

Smoking is allowed even among many Evangelicals; Piero Suman, an Italian Baptist Pastor, has stated that in his opinion a cigarette after a cup of coffee is not a sin (cf. Il Tempo, March 10, 1995). It is most likely that his opinion on smoking was influenced by that of Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the well known Baptist preacher who lived in the nineteenth century, who stated (in the autumn of 1874): ‘If anybody can show me in the Bible the command, ‘Thou shalt not smoke,’ I am ready to keep it; but I haven't found it yet. I find ten commandments, and it's as much as I can do to keep them; and I've no desire to make them into eleven or twelve. ….. I wish to say that I'm not ashamed of anything whatever that I do, and I don't feel that smoking makes me ashamed, and therefore I mean to smoke to the glory of God.’

**Confutation**

The apostle Paul says to the Corinthians: “Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple” (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 – NIV), and again: “Do you not know that your body is a [the] temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 – NIV).

Therefore, inasmuch as smoking destroys one’s body (no matter how many cigarettes one smokes each day, whether they are many or a few, smoking is detrimental to one’s health for it causes several diseases which in most cases shorten the life of smokers) a Christian must abstain from smoking lest he destroy his body, which is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Let no one deceive you with empty words.

---

**Tattooing is a valid spiritual expression**

Many Christians think there is nothing wrong with tattoos. A recent survey found that ‘75% of young conservative Christians believe tattooing is a valid spiritual expression’ (‘For the Love of God,’ The Vancouver Sun, Vancouver, British Columbia, Feb. 1999). Reporter Douglas Todd of *The Vancouver Sun* visited the Vineyard Christian Fellowship in Langley, British Columbia, and found that tattoos are the newest “in thing” for Vineyard Christians. Amy Bonde, who is a staff member at the Vineyard in Langley, has a large Celtic cross tattooed on the small of her back. Encircling the cross are Hebrew letters that allegedly mean, “I am my beloved’s, and he is mine.” Bonde says the tattoo signifies that she looks upon Jesus Christ as her "lover." Another Vineyard member, Peter Davyduck, has a tattoo of the word "SIN" on his ankle. He says this is a message to "judgmental Christians that everyone is a sinner and should be accepted in spite of it."

**Confutation**

The Holy Scripture forbids us to tattoo our own body, for it is written: “You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:28 – NKJV).
Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:19), therefore we must possess it in sanctification and honor (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:4). That means that we must abstain from everything that is able to destroy or defile it such as tattooing.

Know this, brethren, that we as sons of God are not free to do whatever we like, for we must do the will of God for us. And since God's will for each one of us is to pursue holiness, we must be very careful what we put on, what we see, what we say, where we go, what we do, how we use our body, and so on, for we are called to abstain from every form - or from all appearance - of evil (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:22), not to love the world (cf. 1 John 2:15), to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts (cf. Titus 2:12), to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (cf. Ephesians 5:11), and to abhor what is evil (cf. Romans 12:9). As for tattooing, it can be said without any doubt that it is a worldly lust, an unfruitful work of darkness, a form of evil, from which we must abstain. Let no one deceive you with vain words.
FOODS AND BEVERAGES

Christians must abstain from certain foods and beverages

Ellen G. White, the prophetess of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, taught that every Christian must abstain from eating meat, for the eating of flesh is unnatural. Here are some quotes of Mrs White on meat-eating: ‘Let not any of our ministers set an evil example in the eating of flesh-meat. Let them and their families live up to the light of health reform. Let not our ministers animalize their own nature and the nature of their children’ (Spalding and Magan, p. 211); ‘If ever there was a time when the diet should be of the most simple kind, it is now. Meat should not be placed before our children. Its influence is to excite and strengthen the lower passions, and has a tendency to deaden the moral powers. Grains and fruits prepared free from grease, and in as natural a condition as possible, should be the food for the tables of all who claim to be preparing for translation to heaven’ (Testimonies, Vol. 2, p. 352); ‘Those who have received instruction regarding the evils of the use of flesh foods...will not continue to indulge their appetite for food that they know to be unhealthful. God demands that the appetites be cleansed, and that self-denial be practiced in regard to those things which are not good. This is a work that will have to be done before His people can stand before Him a perfected people’ (Testimonies, Vol. 9, p. 153) In the light of the above mentioned words of Ellen White, therefore, every Adventist should eat only vegetables, or rather vegetables, fruits, nuts and grains. For they constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator. However, the Adventist Church has taken the following position on meat-eating: every Christian must abstain from the so called unclean foods spoken of in the law of Moses while he is allowed to eat the ‘clean foods’: ‘Do Seventh-day Adventists believe that foods such as lobsters, crabs, pork, etcetera, all forbidden under the Mosaic law, are still forbidden, binding upon the Christian, and hence not to be eaten under penalty of sin? .... It is true we refrain from eating certain articles, as indicated in the query, but not because the law of Moses has any binding claims upon us. Far from it. We stand fast in the liberty with which God has set us free. It must be remembered that God recognized “clean” and “unclean” animals at the time of the Flood, long before there was a law of Moses. We reason that if God saw fit at that time to counsel His people against certain articles of diet, these things were not best for human consumption; and since we are physically constituted in the same way as are the Jews and all other peoples, we believe such things are not the best for us to use today. To us, the whole matter of unclean foods is primarily a question of health ....’ (Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions On Doctrine, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C. 1957, pages 623-624); ‘Along with adequate exercise and rest, we are to adopt the most healthful diet possible and abstain from the unclean foods identified in the Scriptures’ (Fundamental Beliefs, 21) So the vegetable diet taught by Ellen G. White is not a test of fellowship in the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, though it is considered the proper diet chosen for mankind by God. The Adventist Church teaches also that a Christian must abstain totally from tea, coffee, beer, wine, or any alcoholic drinks, for all these beverages have harmful effects on mind and morals.

The Adventist Church is not the only sect which teaches such things, for there are many other sects all over the world which teach similar doctrines. For instance, the followers of Herbert Armstrong teach that we must abstain from the ‘unclean foods’ of the law of Moses: ‘The instruction in the 11th chapter of Leviticus, then, is not some ritualistic regulation for the Mosaic period only. Why do so many people have the idea that God is some great unfair monster who imposes foolish hardships on His people? Whatever God instructs us is for OUR GOOD, not some nonsensical restriction for one period to be changed around some different way for other people of a different period. Swine flesh--pork, ham, bacon, sausage, etc.-- is simply NOT FIT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION. The same is true with oysters, lobsters, clams, crabs, shrimp,
crawfish, dogs, snakes, rats, and skunks. The only seafood fit for food are fish having both fins and scales. Halibut has both and is clean. Catfish is a skin fish—unclean. It's all a matter of what we have become accustomed to doing. It seems strange and horrifying to hear that some Orientals eat mice as a delicacy. But many Orientals are horrified to hear that we eat nasty, slimy, filthy oysters! But some human grown-ups, like little babies, will eat anything they can get their hands on and stuff into their mouths. At so-called “quality” grocery stores in large towns and cities, specializing in rare delicacies, you can purchase “delicious” canned rattlesnake—if you care for it. So far as I am concerned, you may have my portion if you wish to try it. I do not care to eat it for the same reason I do not eat slugs, skunks, cats, or eels—for the same reason I do not eat poison ivy or weeds. Yes, and for the same reason I do not put fuel oil mixed with sand in the gas tank of my car! The day will come when the learned (so-called) doctors will at last learn that eating greasy hog flesh and other unfit "foods" has been a prime cause of cancer and other deadly diseases' (Herbert W. Armstrong, IS All ANIMAL FLESH Good Food?). And Mormons teach that one must abstain from some kinds of flesh during certain periods of the year, and from wine, alcoholic beverages, tea, and coffee: ‘Behold, verily, thus saith the Lord unto you: In consequence of evils and designs which do and will exist in the hearts of conspiring men in the last days, I have warned you, and forewarn you, by giving unto you this word of wisdom by revelation. That inasmuch as any man drinketh wine or strong drink among you, behold it is not good, neither meet in the sight of your Father, only in assembling yourselves together to offer up your sacraments before him. And, behold, this should be wine, yea, pure wine of the grape of the vine, of your own make. And, again, strong drinks are not for the belly, but for the washing of your bodies. And again, tobacco is not for the body, neither for the belly, and is not good for man, but is an herb for bruises and all sick cattle, to be used with judgment and skill. And again, hot drinks are not for the body or belly. And again, verily I say unto you, all wholesome herbs God hath ordained for the constitution, nature, and use of man. Every herb in the season thereof, and every fruit in the season thereof; all these to be used with prudence and thanksgiving. Yea, flesh also of beasts and of the fowls of the air, I, the Lord, have ordained for the use of man with thanksgiving; nevertheless they are to be used sparingly; And it is pleasing unto me that they should not be used, only in times of winter, or of cold, or famine.’ (Doctrine and Covenants, 89:4-13).

Even some Evangelical Churches forbid their members to eat certain foods (in most cases the unclean foods of the law), and to drink wine or any alcoholic beverages.

Confutation

Those who command to abstain from foods created by God teach a doctrine of demons

Paul said that those who command to abstain from foods which God created are hypocritical liars (cf. 1 Timothy 4:2-3) who teach a doctrine of demons, and also that “food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse” (1 Corinthians 8:8 – NKJV).

Therefore those who teach that if one abstains from certain foods created by God he is more appreciated (by God) — or held in greater esteem (by God) - than he who does eat those foods are liars, who deceive themselves. Do you know why food does not commend us to God? For “the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17 – NKJV); so those who are pleasing to God and approved by men are those who pursue righteousness and peace and who rejoice in the Lord by the Holy Spirit.

Now let me refute some of the arguments of those who command to abstain from meat. They affirm that men ought to eat only vegetables and fruits for God at the beginning said to the man and woman: “I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food” (Genesis 1:29 – NIV). However, they forget that God, after the flood, said to Noah and his sons: “Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything” (Genesis 9:3
Furthermore, they forget that in the wilderness God gave the Israelites meat (that is, quail) to eat, as it is written: “The Lord will give you meat, and you shall eat” (Numbers 11:18 – NKJV) and again: “He also rained meat on them like the dust, feathered fowl like the sand of the seas; and He let them fall in the midst of their camp, all around their dwellings. So they ate and were well filled” (Psalm 78:27-29 – NKJV); they forget also that God commanded the ravens to bring to Elijah bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening (cf. 1 Kings 17:2-6); and they forget that Jesus and His disciples ate the Passover lamb as the law of Moses commanded (as it is written: “Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it” Exodus 12:8 – NKJV), and that after He rose from the dead He ate some fish, as it is written: “So they gave Him a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb. And He took it and ate in their presence” (Luke 24:42-43 – NKJV). As you can see, according to the Scripture it is lawful for believers to eat meat, for meat-eating does not have any harmful effects on the health of believers or on their spiritual life. Brothers, remember that what we eat is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer, so it cannot damage our health nor our spirituality. Our health will be damaged if we eat too much meat, for we will break the commandment which says: “Do not mix with winebibbers, or with gluttonous eaters of meat …” (Proverbs 23:20 – NKJV), and thus we will reap corruption from the flesh, for it is written: “He who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption” (Galatians 6:8 – NKJV). If we eat too much meat, our spiritual life also will be damaged, for Jesus said: “Take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing …. (Luke 21:34 – NKJV). As you can see, the ‘diet’ counselled by Adventists, which include the total abstention from meat, contradicts the Word of God. It is indeed a doctrine of demons; so let no one of them deceive you with his smooth words.

They affirm that animals are intelligent creatures of God, which see, hear, suffer, and are affectionate with those who take care of them, so it’s cruel killing them. However, the Word of God allows us to slaughter animals in order to eat their meat, for it is written: “You may slaughter and eat meat within all your gates, whatever your heart desires, according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you ….” (Deuteronomy 12:15 - NKJV). In the light of the Word of God, therefore, those who slaughter animals to eat their flesh are not cruel or merciless people. Brothers in the Lord, let no one deceive you with this argument, for it is not based on the Holy Scripture but on human feelings. Please do not misunderstand me, for I am not judging or criticizing those who do not want to slaughter animals for they haven’t got the heart to slaughter them; I am just refuting those who speak about the innocence of the animals and affirm that some of them behave affectionately toward men, in order to command people to abstain from meat, and deceive people into thinking that those who slaughter animals to eat are merciless.

As you can see, in the light of the teaching of the Scripture, therefore, Ellen G. White was wrong in teaching that Christians must abstain from all flesh foods. She was deceived by the devil, who is the father of lies, into teaching this doctrine. Beware of her teaching on meat-eating, for it is a doctrine of demons.

The mosaic prohibition of eating certain animals has been abolished by Christ, for He has purified all foods.

As we saw before, both the Adventists and the followers of Herbert Armstrong cite the law of Moses to support the prohibition of eating the flesh of certain animals (such as the swine, the camel, and the hare), certain fish, certain birds, and certain flying insects. They quote the eleventh chapter of the book of Leviticus, where the Israelites were commanded not to eat the unclean animals. However, they are wrong in commanding to abstain from these animals, for the mosaic prohibition of eating those foods was a shadow of something which was to come. That’s what Paul affirms when he says to the Colossians: “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17 - NIV). With these words Paul urged the saints not to subject themselves to
those precepts which forbade to eat certain things, which were according to the commandments and doctrines of men, which were of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. Of course the precepts which command people not to eat certain foods have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed religion, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they are of no value to those who observe them. The Scripture affirms that “it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them” (Hebrews 13:9 – NKJV). Therefore, if we keep these commandments of men, we will be enslaved by the weak and beggarly elements again, and we will do something that doesn’t establish our heart before God, for our heart is established by the grace of God and not by the abstention from certain foods. Furthermore, it is not lawful for us to turn back again to the weak and worthless elemental things, for we have died with Christ to the basic principles of this world that we might walk in newness of life. Considering that foods are for the stomach, and the stomach for foods, and one day God will destroy both it and them (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:13), it is really absurd to believe that it is useful to keep the rules concerning foods taught by Adventists and the followers of Herbert Armstrong.

Jesus Christ was familiar with the precepts concerning foods prescribed by the law of Moses, yet He never commanded His disciples to abstain from certain foods saying that they were unclean and could defile them. On the contrary, He made it clear that no food can defile man. Listen to what He said to His disciples: “Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated ....?” (Mark 7:18-19 – NKJV). By these words Jesus meant that there is no food which can defile those who eat it. Concerning these words spoken by Jesus, Mark says: “In saying this, Jesus declared all foods ‘clean.’” (Mark 7:19 – NIV), that is to say, Jesus Christ purified all those foods which were ‘unclean’ according to the law of Moses. That no food is unclean is confirmed by the apostle Paul when he says to the Romans that “there is nothing unclean of itself” (Romans 14:14 – NKJV). I am sure that Paul, who was a Jew by birth and held in great esteem the law of Moses, would never have written these words to the Gentiles if he had not been fully convinced by Jesus Christ that the prohibition of eating the unclean foods had been abolished. Of course Paul said immediately after: “But to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean” (Romans 14:14 – NKJV), but notice that the apostle says that ‘to him it is unclean’, that is to say, it is not unclean to everybody. Therefore if anyone considers the swine to be unclean, to him it is unclean and he is free in the Lord to abstain from it, but he has not the right to impose his opinion on the others.

So, brothers, if anyone comes to you and commands you to abstain from a certain food, saying that it is unclean and thus if you eat it you will be defiled or if you eat it it may have harmful effects on your body and spiritual life, you must not give heed to him for he does not consent to the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ: “He is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings ...” (1 Timothy 6:4-5 – NKJV), as Paul says to Timothy. Admonish him, and stop his mouth. The only foods from which we must abstain are blood, foods sacrificed to idols, and things strangled, for these are the things that the apostles and elders commanded us, who are Gentiles by birth, to abstain from when they gathered together in Jerusalem about the year 50 after Christ (cf. Acts 15:1-32). All the other foods can be eaten freely. Christ has delivered us from the law, so that we might be free; therefore stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free.

How to behave toward those who are weak in the faith

Paul said that “every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused” (1 Timothy 4:4 – NKJV), confirming thus the following words written in the law: “Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good” (Genesis 1:31 – NKJV). Therefore, we who have known the truth have the right to eat everything, but we must be careful that the exercise of our freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak, for Paul says: “Beware lest somehow
this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak” (1 Corinthians 8:9 – NKJV). Who are the weak in the faith? They are those believers who eat only vegetables and thus they abstain from all flesh foods. For they are fully convinced in their own mind that meat is unclean. So let us see how we must behave toward those who are weak and how we may cause them to stumble with our food.

The apostle Paul said to the saints of Rome: “Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.” (Romans 14:1-4). First of all, let me say – in order to avoid any misunderstanding - that he who is weak in the faith is not someone who has departed from the faith and commands people to abstain from foods which God created, but a brother who is of the opinion that he must abstain from certain foods, but he does not command others to do the same. Now Paul says that we must receive one who is weak in the faith and thus eats only vegetables, for God has received him in Christ. However, we must receive him without passing judgement on disputable matters, or else we will stir up strives which are of no value and ruin the hearers. We must not despise a brother who eats only vegetables, for he does so to the Lord and he give thanks to God for the food he eats. So why should we despise him?

Paul says: “Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean. But if thy brother be grieved with thy meat, now walkest thou not charitably. Destroy not him with thy meat, for whom Christ died. Let not then your good be evil spoken of: For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another. For meat destroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Hast thou faith? have it to thyself before God. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” (Romans 14:13-23). From what Paul says we learn that we can cause a brother who is weak to stumble and fall, we can grieve him and destroy the work of God in him, and destroy him with our food. Therefore, it is necessary to know how to behave toward him lest we destroy him with something which perishes with the using, that is, our food. The instructions given by Paul are useful in this field, therefore let us pay attention to them. Paul says that there is nothing unclean of itself, but if a brother considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean; therefore we must not grieve him telling him that he is wrong and he should change his mind for he is in the wrong, nor should we quote the Scripture in order to show him that his opinion is wrong. Should we grieve him because of his opinion on certain foods, we would no longer walk in love, for we would strive about opinions on foods, and it would be of no value for the brother is fully convinced that certain foods are unclean and he has no doubts about his behaviour. We then who are strong must bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves by trying to convince the weak, that is, by trying to impose our opinion on them. How do we bear with the scruples of the weak? By not eating meat, nor drinking wine, nor doing anything else that will cause our brother who is weak to fall. In this way we walk in love, we please our neighbour for his good, to build him up, and we do what leads to peace and to mutual edification. What we must always bear in mind is that the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, and that consequently if we eat all things, giving thanks to God, we are not better than those who eat only vegetables giving thanks to God. Know this, that if the kingdom of God were a matter of eating and drinking, we would be continually busy choosing the good foods and rejecting the bad ones, and we would continually talk about those foods which would commend us to God.
and those foods which would defile us. But thanks be to God, the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but is righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. That's why we believers see to it that we are righteous as God is righteous; and we, as much as depends on us, live peaceably with all men, and we do not avenge ourselves, and we always rejoice in the Lord; because we know that we must do these things in order to please God. Brothers, beware of those who command to abstain from foods which were created by God. I have written about this subject in order to explain to you that while on the one hand we must not tolerate those who command Christians to abstain from foods created by God, for they teach a doctrine of demons, on the other hand we must tolerate those believers who, being weak in the faith, eat only vegetables, for to them meat is unclean, because they do so to the Lord and do not command others to abstain from meat.

The Word of God does not forbid us to drink wine or other alcoholic beverages

What does the Scripture say about wine and other alcoholic beverages? Does it permit us to drink alcoholic beverages or not? The Scripture commands us not to get drunk, but it does not command us to abstain from alcoholic beverages. In other words, the Scripture condemns the abuse of alcoholic beverages but not the use of them, thus the Scripture allows the partaking of alcoholic beverages in moderation and with circumspection. Here are some of the numerous biblical warnings against drunkenness. In the book of Proverbs it is written: “Be not among winebibbers; among riotous eaters of flesh: For the drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty: and drowsiness shall clothe a man with rags” (Proverbs 23:20-21), and again: “Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at the wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder. Thine eyes shall behold strange women, and thine heart shall utter perverse things. Yea, thou shalt be as he that lieth down in the midst of the sea, or as he that lieth upon the top of a mast. They have stricken me, shalt thou say, and I was not sick; they have beaten me, and I felt it not: when shall I awake? I will seek it yet again” (Proverbs 23:29-35). The apostle Paul says to the Ephesians: “Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery” (Ephesians 5:18 – NIV). That wine leads men to conduct themselves in a dissolute way is confirmed by the example of Noah, who “drank of the wine and was drunk, and became uncovered in his tent” (Genesis 9:21 – NKJV), and by the example of Lot, who was made drunk by his daughters so that they might lie with him, and he did not know when they lay down or when they arose (cf. Genesis 19:30-38). Drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom of God (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:21).

Let me quote now some biblical passages which permit us to drink wine or other alcoholic beverages in moderation. In the book of Proverbs we read: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is a brawler, and whoever is led astray by it is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1 – NKJV). Notice that Solomon does not say that whoever drinks wine or a strong drink is not wise, but another thing, that is, whoever is led astray by it is not wise. That we are allowed to drink wine is confirmed by Paul when he says to Timothy: “No longer drink only water, but use a little wine for your stomach’s sake and your frequent infirmities” (1 Timothy 5:23 – NKJV), and to Titus that the bishop must be “not given to much wine” (Titus 1:7 – NIV. Cf. 1 Timothy 3:3. Paul says that deacons also must be “not given to much wine” 1 Timothy 3:8 – NKJV), and that the older women must be “not given to much wine” (Titus 2:3 – NKJV). The law also confirms that we are allowed to drink wine and alcoholic beverages, for it says: “Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to set his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: Then shalt thou turn it into money, and
bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household” (Deuteronomy 14:22-26. The NIV reads “wine or other fermented drink”). Notice that among the things God allowed the Israelites to buy were wine and any other fermented drinks. That’s why Paul did not forbid believers to drink wine, because he knew that the law did not condemn the moderate use of wine and other alcoholic beverages. Concerning tea and coffee, we say the same thing, that is, according to the Scripture it is lawful for us to drink them in moderation. Brothers in the Lord, let no one deceive you with empty words.

We are free in the Lord to eat blood, things offered to idols and strangled things

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christians are free to eat blood, things strangled and things offered to idols. For the Council of Florence stated as follows: ‘It [the holy Roman church] firmly believes, professes and teaches that every creature of God is good and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because according to the word of the Lord not what goes into the mouth defiles a person, and because the difference in the Mosaic law between clean and unclean foods belongs to ceremonial practices, which have passed away and lost their efficacy with the coming of the gospel. It also declares that the apostolic prohibition, to abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled, was suited to that time when a single church was rising from Jews and gentiles, who previously lived with different ceremonies and customs. This was so that the gentiles should have some observances in common with Jews, and occasion would be offered of coming together in one worship and faith of God and a cause of dissension might be removed, since by ancient custom blood and strangled things seemed abominable to Jews, and gentiles could be thought to be returning to idolatry if they ate sacrificial food. In places, however, where the Christian religion has been promulgated to such an extent that no Jew is to be met with and all have joined the church, uniformly practising the same rites and ceremonies of the gospel and believing that to the clean all things are clean, since the cause of that apostolic prohibition has ceased, so its effect has ceased (Ecumenical Council of Florence [1438-1445], Session 11, 4 February 1442). In other words, according to the Roman Catholic Church, those decrees determined by the apostles and elders were disciplinary decrees for those times only, and as the circumstances did permit it – that is, when the merging of the Jews and Gentiles was completed - they were revoked. To support the temporariness of those decrees, it holds that Paul permitted the saints to eat things sacrificed to idols (cf. 1 Corinth 8:1-13), which is a clear evidence of the temporariness of those decrees. The Catholic Church affirms not only that those decrees were temporary but also that in the days of the apostles they applied only to the Churches of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia. To support this thesis they point out that Paul did not mention those decrees in his epistles, which indicates that those decrees applied only to some churches and for a time (cf. New Catholic Encyclopedia, 1967, Jerusalem, council of).

Even many Protestants teach that Christians are free to eat blood, strangled things and things offered to idols for the decrees determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem were temporary. In the Matthew Henry's Commentary we read the following things about the decrees determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem: Acts 15:7-21 – ‘…. The opinion of James was, that the Gentile converts ought not to be troubled about Jewish rites, but that they should abstain from meats offered to idols, so that they might show their hatred of idolatry. Also, that they should be cautioned against fornication, which was not abhorred by the Gentiles as it should be, and even formed a part of some of their rites. They were counselled to abstain from
things strangled, and from eating blood; this was forbidden by the law of Moses, and also here, from reverence to the blood of the sacrifices, which being then still offered, it would needlessly grieve the Jewish converts, and further prejudice the unconverted Jews. But as the reason has long ceased, we are left free in this, as in the like matters. Let converts be warned to avoid all appearances of the evils which they formerly practised, or are likely to be tempted to; and caution them to use Christian liberty with moderation and prudence’ (From: http://www.htmlbible.com).

Confutation

What the Roman Catholic Church and many Protestant Churches teach on the decrees determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem is not true for those decrees were not just for some Churches nor were they temporary. Now I am going to prove it through the Holy Scriptures.

First of all, let me quote the first thirty-two verses of the fifteenth chapter of the Acts of the apostles: “And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved. When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question. And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them. But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses. And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter. And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they. Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them. And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day. Then pleased it the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas: namely, Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren: And they wrote letters by them after this manner; The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: It seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, Men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus.
Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication: from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well. So when they were dismissed, they came to Antioch: and when they had gathered the multitude together, they delivered the epistle: Which when they had read, they rejoiced for the consolation. And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them."

As you can see, some brethren who were Jews by birth troubled the Gentile believers who were in Antioch telling them that unless they were circumcised they could not be saved. But the apostles Paul and Barnabas – who at that time were at Antioch – opposed those brethren for they were fully convinced that we are saved by grace through faith apart from the works of the law. However, the brethren of Antioch determined that Paul and Barnabas and some other believers should go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question. After they arrived at Jerusalem, Paul and Barnabas told the Church and the apostles and elders the things which the Lord had done with them among the Gentiles. But some of the Pharisees who believed rose up saying that it was necessary to circumcise the Gentile believers and to command them to keep the law of Moses. Then the apostles and elders gathered together to consider the matter. After much discussion, and after Peter, Paul and Barnabas, and James had spoken, the apostles and elders determined not to command the Gentile believers to be circumcised nor to keep the law of Moses, but to command them to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from the meat of strangled animals, and from fornication. Therefore, by that decision the apostles and elders confirmed that salvation is by grace and not by the works of the law as some Jewish brethren taught.

Now, in the light of what happened at that time, why should we consider those decrees concerning foods passed away when we know that today it may happen that some Jewish brethren teach some Gentiles believers the same false teaching, that is, ‘Unless you are circumcised and keep the law of Moses, you cannot be saved!’? Why should we consider those decrees passed away when we know that many Gentiles all over the world still kill animals by strangling or choking them and eat their meat, offer various foods to idols, and eat blood, just as the Gentiles did in the days of the apostles? Don’t you think that if we, as Gentile believers, found ourselves in the same condition as those Gentile believers of Antioch found themselves at that time, we could resist and refute those who teach us ‘unless you are circumcised and you keep the law of Moses you cannot be saved’ by quoting what the apostles and elders said during that assembly at Jerusalem concerning that matter? Don’t you think that if those decrees were temporary, the apostles and elders would have declared it in the letter which they sent to the Gentile believers? Let me tell you another thing: Do you not know that Jews still abstain from blood, from strangled things, and from the things the Gentiles offer to idols, and when some of them believe in Jesus Christ they keep abstaining from all these things? So, let us suppose that some Jews believe that Jesus is the Messiah and they join the Church of which you are a member, don’t you think that if they see you eating blood, strangled things, and things offered to idols, they will be scandalized by your conduct and will stumble and fall because of you?

As for the argument according to which those decrees applied only to some churches of those days, I say this. It is true that the apostles and elders sent that letter to the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (cf. Acts 15:23), but that does not mean that the contents of that letter was valid only for the believers who lived in those places. If it were so, it would be like saying that the epistle Paul wrote to the Colossians was valid only for the believers of Colosse or the one he wrote to the Romans was valid only for the saints of Rome, for the simple reason that in those letters Paul does not say that they were for the saints who live all over the world. Of course each one of those letters was written by Paul to the saints of a specific city, but the words which are written in them are valid for all the saints of all ages: the same thing must be said about the letter the apostles and elders wrote to the Gentile believers who lived in those places at that time, it is valid for all the saints of all places and ages. That is confirmed by the fact that
after that letter was read in Antioch, when Paul and Silas departed to visit the brethren in every city where Paul and Barnabas had preached the Gospel, “as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem” (Acts 16:4 – NKJV). Which were the cities they went through? They were these: Derbe, Lystra, Iconium and Antioch in Pisidia, and other cities which were not in Syria and Cilicia (which are the regions spoken of in that letter). To confirm that those decrees were to be kept also by those believers who did not live in Syria or Cilicia, I point out that in the Church of Thyatira there was a woman named Jezebel who deceived the servants of the Lord into eating things sacrificed to idols (cf. Revelation 2:20), and in the Church of Pergamos there were some who held the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols (cf. Revelation 2:14). In both cases the Lord made it clear that eating things sacrificed to idols was wrong. Notice that Thyatira and Pergamos were not located in Syria nor in Cilicia but in Asia (cf. Revelation 1:4,11).

As for the fact that Paul did not mention in his epistles the decrees determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem, and he permitted the saints to eat things sacrificed to idols, which things indicate that those decrees must be considered passed away, I say this. If one reads carefully the words Paul wrote to the Corinthians about things sacrificed to idols, he will notice that Paul did not want believers to eat things sacrificed to idols. Here are some words written by Paul which prove what I have just said.

“However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled” (1 Corinthians 8:7 – NKJV). Therefore, in the Church of Corinth there were some believers who ate things sacrificed to idols and their conscience was defiled through their wrong behaviour.

“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons” (1 Corinthians 10:20 – NKJV). As you can see, Paul was convinced that if a believer eats things sacrificed to idols he has fellowship with demons, for these things were polluted by idols.

Concerning the words of Paul according to which we can eat whatever is sold in the meat market and whatever is set before us by unbelieving people at their home (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:23-30), I say this. Paul, with those words, did not oppose the decrees determined by the apostles and elders, for he just said that we should eat whatever is sold in the meat market and is set before us by unbelieving people, “asking no questions for conscience’ sake” (1 Corinthians 10:25, 27 – NKJV). Please, notice this expression of Paul. So, we, even if those things are things offered to idols, not knowing anything about it, do not have fellowship with demons, for we eat those things not as things offered to idols. On the contrary, if we know that the things which are sold in the meat market or set before us are things offered to idols, and we eat them as things offered to idols, then we will have fellowship with demons and will provoke God to jealousy. So it is absolutely wrong to teach that Paul considered the decrees determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem temporary and valid only for some churches.

**Macrobiotics**

Macrobiotics (from the Greek macro ‘great’ + bios ‘life’) is a dietetic medicine-philosophy founded in the 1920s by a Japanese educator named George Ohsawa. It is a way of eating (but also a way of life), through which – it is said – man can find happiness and peace and live a long life on the earth.

Macrobiotics is based on the Chinese concept of yin and yang. According to the Chinese philosophy, all aspects of life, therefore even man’s metabolism, are governed by the opposing but complementary forces of yin and yang. Yin – representative of an outward centrifugal movement – results in expansion, while yang – representative of an inward centripetal movement – produces contraction. Yin is cold, while yang is hot; yin is sweet, yang is salty; yin is
passive, yang is aggressive. According to macrobiotics, the forces of yin and yang must be kept in balance in order to achieve good health and happiness. The macrobiotics diet, therefore, attempts to achieve harmony between yin and yang. Now let me explain to you why our health and happiness – according to macrobiotics teachers - depend on the macrobiotic diet. Foods also are governed by yin and yang, and some foods tend to make us contractive and aggressive (yang), while other foods tend to relax us. And since the modern diets have produced in man an imbalance between yin and yang, and this imbalance has had harmful effects on man for it has produced many nervous and mental diseases which make man unhappy, it is necessary for man to restore a balance between yin and yang so that he might become healthful and happy. Macrobiotics experts, therefore, affirm that health and happiness depend on an harmonious balance between yin and yang. So foods are classified into yin and yang categories, according to their tastes, properties, and effects on the body. As a result, some foods are recommended while some others are forbidden. For instance, brown rice, barley, millet, oats, corn, rye, whole wheat, buckwheat, fresh vegetables, beans and sea vegetables, are highly recommended; while flesh and dairy foods, vegetables or fruits out of season, potatoes, tomatoes, eggplants (aubergines), imported foods from a long distance, foods produced using pesticides and chemical fertilizers, are all forbidden and must be avoided. Furthermore, macrobiotics principles also govern food preparation and the manner in which food is eaten. Recommendation in this area include: avoid using a microwave oven to prepare food; cook rice in a pressure cooker; eat only when hungry; chew food completely, and so on.

Confutation

To begin with, let me say that the Chinese concept of yin and yang is not scriptural. The Scripture affirms that the devil (or Satan) is the prince of this world, that is to say, he who rules and oppresses this world. The devil does this through the principalities, the powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places, which are all evil spiritual beings. Men are unhappy because they are under the power of Satan, because they serve this evil being doing what displeases the Lord. In other words, men are unhappy because they are slaves of sin, which is a work of the devil, which repays them with death (cf. 1 John 3:8; Romans 6:23). Their unhappiness, therefore, is not due to the modern food or nourishment, but on something else, that is, to their rebellion against God. To confirm this, I want to point out that in the days of Paul, even though there were not these modern foods we eat today which are produced using pesticides and chemical fertilizers and are treated and preserved using chemical products, men were unhappy and corrupt just as they are today, for they served sin rather than God. But let me speak also of Adam and Eve, who lived on the earth about four thousand years before the apostle Paul. Now no one can affirm that in the days of Adam and Eve there were adulterated foods, for all foods were wholesome. There were no pesticides or chemical fertilizers or chemical preservatives, and Adam and Eve fed only on vegetables and fruits (man did not yet fed on meat at that time). Yet, after they disobeyed God, they began to live an unhappy life and to live in fear. This confirms that the reason why man is unhappy is that he rebels against God, he serves sin! Therefore, even if a man's nourishment were the most wholesome, if he is slave of sin, he is unhappy, miserable, blind and naked. Let us look at the condition of those men who are without God and feed on unadulterated foods only. They are unhappy, and it could not be otherwise, for as I said before, man is unhappy because he breaks God's commandments and not because of certain foods he feeds on. Therefore, what man must do is not to achieve harmony between yin and yang (in order to restore a balance between body and spirit), but to achieve that harmony which existed between man and God before the fall of man. In other words, man must be reconciled to God, who created all things. Therefore, we say to men, 'Be reconciled to God' (2 Corinthians 5:21 – NKJV). How can a man be reconciled to God? There is only one way, that is, by repenting of his sins and believing in the Son of God. Then will he become another person, for he will become a
kind, quiet, and happy person, for he will be born again, in that the Holy Spirit will come into his heart and will transform him.

While the experts on macrobiotics affirm, ‘Would you like to become like the vegetable you are examining?’ and say that by eating certain vegetables one acquires the character of those vegetables (which is a nonsense), we who preach Christ say to all men, ‘Do you want to become like Christ, that is, do you want to be conformed to the image of the Son of God, and thus to be meek, peaceable, full of love, etc.?’ Eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God, for He Himself said: ‘He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him’ (John 6:56 – NKJV). Know this, that the flesh of Jesus is food indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. If you feed on them you will become happy, peaceable, and you will have eternal life, the great and true life, an abundant life which will last forever, even after death. However, you must understand that the words of Jesus are spirit and life, and they refer to the faith in Him and to the observance of His commandments (cf. John 6:40, 54, 56; 15:4,5; 1 John 3:24). That's the Way which leads to Life: Christ Jesus. All other ways, including macrobiotics, which claim they lead men to life are false ways and thus are vanities.

Someone will say to me, ‘Are you not in favour of a wholesome nourishment then?’ Yes, we are in favour of a wholesome nourishment, that is to say, we prefer unadulterated foods to those foods which are produced using pesticides or chemical fertilizers or somehow adulterated by man, and we rejoice in the Lord whenever the Lord gives them to us to eat. However, if these kinds of foods are missing we eat the food which is sold in the shop, giving thanks to God for providing it for us. Our happiness does not depend on the food, but on the observance of the commandments of God, as it is written: “More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!” (Luke 11:28 – NKJV), and among the commandments of God there is no commandment which forbids us to eat certain foods, for the Kingdom of God is not eating and drinking (cf. Romans 14:17). The only things we are not allowed to eat for our good, for this is what the Holy Spirit has commanded us, are these: things polluted by idols, strangled things and blood (cf. Acts 15:19, 20, 28, 29). But as for all the other foods, we are allowed to eat them all - of course in moderation (or else we will suffer) for God wants us to be self-controlled (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:12) – giving thanks to God through Christ Jesus. Therefore the macrobiotic commandment which forbids people to eat tomatoes, potatoes, eggplants (aubergines), meat and those foods which are produced using pesticides and chemical fertilizers is a precept which makes the Word of God of no effect, and thus it must be rejected (cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-3). Neither does our health depend on what we eat (I mean it is not by abstaining from certain foods that we will enjoy good health), but on the observance of the commandments of God, for Wisdom, after telling us to be good and truthful, to trust in God with all our heart, and to depart from evil, affirms: “It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones” (Proverbs 3:8 – NKJV). Of course, among the evil things we must depart from is also the immoderate use of food.

Brothers, I conclude by telling you these things: you are free in Christ to eat all things. You are no longer subject to precepts concerning foods, such as ‘Do not eat this food for it has harmful effects on the spirit or the body,’ for these commandments are part of those basic principles of the world from which you have been delivered through the blood of Christ. Your heart is strengthened by the grace of God, “not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them” (Hebrews 13:9 – NKJV). Beloved, give thanks to God for He has set you free.
DAYS AND FEASTS

The Sabbath-day must be kept

Many sects teach that a Christian is bound to keep the Sabbath Day. Among them are the Seventh-Day Adventist Church and the Church founded by Herbert Armstrong. Adventists say: ‘We believe that the Sabbath was instituted in Eden before sin entered, that it was honored of God, set apart by divine appointment, and given to mankind as the perpetual memorial of a finished creation. It was based upon the fact that God Himself had rested from His work of creation, had blessed His Sabbath, or rest day, and had sanctified it, or set it apart for man (Gen. 2:1-3; Mark 2:27). We believe, further, that it was none other than the Son of God Himself, the second person of the eternal Godhead, who was the Creator of Genesis 1:13, and who therefore appointed the original Sabbath (John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Col. 1:16, 17; Heb. 11:1, 2). While the Sabbath is enshrined in the very heart of the commandments of God, it must be remembered that Jesus said, “The Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath” (Mark 2:28). In other words, He is its author and its maker. He is its protector. The Sabbath is the “sabbath of the Lord [Jehovah] thy God” (Ex. 20:10). Hence Christ is its Lord; the Sabbath belongs to Him. It is His day; it is the Lord’s day. Inasmuch as we, His blood-bought children, belong to Him and live in Him, and He lives in us (Gal. 2:20), how natural that Sabbath observance, among other expressions of love and loyalty to Him, should be revealed in our lives …..We believe that the restoration of the Sabbath is indicated in the Bible prophecy of Revelation 14:9-12. Sincerely believing this, we regard the observance of the Sabbath as a test of our loyalty to Christ as Creator and Redeemer.’ (Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions On Doctrine, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C. 1957, pages 149-150, 153)

The followers of Herbert W. Armstrong affirm: ‘God has a Master Plan by which He is fulfilling His awesome purpose for mankind. And His Son, Jesus Christ, plays the central role in God’s little-known plan for man. God’s plan is revealed by seven annual festivals. These annual observances give a step-by-step outline of how God is working out His Master Plan for man. Each vividly pictures a great event in God’s plan. It was not until after the Israelites were delivered from Egypt that God revealed the rest of His annual festivals. As God made the weekly Sabbath for man when man was made, so He gave His people seven annual festivals, with their annual Holy Days (Sabbaths), when He established the Church (or congregation of Israel) in the wilderness. But Israel, under the covenant made at Sinai, had no promise of receiving the Holy Spirit, and therefore could not understand the spiritual meaning of these annual observances. Regardless of carnal Israel’s lack of understanding, God’s annual Holy Days were ordained to be kept FOREVER! Christ kept them. The New Testament Church, founded by Jesus in A.D. 31, kept them. And God’s Church keeps them today! Just as the weekly Sabbath is a “sign” between God and His people, so are the annual Holy Days (Ex. 31:13). They are the “feasts of the LORD”-- “my feasts,” said God (Lev. 23:2, 4). These feasts are, as the God of the Old Testament said in Leviticus 23:37-38, to be kept as holy convocations “beside the [weekly] sabbaths of the LORD”! And as we learned in Lesson 17, God’s festivals, which are a part of God’s Law, were not done away with when the Sinaitic Covenant ceased to be in force at Christ’s death. The whole story of God’s marvelous plan is to be reenacted year after year by God’s Spirit-begotten children—spiritual Israel today—through the keeping of God’s Holy Days. The observance of these days reminds them of His great Master Plan and their part in it.’ (Why Christians Should Keep GOD’S HOLY DAYS, The Ambassador College Bible Correspondence Course, Lesson 23, 1985). As you can see, according to the followers of Herbert Armstrong, every Christian must keep not only the Sabbath day but also the Jewish feasts.
Confutation

We as Christians are not bound to keep the Sabbath day, for the weekly Jewish day of rest – that is, the Sabbath day - is a shadow of the rest of God which God has made known in the fullness of the time by His Son.

That the Sabbath day is a shadow and thus we are not obliged to keep it is evident from the following words Paul wrote to the Colossians: “Therefore do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with regard to a religious festival, a New Moon celebration or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17 - NIV). I want you to notice that these words are preceded by these other words of Paul: “He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us, he took it away, nailing it to the cross ....” (Colossians 2:13-14 – NIV). So the adverb 'therefore' which is in verse 16 indicates that since Christ on the cross has taken away the law of commandments contained in ordinances, which was contrary to us, which has the shadows (New Moons, feasts, sabbaths, regulations concerning foods) and not the realities themselves, now we must not keep the new moon celebrations or the sabbaths or precepts concerning foods, for we died with Christ to the basic elements of the world so that we might walk in newness of life and not in the oldness of the letter. However, if we keep these shadows we will be regarded as people who want to build again those things which Christ has destroyed by His death, and who want to attain perfection by the precepts of the law, which can't justify those who keep them, “for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified” (Galatians 2:16 – NKJV). And that is something which we must avoid.

As I said before, the Sabbath day is a shadow of the rest of God for the people of God. So let me say something else about this. The law of Moses has “a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things” (Hebrews 10:1 – NKJV), therefore the Sabbath day – on which the Israelites had to rest - was not the true rest of God for His people but only a shadow of it. The Scripture confirms this when it says: “There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:9-10 – NIV). When do all those who belong to the people of God enter that rest? When they die in the Lord; that is attested by John in the book of Revelation when he says: “Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them” (Revelation 14:13 – NIV). In the light of what John wrote, therefore, we can say that when believers die they will rest consciously from their labor. I say ‘consciously’ for when a believer dies he does not enter a state of unconsciousness or a state of non-existence, for he goes to be with the Lord in heaven where he is able to see, to hear, to talk and to remember.

So anyone who abstinents from every work on the seventh day of the week rests only for a short period of time for when the Sabbath is over he must begin to work again and he needs to rest again the following Sabbath; while anyone who enters God’s rest (that is, the true rest) rests from his work and labour of love (which he has shown toward the name of God) forever. The Scripture says: “For we who have believed do enter that rest ... Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:3, 11 - NKJV). As you can see, the Scripture makes it clear the following things: first of all those who have believed enter God’s rest, secondly we who are on the earth have not yet entered that rest and we must be diligent to enter it lest anyone fall according to the example of disobedience of the Israelites, who “did not enter because of disobedience” (Hebrews 4:6 – NKJV – As God said: “They shall not enter My rest” Hebrews 4:3). So, beloved, “since a promise remains of entering His rest” (Hebrews 4:1 – NKJV), that is, the Sabbath-rest, let us continue to believe in the Word of God planted in us till the end so that we might enter the blessed rest of God.
Sunday-keeping

Mormons teach that God has commanded His people to worship on Sunday, and to do no work on this specific day of the week, thus those who do not keep Sunday commit a sin. Joseph Smith had the following ‘revelation’ on August 7, 1831, which was Sunday: ‘For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High; Nevertheless thy vows shall be offered up in righteousness on all days and at all times; But remember that on this, the Lord’s day, thou shalt offer thine oblations and thy sacraments unto the Most High, confessing thy sins unto thy brethren, and before the Lord. And on this day thou shalt do none other thing, only let thy food be prepared with singleness of heart that thy fasting may be perfect, or, in other words, that thy joy may be full.’ (Doctrine and Covenants 59:10-13).

According to Mormons, therefore, God – through this ‘revelation’ given to Joseph Smith – has replaced the Sabbath day with Sunday.

This is the position held by Mormons – who are not Christians - on Sunday. However, it must be said that there are many Christians who hold a very similar position on Sunday, for they teach that under grace the Sabbath day has been replaced by Sunday, therefore Sunday is the day of the Lord on which Christians must gather together to worship and on which they are forbidden to work.

Confutation

The above mentioned ‘revelation’ is false, for it is inconsistent with the Scripture. For the apostle Paul says to the Romans: “One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it” (Romans 14:5-6 – NKJV). As you can see, according to the apostle Paul, whose writings are God-breathed, a Christian is free in the Lord to esteem one day above another as well as to esteem every day alike. He is not commanded to observe or to worship on a specific day of the week.

So, God could not reveal to Joseph Smith in 1831 – nor can He reveal nowadays to anyone – that on Sunday every Christian must worship and abstain from all kinds of work. In the light of the teaching of the Scripture, therefore, we reject both the teaching of Mormons and the teaching of those Protestant Churches according to which God has replaced the Sabbath day with Sunday.

We do not criticize nor judge those brothers who esteem Sunday above another day, and thus they do no work on Sunday and they gather together to worship. If they are fully convinced of this, and they observe Sunday to the Lord and not to themselves let them do what they do to the glory of God. But let them not judge those brothers who esteem every day alike. That means they must not affirm that those brothers who do not hallow Sunday, as they do, do commit a sin.

It is not the observance of a day which makes us acceptable in the sight of God, for the Kingdom of God is not observing days, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

See that you are not enslaved by any human law and you do not begin to keep commandments of men; for while it is true that under grace we are not bound to keep the Sabbath day (instead, Adventists teach the opposite thing supporting their wrong teaching on the Sabbath through a ‘revelation’ given to their prophetess), it is also true that we are not bound to keep Sunday in place of the Sabbath day either. Should we keep Sunday in place of the Sabbath, we should abstain from lighting a fire to cook our food, from making our bed, from sweeping a room, from washing the dishes, and many other things which are considered works (look for a Jewish book on the Sabbath day, written by an orthodox Jew, in order to know which are the works a Jew must not do on the Sabbath day) which are heavy burdens hard to bear (I would say, impossible to bear). Therefore, if anyone comes to you and teaches or prophesies that you must keep Sunday in place of the Sabbath day, I urge you to reject his teaching or prophecy, for it contradicts sound doctrine.
WOMEN

Women can dress how they like for God looks at the heart

Today most pastors allow women to dress how they like. That's why many sisters wear miniskirts, trousers, slit skirts, close fitting dresses, transparent blouses, and low-necked blouses, costly clothing, shoes with stiletto heels, fishnet stockings, necklaces, earrings, rings, etc. In addition to this, they allow women to wear make up and to put on some lipstick, to have short hair (that is, to have their hair just as short as men), to have their hair dyed, etc. The reason why these pastors allow women to do all these things is that they believe that unless Christian women dress and behave like the unbelieving women sinners cannot be won to Christ, that is to say, they will hinder unbelievers from turning to the Lord for unbelievers will never attend a worship service where they know women are dressed modestly with decency lest they feel uneasy in the place of worship!!! According to these pastors, their position is based on the Bible, for it is written that the Lord looks at the heart (cf. 1 Samuel 16:7).

Confutation

It’s time to raise one’s voice against these pastors who, through their smooth words and flattering speech, allow many Christian women to dress like prostitutes and seek to deceive those women who still have the sense of decency, who still dress modestly with decency, into thinking that they, through their modest appearance, are a hindrance to the evangelization of unbelieving people. So, I am going to refute this perverse teaching which is widely widespread among the brotherhood in the world.

Concerning the outward adornment of women, Paul says to Timothy: “I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God” (1 Timothy 2:9-10 – NIV), and Peter says to wives: “Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master” (1 Peter 3:3-6 – NIV). As for the words of Paul bear in mind that Paul said to Timothy: “… I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God’s household” (1 Timothy 3:15 – NIV); and as for the words of Peter bear in mind that Peter near the end of the epistle said: “…. This is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it” (1 Peter 5:12 – NIV). Therefore every Christian woman must not wear miniskirts, slit skirts and dresses, trousers (even the women’s trousers), transparent or close fitting blouses, low-necked blouses, etc. Neither must she wear golden jewelry on her neck or her wrists or on her fingers or on her ears; nor must she wear make up or put on lipstick. For all these things are not proper for a woman who professes godliness for they make a woman look provocative and seductive. Instead, she must dress with decency and modesty; she must put on good deeds; she must adorn her heart with the incorruptible ornament which consists of a gentle and quiet spirit.

However, those who hold the teaching ‘dress how you like,’ through their empty words, make the words of the apostles of no effect, saying that God said to the prophet Samuel that the Lord looks at the heart. So let me explain to you what God meant when He said to the prophet Samuel that He looks at the heart. As you know, God was grieved that He had made Saul king, for Saul had not kept His commandments, so He sent Samuel to Jesse of Bethlehem for He had
chosen one of his sons to be king. However, when God commanded Samuel to go to Jesse, He did not tell him the name of the one Samuel had to anoint, for He said to Him: “Take a heifer with you and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.’ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what to do. You are to anoint for me the one I indicate” (1 Samuel 16:2-3 – NIV). Samuel went to Bethlehem, and invited Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice. When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed stands here before the Lord” (1 Samuel 16:6 – NIV). From the words of Samuel we learn that Eliab was a beautiful and tall man, that is to say, a man whose beauty and physical stature would strike anyone. However, God, knowing the thoughts of Samuel, said to him: “Do not look at his appearance or at his physical stature, because I have refused him. For the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7 – NKJV). Therefore God made it clear to Samuel that He, when He chooses someone to be king or prophet or something else, does not look at his outward beauty or at his physical stature, for it is men who look at these things and not God, for God looks at the heart of the person. So if a person’s heart is as God wants, He will appoint him king or prophet etc., but if it is not as God wants, he will be refused. Eliab was beautiful and tall, but God had refused him for his heart was not after God’s heart.

Therefore, the above mentioned words which God said to Samuel cannot be quoted in order to affirm that if a sister wears a miniskirt or a transparent blouse or a close fitting one or some expensive clothes or some golden jewelry God does not care about it at all. I ask you these questions, ‘If it were so, that is, as the rebels say, why then did the apostles teach that both the unmarried and the married women must adorn themselves modestly, with decency and propriety, and not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing? Do you not think that if God did not care about the outward adornment of women at all He would not have given these commandments through the apostles?

Moreover, those who affirm that the Lord looks at the heart forget that if on the one hand men cannot see inside a woman’s heart, on the other hand they can see her body (it should be said that they want to see her body); therefore, if a woman dresses indecently she will attract men’s attention through her provocative and indecent adornment and cause them to stumble. This is why she must keep the commandments of God given by the apostles, in order not to cause those men who look at her to stumble. Instead, many women, with the aid of many pastors who don’t know the Scriptures, want at all costs to cause men to stumble. The way many sisters dress, which is indecent, is no longer called an outrageous way of dressing, as it was called here in Italy, too, long time ago, but rather an efficacious means to attract the people of this world to the place of worship!! No doubt it is a means through which one can attract many men to the place of worship, but that’s a means used also by the managers of night clubs and cinemas and bathing establishments to attract men to those places! I wonder, ‘What else will these rebellious pastors do in order to attract souls to the place of worship?’

Brothers, know this, that this strategy, used by these pastors to induce people to come to the place of worship in order to hear the Gospel, is not from God. These pastors, who affirm these things, are not fishers of men but deceivers of men, just as many perverse people who live in this world. Peter says about the false teachers: “For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error” (2 Peter 2:18 – NKJV); this is what these idle talkers do by urging Christian women to wear provocative and costly clothes, they entice, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, the ones who are just escaping from those who live in error! The worldly lusts have been transplanted into the Church by these pastors on the pretext that they are useful to win souls to Christ. What a deception! Instead of saying, ‘Let us love one another as Christ commanded us, so that the world may feel attracted to us seeing the love which we have for one another,’ or, ‘Let us desire earnestly spiritual gifts, so that the glorious manifestation of the Spirit may be seen among us, and sinners may recognize that God is truly among us, and they may feel attracted to us when they hear about the great things God works among us,’ many urge the Christian women not to dress the way women
dressed in the past but to follow the fashion, lest the people of this world feel uneasy when they come to the place of worship and lest they go away without coming back. Tell me this, ‘Where does the Scripture say that the children of God must conform themselves to the worldly lusts, while sinners must not conform themselves to the holy ways of God?’ You dare say, ‘The people of this world might be scandalized by seeing women with long skirts, long sleeves, without make-up and jewelry!’ but I tell to you that women will scandalize unbelievers if they dress, or rather if they undress, as you tell them to do. Who has bewitched you? Repent and walk the old paths again, for the paths you are walking are crooked. I urge you not to tell those things to women.

Some words to women

Sisters in the Lord, know this, that since your body is the temple of God you are not allowed to adorn yourselves how you like, that is, like the world, for the temple of God is holy and you must glorify God in your body. You may ask me, ‘Do you mean then that if we dress like the world we will not glorify God in our body?’ Yes, that’s exactly what I mean. Why do I affirm this? Because the fashion of the world is perverse and leads you to break the Word of God.

The fashion of the world tends to masculinize women. Is it not true that a woman who wears trousers – whether blue jeans or slacks or pant suits - looks like a man? Whereas the Bible affirms that there must be a clear difference between men and women in their way of dressing, as it is written in the law: “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garments, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God” (Deuteronomy 22:5 – NKJV). You may say to me, ‘That’s a verse of the law of Moses and we are not under the law but under grace!’ Well, have you never read that “the law is good if one uses it lawfully” (1 Timothy 1:8 – NKJV) for the law is made for whatever is contrary to the sound doctrine (cf. 1 Timothy 1:10)? Have you never noticed that Paul, who was under grace, used the law to confirm some New Testament principles? So, since I have quoted that verse of the law just to confirm a principle which is still valid under the New Testament, I have used the law lawfully. And consequently you’d better pay attention to what that verse of the law says concerning the way of dressing, for if you reject it you will provoke God to anger. So, sister in the Lord, do not wear trousers, for they make you look like a man. Make sure that what you wear identifies you as a female, and that men don’t need to look at the tempting zones of your body – which is something the devil wants men to do - to tell whether you are a male or female.

The fashion of the world tends to make a woman provocative and seductive, and thus it leads men to lust after her. In other words, the fashion of the world tends to cause men to stumble. Do you know what happens both in the mind and in the heart of a man when he looks at a woman who wears a miniskirt, or a slit skirt or a close fitting dress or a low-necked dress, or a transparent blouse, or tight trousers, or fishnet stockings etc.? He begins to lust after that woman. So these articles of clothing send sexual signals. Have you ever wondered why prostitutes wear the above mentioned articles of clothing? Because they want to allure men into a sexual relationship. Have you ever wondered why the adulteress dresses like a harlot? Because she wants to allure men into a sexual relationship. Listen to what Solomon said about the adulteress: “Then out came a woman to meet him [a youth who lacked judgement], dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent …. She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said: I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows. So I came out to meet you; I looked for you and have found you! I have covered my bed with coloured linens from Egypt. I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon. Come, let’s drink deep of love till morning; let’s enjoy ourselves with love! My husband is not at home; he has gone on a long journey. He took his purse filled with money and will not be home till full moon. With persuasive words she led him astray; she seduced him with her smooth talk …. “ (Proverbs 7:10, 13-21 – NIV). As you can see, that married woman was dressed like a prostitute. Why? It is evident, because she wanted to seduce that young man so that he might lie with her, while her husband was not at home. That woman had a crafty heart and knew that a certain way of dressing would
help her to seduce men, that's why she dressed like a prostitute. Sisters in the Lord, you must understand that clothing is a language, and if you wear the above mentioned articles of clothing you will transmit the following message to those men who look at you: 'I want you to look at my body and lust after me!' So men will think that you are a loose woman, and think evil thoughts because of you, and some of them might make advances. In the light of this, therefore, by dressing like a prostitute – or indecently – you will cause men to stumble, while the Scripture says: "Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the church of God ...." (1 Corinthians 10:32 – NIV). I warn you not to wear indecent articles of clothing, lest you cause men to stumble.

Let me tell you now a few things about make up, lipstick, jewelry, and shoes with stiletto heels: the purpose of all these things is to make you look provocative and seductive. So you must flee them also. If you still wear make up or lipstick or jewelry or shoes with stiletto heels, I urge you to stop wearing these things, for you are wasting your money and your time and by making up and putting on lipstick you are even damaging your skin. Remember that Jezebel, who was an evil woman, "painted her eyes" (2 Kings 9:30 – NIV); and that Sarah, who was a holy woman who trusted in God, did not wear any jewelry (cf. 1 Peter 3:3-6), even though she was the wife of Abraham, who was a rich man who had much gold. Furthermore, do not have your hair dyed; be content with the natural colour of your hair. Neither should you have short hair, for the Scripture says that "if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering" (1 Corinthians 11:15 – NKJV).

Let all your skirts, all your dresses and all your blouses, all your shoes and all your stockings be modest. Wear long skirts without vents, which cover all your legs; wear long-sleeved blouses. Dress in a way worthy of the Gospel, so that you may glorify God in your body as the Scripture commands. And the Lord will delight in you and will honor you.

I conclude by telling you the following things. Be careful how you adorn yourselves, sisters in the Lord, for your outward appearance is important to your testimony. If you adorn yourselves the way the Scripture commands you to do (and you do also the other things the Scripture commands you to do), the name of the Lord will be glorified in you and you in Him, and the faith in the Gospel you profess will be supported and honored by your holy conduct. But if you adorn yourselves like the daughters of this world, following the fashion of this world, your testimony will be weakened and the name of the Lord will be blasphemed because of your outrageous way of dressing. Know this, that all those pastors who teach that you can dress how you like are not pursuing what is good for you.

**It is lawful for women to wear jewelry**

The Assemblies of God (U.S.A) has stated: 'In the early days of the Pentecostal movement, piercing of women's ears for the wearing of earrings was strongly disapproved. Wearing any jewelry was considered sinful because the practice was associated with women of low morality standards. That assumption is no longer held, and some women feel their testimony is given less attention when the plainness of simple dress with no jewelry suggests to outsiders a lack of care about one's appearance. If, however, a Christian has strong convictions against wearing jewelry, that conviction should be honored.' (From: www.ag.org) This position is held by many other Churches all over the world.

**Confutation**

Paul wrote to Timothy: "I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God" (1 Timothy 2:9-10 – NIV), and Peter wrote to wives: “Your
beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God’s sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master” (1 Peter 3:3-4 – NIV).

Therefore, in the light of the Word of God, a Christian woman is not allowed to wear necklaces, rings, bracelets, earrings, and any other jewelry, for all these things are not proper for women who profess godliness. The purpose of these things is to make women provocative and seductive, and a daughter of God must not be provocative nor seductive. I know very well that some women think that their testimony is given less attention if they don’t wear any jewelry, but they are mistaken, having been deceived by the devil into thinking such a thing. The truth is that the testimony of a Christian woman is given more attention if she adorns herself with modesty and propriety, without any jewelry, for in this way she glorifies God in her body, that is to say, she declares to the world that her body belongs to the Lord and thus she no longer wants to live according to the worldly lusts but she wants to be holy in body for the rest of her life.

To those who have been appointed to shepherd the flock of the Lord, who approve of the wearing of jewelry, I say this, ‘Stop approving of this practice, for it is sinful in the sight of God: and teach what the apostles taught concerning the wearing of jewelry; do not shun to declare it to the people of God.’

Now listen, you sisters in the Lord, let no one deceive you with empty words, for God delights in those women who have decided not to wear any jewelry in order to glorify God in their body; God honors them and will reward them in that day. So, if you still wear some jewelry I urge you to take them off and to throw them away.

A Christian woman is not bound to cover her head with a veil when she prays or prophesies

Most Protestant Churches (among which also many Pentecostal Churches) teach that a Christian woman is not bound to cover her head with a veil or to wear a head covering when she prays or prophesies, even though Paul says the very opposite in his first epistle to the Corinthians (11:2-16). These Churches reject this biblical commandment for several reasons. The reasons generally given against it are these:

1) The words of Paul have no applicability to us today. Paul is speaking about a ‘tradition’ that he has handed on. Hence, since this is not the tradition of the modern church, we hardly need to consider his words. So, according to those who hold this view, the practice of wearing a veil was just a nice custom followed by the Churches of God at that time; but in our day, since most churches no longer have this custom, and it is not within our ability to change the customs which are followed, women are not required to wear a head covering.

2) The head covering is the hair. In other words, a woman’s hair is given to her instead of a veil. A woman who has long hair is effectively veiled and covered. Hence, the applicability today is that women should wear long hair. Paul wants women to wear long hair in order to show that they are submissive to male headship.

3) The head covering is a meaningful symbol in the ancient world that needs some sort of corresponding symbol today, but not necessarily a head covering. Here is how Daniel B. Wallace, Ph.D. Associate Professor of New Testament Studies at the Dallas Theological Seminary, explains this view: ‘This is the view that I currently adopt. In essence, it is based on an understanding of the role of head coverings in the ancient world vs. the modern world. In the ancient world head coverings were apparently in vogue in some parts of the Graeco-Roman empire. Some groups expected the men to wear head coverings; others expected women to
wear them. Still others felt that such were optional for both men and women. It is not important to determine which group did what. The important thing to note is that the early church adopted a convention already in use in society and gave it a distinctively Christian hue. That Paul could say that no other churches had any other practice may well indicate how easily such a practice could be adopted. This finds parallels with baptism in Israel. The Pharisees did not ask John, “What are you doing?” Instead, they asked, “Why are you doing this?” They understood baptism (even though John’s baptism was apparently the first to be other-baptism rather than self-baptism); what they didn’t understand was John’s authority and what his baptism symbolized. In a similar way, the early church practice of requiring the women to wear a head covering when praying or prophesying would not have been viewed as an unusual request. In the cosmopolitan cities of Asia Minor, Macedonia, and Greece, no one would feel out of place. Head coverings were everywhere. When a woman wore one in the church, she was showing her subordination to her husband, but was not out of place with society. One could easily imagine a woman walking down the street to the worship service with a head covering on without being noticed. Today, however, the situation is quite different, at least in the West. For a woman to wear a head covering would seem to be a distinctively humiliating experience. Many women—even biblically submissive wives—resist the notion precisely because they feel awkward and self-conscious. But the head covering in Paul’s day was intended only to display the woman’s subordination, not her humiliation. Today, ironically, to require a head covering for women in the worship service would be tantamount to asking them to shave their heads! The effect, therefore, would be just the opposite of what Paul intended. Thus, in attempting to fulfill the spirit of the apostle’s instruction, not just his words, some suitable substitute symbol needs to be found.

Confutation

Now I am going to refute the above mentioned views.

First view

According to the Scripture, the practice of wearing a head covering for women was indeed one of the traditions Paul had handed down to the saints of Corinth, for Paul at the beginning of the eleventh chapter of 1 Corinthians says: “Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you,” (1 Corinthians 11:2 – NKJV) and immediately after he begins to speak about the veil. However, the Greek word for tradition used by Paul, that is, paradosis, does not mean ‘tradition’ in the modern English sense of the word of a nice custom that one can dispense with if desired, because the tradition about the head covering for women was a teaching which Paul delivered to the saints which had thus to be followed, just as all his other teachings. Listen to what Paul says: “For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels” (1 Corinthians 11:10 – NKJV). That the traditions Paul passed on the saints were teachings which had to be followed by every Christian is evident from the following words he wrote to the Thessalonians: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle … We command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us” (2 Thessalonians 2:15; 3:6 – NKJV). The Greek word for ‘tradition’ used by Paul in these words is the same Greek word I cited before, that is, paradosis. As you can see, the saints were commanded to hold the traditions Paul and his fellow workers had delivered to them, and to withdraw from every brother who did not walk according to those traditions. Note that Paul says to the Thessalonians that anyone who does not walk according to the tradition he has received from the apostles walks disorderly. Furthermore, it must be said that in the days of the apostles the teaching about the veil or the practice of wearing a headcovering was followed not only by the Churches founded by Paul but by all the churches of God, for Paul says to the Corinthians: “But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the
churches of God” (1 Corinthians 11:16 – NKJV). If then Paul appealed to what the churches of God did, that means the custom of wearing a headcovering was accepted by all the Churches in those days, or rather by all those Churches who were not contentious. In the light of this, therefore, the teaching about the female headcovering must be followed by all Churches. On the other hand, as we saw before, Paul says that the woman ought to have a symbol of authority – which is the veil, that shows her submission to the man - on her head because of the angels, so we can’t affirm that his teaching on the veil is optional for the angels of God still watch the saints and are around them all over the world and consequently the woman must cover her head with a veil in order to show the angels of God her submission to man. In other words, how can one say that a Christian woman is not bound to cover her head with a veil, when Paul says that it is because of the angels that she ought to cover her head with a veil in order to show the angels her submission to man? How can one say that the woman is not bound to cover her head with a veil, when the veil on her head demonstrates the divine order of authority and submission that God decreed, for - as you know - God has put the woman under the authority of man, as it is written that the head of every woman is the man? However, the point is that many Christian women, knowing that the veil is a symbol of their submission to men, refuse to wear a veil when praying or prophesying for they refuse to show the angels of God their submission to man. And they cover their haughtiness and hardness of heart with empty words, such as, ‘Brother, what Paul says about the woman’s headcovering is optional!’

Second view

It is true that Paul says: “But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering” (1 Corinthians 11:15 – NKJV), but by those words he did not mean at all that a woman’s long hair is the headcovering or the veil a woman is commanded to wear when praying or prophesying. What did he mean by those words then? Well, he simply meant that a woman’s long hair is her natural covering, given to her by God, which distinguishes her from man. In other words, Paul meant that long hair is a glory to the woman for it serves as a natural covering for her. However, her long hair is not the sign or symbol of authority which she must have on her head in order to show the angels of God her submission to man’s authority. No doubt a woman does a right thing in wearing long hair, for she abides by the God-given created order and natural instinct (while she does a wrong thing in wearing short hair for short hair makes her look like a man), but that is not the woman’s headcovering Paul speaks of. If one reads carefully the two preceding verses, that is, verses 13 and 14, he will realize that Paul did not teach that if a woman wears long hair she does not need to cover her head with a veil. Here are the words of Paul: “Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?” (1 Corinthians 11:13-14 - NKJV) As you can see, Paul, in order to demonstrate that it is improper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered, speaks of what the very nature of things teaches us concerning long hair, saying that if a man wears long hair it is a dishonor to him for he looks like a woman, while if a woman has long hair it is a glory to her for her hair is given to her for a natural covering. Therefore, as it is proper for a woman to wear long hair for it shows her glory, so it is proper for her to wear a headcovering, too, while praying or prophesying, for the headcovering shows her submission to man’s authority.

Third view

Paul clearly said that a woman must cover her head while praying or prophesying, that is, she must have a symbol or sign of authority on her head, as it is written: “For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels” (1 Corinthians 11:10 – NKJV). What symbol or sign did he refer to? He referred to a veil, for in the book of Genesis we read that when Rebekah saw Isaac “she took a veil and covered herself” (Genesis 24:65 – NKJV), that is to say, she took her veil and covered her hair with the veil.
Conclusion

I want to conclude by saying some words to all the Christian women who do not wear a veil when they pray or prophesy, and to all those pastors and teachers who oppose this custom or ignore it.

Sisters in the Lord, know this, that what Paul says about the woman's headcovering is not optional but mandatory. So wear a veil when you pray or prophesy, in order to honor your head, that is, man. You may say to me, 'The Church I attend does not follow this custom!' It doesn't matter, wear a veil, for you are called to pray or prophesy with your head covered with a veil. God will honor your decision, for it is a right decision. Know this, that for a woman to wear a headcovering is not a humiliating experience but a beautiful experience for by wearing a headcovering she honors her head showing the angels of God her submission to man. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for God wants you to cover your head with a veil. Do not be afraid of those Christians who are ready to criticize you or even to rebuke a Christian woman if she covers her head with a veil when she prays or prophesies, but they keep silent if she wears a miniskirt or a see-through dress or some other indecent dress. These Christians are contentious and do not want to abide by the words of the apostle Paul (which are sound words), for they walk according to the worldly lusts. Do not listen to them!

You who are pastors and teachers, who have taught so far that women are not bound to cover their head with a veil, repent and start urging women to wear a veil when praying or prophesying. God will certainly honor your decision too, for the Lord honors all those who honor His Word. Do not be afraid of those who will criticize you and oppose you. Be of good courage and proclaim to the saints this part of the counsel of God too.
CHRISTIAN MUSIC

Christian rock music

Many Christians affirm that rock music (as well as other kinds of contemporary music, such as rap and disco) must be used to reach the lost with the Gospel, that is to say, they affirm that rock music is a means of communicating the Gospel to the young people who do not know God so that they might be saved. Those who affirm this usually cite the following words of Paul: “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law: to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22 - NKJV). According to them, therefore, the Scripture allows a Christian to play rock music in order to win people to Christ! Moreover, rock music can be played to praise and glorify the Lord! The reason why they affirm this is that they believe that any style of music is acceptable to carry the message of the cross to the lost and to glorify Jesus Christ. Here is the Christian Rocker’s Creed as it was published in the popular CCM Magazine: “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all music was created equal, that no instrument or style of music is in itself evil—that the diversity of musical expression which flows forth from man is but one evidence of the boundless creativity of our Heavenly Father” (CCM Magazine, November 1988, p. 12). Furthermore, note the following statements from the CCM crowd: ‘There is no such thing as ‘gospel music.’ Every style and form of music can become gospel, whether it’s jazz, pop, rock ‘n’ roll, or rap’ (Don Butler, Gospel Music Association, Inhouse Music, March/April 1991, p. 27); ‘There’s no such thing as Christian music. That’s because all kinds of music are capable of expressing Christian thought. It’s not the music that’s Christian, it’s the lyrics” (John Styll, “What Makes Music Christian,” CCM Magazine, June 1991, p. 22; reprinted from the April 1987 issue; Styll [1952-] is the Founder and Executive Editor of CCM Magazine and President of the Gospel Music Association); ‘I believe music, in itself, is a neutral force’ (Keith Green, Can God Use Rock Music?); ‘Music per se … can be considered morally neutral—it is neither sinful nor holy. Its morality is determined by the use to which it is put’ (David Scheer, PG: A Parental Guide to Rock, p. 167); ‘We take the music of the street and apply Christian lyrics to it’ (Billy Ray Hearn, owner of Sparrow Records and creator of ABC’s Myrrh label, cited by Ric Llewellyn, "Christian Rock," Foundation, Vol. VI, Issue 2, 1985, p. 16); ‘We need to know rock ‘n’ roll. We need to know the gentleness of a folk tune. We need to know the majesty of Handel’s Messiah. We need to know the awesome reverence of the Gregorian chant’ (John Michael Talbot, CCM Magazine, July 1998, p. 28); ‘We’re like Billy Graham with guitars, basically … rock and roll is neutral. It depends on the spirit’ (Michael Bloodgood, Duluth News Tribune, October 9, 1987, p. 1C); ‘Music is not good or evil because of the formation of the notes or the structure of the beat. Music is good because the heart of the person playing it is innocently and sincerely giving praise to our God’ (Mylon LeFevre, cited by Jeff Godwin, What’s Wrong with Christian Rock?, p. 122); ‘…music is just music. It’s the message that’s important’ (Mylon LeFevre, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, Seattle, Washington, Oct. 11, 1984); ‘God is the King of Soul; He’s the King of all rhythm’ (Phil Driscoll, cited by Tim Fisher, Battle for Christian Music, p. 82); ‘There’s no such thing as Christian music. Music is generic’ (Chris Christian, cited by Kit Frieden, “Christian Music Guru Says There’s ‘No Such Thing,’” The Patriot, Harrisburg, Penn., Nov. 29, 1986); ‘God gave rock and roll to you/ Put it in the soul of every one/ If you love the sound/ Then don’t forget the source’ ("God Gave Rock and Roll," Petra); ‘All music was His to begin with and He’ll use any medium necessary to convey
First of all, let me say that I also have thought for a certain period of time of my new life in Christ that rock music can be used to reach the lost, for after I got saved in 1983 (at that time I was about 19 years old) I listened to the so-called Christian rock music played by some ‘Christian’ groups (such as Jerusalem, Resurrection Band, and others) for about two years. I became acquainted with the so-called Christian rock music during my second stay in England (January-July 1984). For in Italy at that time there was no ‘Christian rock music.’ I liked that kind of music and I thought that it could be really used to reach the young people with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I have to confess that at the time I could not help listening to the so-called Christian rock music. I even tried to persuade my father, my grandmother and other Christians to accept this kind of music as a means of reaching the young people with the message of the cross, but without success. I remember that at that time when I would evangelize the lost I used to speak also about some ‘Christian’ rock stars and I even made them listen to some of their songs, even though they did not understand English or they understood just a few English words. I thought: ‘In this way they will feel attracted to the Gospel and accept it!’ I was sincere, I really wanted to win them to Christ, and I was ready to speak also about the so-called Christian rock music in order to persuade young people to accept Christ in their life. I advocated the so-called Christian rock concerts, I myself attended one of these concerts while I was in England during my second stay. To me at that time there was nothing wrong with this kind of music; I mean in my opinion at that time rock music (as well as other kinds of modern forms of music) was an efficacious means of drawing the lost to the worship places or to some other places (parks, streets, squares, stadiums, theatres, auditoriums, etc.) in order to let them hear about Jesus. I was convinced that as long as a song contained the message of salvation, a Christian could play rock music to convey this message to the lost. It goes without saying that in my opinion rock music could be used also to praise the Lord, so a Christian singer could praise the Lord even playing rock music. So a Christian could listen to such songs for their words were addressed to God! But I was mistaken. You may ask me now: ‘How did you come to the conclusion that a Christian must not play nor listen to the so-called Christian rock music?’ I came to this conclusion praying to the Lord, searching the Scriptures, and pursuing holiness.

Now I am going to explain to you why rock music must be rejected, and thus every Christian must not play or listen to it.

Rock music is rooted in occultism

Rock music is rooted in occultism for it originated in the African jungle among people who were devoted to voodoo and witchcraft. The medicine man (or priest or sorcerer) was the chief...
musician also, and it used the music to get the tribesmen into contact with the gods to drive the evil spirits away or to attract the favour of the good gods. The way he used music to get his tribesmen into contact with the gods was through the beat. By means of the music, the tribesmen were worked into a craze, a frenzy, and were able to hear voices of the spirits, see what they otherwise did not see, and do what they otherwise could not do. Obviously we know that those gods evoked by the medicine man actually were demons or evil spirits. Then in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the negroes who were captured from Africa for slavery in America took with them their religion, and with it also the music used by them in their homeland to contact demons. The occult origins of this kind of music is confirmed not only by the fact that it is an extremely violent style of music which incites the listeners to be violent, merciless, arrogant, to take drugs, to fornicate, to rebel against the governing authorities, to hate Jesus Christ and His teachings, etc., but also by the fact that many of the so called rock stars are devoted to occultism or have something to do with it and have dedicated directly or indirectly some of their songs to the devil (for instance, the Rolling Stones’ song titled ‘Sympathy for the Devil,’ and the Led Zeppelin’s ‘Stairway to Heaven’ are songs which have undoubtedly occult origins); who is the originator of this kind of music which attracts so many young people. Even some unsaved rock musicians and researches have confirmed the connection between rock music and the occult. Newsweek magazine noted the African and voodoo music connection in disco rock: "From Latin music, it takes the percolating percussion, its sensuous, throbbing rhythms; from Afro and Cuban music, it repeats simple lyric lines like voodoo chants" (Newsweek, April 2, 1979, pp. 58,59). Rock artist Peter Gabriel has no doubt that there is a direct African connection to rock & roll: 'There are things like the bo diddley rhythm that i’ve heard beat-for-beat in congolese patterns. Part of what we consider our fundamental rock and roll heritage originated in Africa. Period' (Peter Gabriel, interview with Timothy White, 1986, Rock Lives, p. 720). In his book Rock and Roll an Unruly History, Robert Palmer, noted rock music critic and historian, is forthright about the direct connection between voodoo and rock music: 'Bata drums [drums used in voodoo], sacred to the Yoruba people of Nigeria and Cuba: Their push and pull provided a template for the inner rhythms of rock and roll. .... The idea that certain rhythm patterns or sequences serve as conduits for spiritual energies, linking individual human consciousness with the gods, is basic to traditional African religions, and to African-derived religions throughout the Americas. And whether we’re speaking historically or musicologically, the fundamental riffs, licks, bass figures, and drum rhythms that make rock and roll can ultimately be traced back to African music of a primarily spiritual or ritual nature. In a sense, rock and roll is a kind of ‘voodoo,’ rooted in a vigorous tradition of celebrating nature and spirit that’s far removed from the sober patriarchal values espoused by the self-appointed guardians of western culture. .... Bata drummers tap out their toques, or rhythm patterns, like signals to the realm of the gods, inviting and enticing them to come on down and mount or possess their horses, or devotees. ....The specific drum patterns or toques include some riffs and licks basic to the rock and roll vocabulary." (Robert Palmer, Rock & Roll, An Unruly History, Harmony Books, New York, 1995 p. 46, 53, 62). Little Richard, one of the rock’s fathers, has also testified of this connection: 'My true belief about Rock ‘n’ Roll--and there have been a lot of phrases attributed to me over the years--is this: I believe this kind of music is demonic. ... a lot of the beats in music today are taken from voodoo, from the voodoo drums. If you study music in rhythms, like I have, you’ll see that is true ... I believe that kind of music is driving people from Christ. It is contagious" (Little Richard, quoted by Charles White, The Life and Times of Little Richard, p. 197). John Lennon said rock & roll gets through to people because of its voodoo beat: "Because it is primitive enough and has no bull, really, the best stuff, and it gets through to you its beat. Go to the jungle and they have the rhythm and it goes throughout the world and it’s as simple as that" (Lennon, Rolling Stone, Feb. 12, 1976, p 100). Tony Sanchez, who travelled with the Stones for many years and who wrote a book about them, described the music at their infamous concert at Altamonte, during which many people were injured and killed, as "pounding voodoo drumming and primitive shrieks" (Sanchez, Up and Down with the Rolling Stones, p. 184). He described the music of the Rolling Stones song ‘Gimme Shelter’ as ‘hypnotic, voodoo
rhythm’ (Sanchez, p. 175). **David Byrne** of Talking Heads produced a documentary film, *The House of Life* (1981), on the drumming and chanting rituals of the African-rooted religion candomble in Brazil, during which the followers are taken over by their gods. “If you go back in the history of American popular music, you’re constantly finding elements of Yoruba [voodoo] influence. The rhythms are there - Even Little Richard. If you grow up with that, you’ve already got a taste of it. So when you see Candomble, you say to yourself, ‘hey, this is part of where it all comes from’” (Byrne, *Rolling Stone*, July 13-27, 1989, p. 78). **David Szatmary**’s book *A Time to Rock: A Social History of Rock ‘n’ Roll* traces rock to African rhythms. Under the section on ‘the Birth of the Blues,’ this secular rock historian says: "The blues were an indigenous creation of black slaves who adapted their African musical heritage to the American environment. Though taking many forms and undergoing many permutations through the years, the blues formed the basis of rock-and-roll. · Probably most important, the slaves, accustomed to dancing and singing to the beat of drums in Africa, emphasized rhythm over harmony” (p. 2). **Mickey Hart**, drummer for the Grateful Dead, has studied the connection between rock music and African paganism extensively. He says that rock and roll is "the latest extension of the African backbeat" (Mickey Hart, *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*, p. 64). He also says that the "mother rhythms from West Africa mutated into rock and roll" (p. 91). He traces a direct connection between rock & roll and the rhythms of witch doctors and voodoo practitioners. “· when the slave ships began playing the waters between the New World and West Africa, everyone though they carried just strong, expendable bodies. But they were also carrying the Counterplayer culture--maybe even the mother goddess culture--preserved in the form of drum rhythms that could call down the Orisha from their time to ours. In the Caribbean and South America, slaves were allowed to keep their drums and thus preserved their vital connection with the Orisha, though the sudden mingling of so many different tribes produced new variations like candomble, santeria, and vodun. · and out of this severing came jazz, the blues, the backbeat, rhythm and blues, and rock and roll -- some of the most powerful rhythms on the planet. · It is hard to pinpoint the exact moment when I awoke to the fact that my tradition--rock and roll--did have a spirit side, that there was a branch of the family that had maintained the ancient connection between the drum and the gods” (Mickey Hart, drummer for the Grateful Dead, *Drumming at the Edge of Magic*, pp. 209,210,212). It is evident, therefore, that since this kind of music has occult origins it is a work of darkness, and thus we as sons of God must have nothing to do with it, as it is written: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Ephesians 5:11 – NKJV).

Rock music has harmful effects on those who play and listen to it

Rock music has harmful effects on those who play or listen to it. For this kind of music encourages people to rebel against the governing authorities appointed by God, to give themselves over to illicit sex (fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism), to strip off, to blaspheme the name of God, to practice occultism, to get drunk, to take drugs, to hate their neighbour, to beat and kill other people, to mention just some of the bad things it encourages to do. Here in Italy there is a well-known rock star, named Vasco Rossi, who many years ago recorded a song whose title was ‘Voglio una vita spericolata’, which means ‘I want to live in the fast lane,’ and which was a great success at the time, and which is still loved by many young people. The lyrics of this song says among other things, ‘Voglio una vita piena di guai’, that is, ‘I want a life full of troubles’. You may say, ‘Not all the lyrics of the rock songs urges people to live a life full of troubles!’ Well, my answer is that even though not all the lyrics of the rock songs urges people to get drunk, to take drugs, to fornicate, and so on, all of them somehow convey a wrong message, for the rock music itself conveys a wrong message to the hearers. Let me give you an example: consider any rock song played by a famous rock band, which is played only with instruments without any words, does it convey a message such as ‘be humble’, or ‘turn the other cheek’, or ‘be holy,’ or ‘seek righteousness’? I don’t think so. It seems to me that rock music – even if it is played with instruments only - conveys the following messages: ‘Be
arrogant’, ‘be violent,’ ‘do whatever you like,’ and so on. That’s why rock music can’t accompany holy and righteous words, for rock music in itself is evil. We can’t mix Christian lyrics and rock music, for we can’t mix holy words and unholy melodies. So, no matter if the lyrics of the rock songs contain bad words or not, incite people to revolt or not, the music itself conveys a bad and wrong message to the hearers. We can compare rock music to a bad tree that brings bad fruits. This is confirmed by the conduct displayed by the rock bands and by those who attend rock concerts. They are carnally minded, for they set their minds on the things of the flesh. You can really find all kinds of perverse and rebellious people among them. Therefore we, who are the temple of the Holy Spirit and are led by the Holy Spirit, must not play or listen to this diabolic style of music, which encourages people to live according to the flesh. The Scripture says: “If you live according to the flesh you will die” (Romans 8:13 – NKJV), so we can’t love or use something whose purpose is to lure Christians into doing what is contrary to the Word of God and thus to kill them spiritually. In other words, we can’t love or use a kind of music that incites people to rebel against God.

Music is not neutral

In the light of what I have said so far, therefore, it is obvious that the statement according to which music is neutral is untrue, for rock music is not neutral at all. Anyone who has attended a rock concert cannot deny that the atmosphere that this kind of music creates in the stadium or in the auditorium where the concert is held is not a holy atmosphere but on the contrary an atmosphere that encourages people to get drunk, to be violent, to move sensually, to speak bad words, to fornicate, to commit adultery, and so on, which are all works of the flesh that we as sons of God must hate and flee. Yes, rock music creates a sinful atmosphere, just as other kinds of music. Have you ever wondered why the owner of a tavern or a night club chooses a certain kind of music, which appeals to the fleshly lusts? Have you ever wondered why movie makers decide to accompany each scene of their films with a certain kind of music which is different depending on the scene? Have you ever wondered why advertisers use a certain kind of music rather than another to promote certain products? The answer to these questions is the same: because music is not neutral but is able to create the right atmosphere or to have the right psychological effects on those who listen to it. I am surprised to see that many Christians do not realize this. Listen, you who think that music is neutral: let us suppose you are praying to God in your bedroom, and suddenly you hear someone play a heavy metal song, would you not be disturbed by that music? I am sure, you would. However, let us suppose that while you are praying to God in your bedroom you hear someone play ‘Oh Great Thou art’ or ‘Amazing Grace’ or ‘El Shadday,’ would you be disturbed? Not at all. Why? Because the kind of music which accompanies these songs does not lust against the Spirit, but rather it encourages the Holy Spirit activity. That’s why if someone plays one of the above mentioned songs while all the members of a Church are praying with a low voice to God, the spiritual atmosphere is not disturbed at all. Likewise, if someone is in a night club, and suddenly someone begins to play ‘Amazing Grace’ in the night club, he will feel greatly disturbed by that song; not only by the lyrics, but also by the type of music that accompanies the words of that song. Why? Because the music of ‘Amazing Grace’ creates an atmosphere that is not fit for a night club. That’s why the owner of a night club chooses certain kinds of music, which minister to the carnal side of man, so that those who attend that place may feel at ease while they stay in that sinful place.

What kind of music should accompany Christian songs

Having demonstrated that rock music is just one of the fleshly types of music existing in this world of darkness, and therefore it is not fit at all for accompanying Christian songs, let me tell you what kind of music Christians must play and listen to. First of all I want to remind you that a Christian is a person who belongs to Christ, and the Scripture affirms that “those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Galatians 5:24 – NKJV) for they
died with Christ to sin, that is to say, their old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that they should no longer be slaves of sin (cf. Romans 6:6). This is why Paul says that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17 – NKJV), for a Christian is no longer a carnal person who walks according to the passions and desires of the flesh, but a new person, a spiritual person, who walks according to new passions and desires, which are holy and right for they are produced in him by the Holy Spirit of God. In other words, a Christian is someone who walks in the Spirit and not in the flesh - he is a spiritual person and not a carnal person - for the Spirit who dwells in him prompts him to think, to dress, to talk, to behave in a completely different way, which is holy. A Christian knows that he no longer belongs to this wicked world, for the Lord has rescued him from it through the blood of Jesus Christ and so now, since he belongs to Christ, he must not love the world or the things in the world, for - as John says – “all that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world” (1 John 2:16 – NKJV). As a consequence, he must not play or listen to all those kinds of music which appeal to the fleshly lusts and try to arouse them, and among these kinds of music are rock, disco, rap and many others, for all of them prompt the listeners to move sensually, to think evil thoughts, to fornicate and so on, that is to say, to do things which are hostile to the Holy Spirit. So what kind of songs should a Christian play or listen to? A Christian must play and hear only spiritual songs, that is, songs whose lyrics and melodies are spiritual, for the Scripture says: “... be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:18-19), and again: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16). In the light of the Scripture, therefore, the music which accompanies the Christian songs must create a holy atmosphere, that is to say, a wholesome spiritual atmosphere that encourages the Holy Spirit activity. Let me explain to you what I mean. All the saints who are gathered in the place of worship, when they sing a song to the Lord or hear someone sing a song, should be prompted to reflect on the love of God which He manifested toward us by sending Jesus into this world to atone for our sins, on His power, on His faithfulness, on His greatness, and so on; they should be prompted to praise and thank Him all the more, they should be prompted to rejoice in the Lord, they should be encouraged to follow the Lord, they should feel strengthened in the inner man, and to ask God to forgive them of their sins. As for the unbelievers who happen to be in the place of worship and listen to a song, they should perceive that they are in the midst of the Church of the Living God. In other words, unbelievers should feel the presence of God in a place of worship also through the music which is played by the saints there. What I mean is this: just as a believer, who walks according to the Spirit, perceives that demons are present in a place where rock or disco music is played, so sinners should realize that God is present in a certain place also through the music that is played in that place. Through the music played there they should perceive a holy and spiritual atmosphere, they should be encouraged to ask God to forgive their sins, they should not be at their ease till they repent of their sins and believe in the Gospel.

Further proof that confirms that music is not neutral

That music is not neutral is evident also from the following incidents recorded in the Bible. “And it came to pass, when the evil spirit from God was upon Saul, that David took an harp, and played with his hand: so Saul was refreshed, and was well, and the evil spirit departed from him” (1 Samuel 16:23). Note that when David played the harp, Saul was refreshed and well, and the evil spirit departed from him. “And he went and sent to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, The king of Moab hath rebelled against me: wilt thou go with me against Moab to battle? And he said, I will go up: I am as thou art, my people as thy people, and my horses as thy horses. And he said, Which way shall we go up? And he answered, The way through the wilderness of Edom. So the king of
Israel went, and the king of Judah, and the king of Edom: and they fetched a compass of seven days’ journey: and there was no water for the host, and for the cattle that followed them. And the king of Israel said, Alas! that the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab! But Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD, that we may enquire of the LORD by him? And one of the king of Israel’s servants answered and said, Here is Elisha the son of Shaphat, which poured water on the hands of Elijah. And Jehoshaphat said, The word of the LORD is with him. So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him. And Elisha said unto the king of Israel, What have I to do with thee? get thee to the prophets of thy father, and to the prophets of thy mother. And the king of Israel said unto him, Nay: for the LORD hath called these three kings together, to deliver them into the hand of Moab. And Elisha said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, surely, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look toward thee, nor see thee. But now bring me a minstrel [the NIV reads ‘an harpist’]. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him. And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Make this valley full of ditches. For thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not see wind, neither shall ye see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, that ye may drink, both ye, and your cattle, and your beasts. And this is but a light thing in the sight of the LORD: he will deliver the Moabites also into your hand. And ye shall smite every fenced city, and every choice city, and shall fell every good tree, and stop all wells of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones. And it came to pass in the morning, when the meat offering was offered, that, behold, there came water by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.” (2 Kings 3:7-20).

Have you noticed that the prophet Elisha asked that a harpist should be brought to him? Why a harpist? Well, I think it was because according to the prophet Elisha the sound of a harp was able to create the right atmosphere in that moment.

Please notice that in both cases when the harp was played a good thing took place; when David played his harp king Saul would feel better and the evil spirit would leave him; while when the harpist played in the presence of the prophet Elisha it came to pass that the hand of the Lord came upon Elisha and he spoke from the Lord.

In the light of these two incidents recorded in the Bible, we should not be surprised therefore to find out that in heaven the musical instrument which is played is the harp, as it is written: “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And he came and took the book out of the right hand of him that sat upon the throne. And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth” (Revelations 5:6-10), and again: “And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest” (Revelations 15:2-4). The fact that in heaven both the living creatures and the elders, who are around the throne of God, have each a harp should lead each of us to reflect very seriously on the kind of music which should accompany Christian songs. Please do not misunderstand me, I am not saying that Christian songs can be accompanied only by the sound of a harp or that songs are spiritual only if they are accompanied with a harp, but I just want you to realize that not all kinds of music are fit for Christian songs.

There is no doubt that the harp creates a good atmosphere in the place where it is played and is fit for a holy meeting. Many years ago I saw a sister play the harp in a place of worship, and I still

402
remember with pleasure the type of sound which her harp produced. It was as if the sound of that harp created an heavenly atmosphere. However, according to the Scripture, we are allowed to praise the Lord with other instruments, as it is written in the book of Psalms: “Praise him with the sounding of the trumpet, praise him with the harp and lyre, praise him with tambourine and dancing, praise him with the strings and flute, praise him with the clash of cymbals, praise him with resounding cymbals” (Psalm 150:3-5 – NIV). So the harp is not the only instrument we are allowed to play to accompany the songs we sing to the Lord.

About the so called Christian rock artists and their music

I have proved that rock music is not fit for Christian songs for it is of the devil, therefore it must be rejected without hesitation. Now I want to say something about the so called Christian rock music and those who play it.

- ‘Christian’ rock artists affirm that they use rock music to evangelize the lost, that is to say, they affirm that rock music is a means of communicating the Gospel to the young people who do not know God so that they might be saved.

First of all, it must be said that according to the Scripture we cannot use an evil thing as a means of evangelizing the lost. The end does not justify the means. Just as we can’t use sex to reach the lost and win them to Christ – like the Children of God who, being perverted people who teach damnable heresies, practice the so called ‘flirty fishing’ -, or karate and some other martial arts – like some groups of young people who use martial arts to evangelize the lost -, for these means are wrong, so we can’t use a kind of music which is rooted in occultism to evangelize the lost in order to win them to Christ. Someone will say then: ‘Did not Paul say: “For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22 - NKJV)?’ Yes, he said these words, but he never meant by them that we are allowed to do evil that good may come, that is to say, he never meant that we are allowed to break the Word of God that we may win people to Christ. For Paul himself did not use evil means to evangelize the lost. Let me give you a few examples to explain to you this concept. Paul did not let his hair grow long like the hair of a woman, nor did he wear some earrings, in order to evangelize the effeminate or the sodomites or some other sinners! In other words, Paul did not decide to behave like a sinner or to look like a sinner in order to win the lost! Yet, this is what many so called Christian artists have actually decided to do, for they behave and dress like sinners! There are some male Christian artists who have long hair, wear earrings, live a sinful life, move sensually on the stage, etc. There are some female Christian artists who are dressed like prostitutes, they live a sinful life, on the stage they move sensually, etc. Now let us assume, for the sake of argument, that their purpose is to evangelize the lost; don’t you think that by dressing and living in that way they will cause people to stumble? That is to say, don’t you think that by their lifestyle they will keep sinners from turning from their evil ways to the Lord? Of course they will, for they do not conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel. They have conformed to the worldly lusts, so they are not light but rather darkness, and so sinners cannot see in them the light of the Lord, but they see the darkness of this wicked world. So, in the light of what the Scripture teaches, what these so called Christian artists are doing is to keep people from turning from their evil deeds. They claim to be Christians, but actually they refuse to follow Christ’s steps, they are rebellious, arrogant, they do not fear God. A Christian – no matter where he lives and what his job is – must act different and look different from the people of this world, for he is no longer part of this world. Paul said to the saints in Rome: “Do not be conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2 – NKJV), while the message which these so called Christian artists communicate to Christians through their acts and
appearance is the opposite, that is, ‘Be conformed to this world’. So, it seems incredible yet it is true, on the one hand they affirm that through their music they want to evangelize the people of this world, but on the other hand through their lifestyle they show that they do not want people to be rescued from this wicked world. I firmly believe that these so called Christian rock artists do not evangelize the world, but rather they scandalize the world.

- ‘Christian’ rock artists affirm that they use music to reach the lost. However, according to the Scripture, the purpose of Christian music was never meant to evangelize the lost. The purpose of Christian music is to glorify God, to thank Him, to sing of His love, of His power, of His faithfulness. The Scripture says: “... be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Ephesians 5:18-19), and again: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:16), and again: “Sing to the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of saints” (Psalm 149:1 – NKJV), and also: ‘Sing praises to the Lord, who dwells in Zion!” (Psalm 9:11 – NKJV). God's method of reaching the lost is the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God. For Jesus, before He was taken up into heaven, said to the apostles: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature ...” (Mark 16:15 – NKJV). So we must reach the lost by preaching to them that Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and rose again for our justification, and by exhorting them to repent of their sins and to believe in Jesus Christ so that they may receive remission of sins and eternal life. That was the message which the apostles of the Lord preached to the lost in their days in order to win them to Christ, and they preached it with boldness, without fearing the reaction of sinners. However let us assume, for the sake of argument, that the so called Christian rock artists use music to evangelize the world, we should find in their songs the message of the Gospel, shouldn’t we? But we do not find it at all. Their message is vague, and very often meaningless. Even the name of Jesus Christ can’t be found in most of their songs; they have replaced it with the pronouns ‘he’, and ‘him.’ Why? Because rather than get their audience interested in God, they want their audience to get interested in their music and to buy their records. These people are trying to please men, rather than God. They are not serving God but their belly. Beware of them.

Conclusion

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, if you still listen to the so called Christian rock music, I urge you to stop listening to it immediately. If you have some records of these so called Christian rock bands, take them and break them into pieces and throw them away. Their music is a worldly music which is rooted in occultism, which appeals to fleshly lusts, and does not glorify God. They do not want their listeners to get interested in the things of God, but to buy their records. Know this, that there is no such thing as “Christian” rock music. Just as there is no such thing as “Christian adultery” or “Christian homosexuality”. If it is rock music is not Christian, and if it is Christian music is not rock.
OATHS

*It is lawful for a Christian to swear an oath*

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that it is lawful for a Christian to swear an oath. The Code of Canon Law says: ‘An oath, that is the invocation of the divine name as a witness to truth, cannot be taken unless in truth, in judgment, and in justice’ (can. 1199 § 1). The Catholic Encyclopedia confirms the Code of Canon Law: ‘An oath is an invocation to God to witness the truth of a statement. It may be express and direct, as when one swears by God Himself; or implicit and tacit, as when we swear by creatures, since they bear a special relation to the Creator and manifest His majesty and the supreme ….. An oath is licit, and an act of virtue, under certain conditions. It is, in effect, an act of homage rendered by the creature to the wisdom and omnipotence of the Creator—it is therefore an act of the virtue of religion; moreover, it is an excellent way of affording men security in their mutual intercourse. It is justified in the Old and New Testament; the faithful and the Church from Apostolic times to the present day have employed oaths; and canonical legislation and doctrinal decrees have affirmed their lawfulness.’

The Anglican Church teaches the same thing, for it says: ‘As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ, so we judge that Christian religion doth not prohibit but that a man may swear when the magistrate requireth in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the Prophet’s teaching in justice, judgement, and truth’ (The Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, XXXIX). Seventh-Day Adventist Church also teaches that it is lawful for a Christian to swear an oath, in that Ellen White in the third chapter of *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing* stated: ‘The reason for this command is given: We are not to swear “by the heaven, for it is the throne of God; nor by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, for thou canst not make one hair white or black.” R.V. All things come of God. We have nothing that we have not received; and, more than this, we have nothing that has not been purchased for us by the blood of Christ. Everything we possess comes to us stamped with the cross, bought with the blood that is precious above all estimate, because it is the life of God. Hence there is nothing that we have a right to pledge, as if it were our own, for the fulfillment of our word. The Jews understood the third commandment as prohibiting the profane use of the name of God; but they thought themselves at liberty to employ other oaths. Oath taking was common among them. Through Moses they had been forbidden to swear falsely, but they had many devices for freeing themselves from the obligation imposed by an oath. They did not fear to indulge in what was really profanity, nor did they shrink from perjury so long as it was veiled by some technical evasion of the law. Jesus condemned their practices, declaring that their custom in oath taking was a transgression of the commandment of God. Our Saviour did not, however, forbid the use of the judicial oath, in which God is solemnly called to witness that what is said is truth and nothing but the truth.’

**Confutation**

Jesus Christ said: ‘Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one’ (Matthew 5:33-37 – NKJV).
James, the Lord’s brother, confirmed the words of Jesus, saying: “But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth, or with any other oath. But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No,’ lest you fall into judgement” (James 5:12 – NKJV).

In the light of these Bible verses, we say that it is never right to swear. How can someone swear to tell the truth at a given moment and thereby imply that at other times he might not? A Christian tells the truth all the time! Thus he does not need to swear he will tell the truth. The Bible makes the judicial oath both unnecessary and wrong for the Christian. Let no one deceive you with empty words.

**It is lawful for a Christian to swear an oath falsely (that is, with mental reservation)**

According to the Roman Catholic doctrine on lying, on certain circumstances a man is allowed to swear an oath falsely, that is, with mental reservation. I will explain to you what that means by quoting some words taken from the encyclical *Non abbiamo bisogno* written by Pope Pius XI in 1931 during the Fascist regime in Italy: ‘You ask us, Venerable Brethren, in view of what has taken place, what is to be thought about the formula of the oath, which even little boys and girls are obliged to take, that they will execute orders without discussion from an authority which, as we have seen and experienced, can give orders against all truth and justice and in disregard of the rights of the Church and its souls, which are already by their very nature sacred and inviolable. Takers of this oath must swear to serve with all their strength, even to the shedding of blood, the cause of a revolution which snatches the young from the Church and from Jesus Christ, and which inculcates in its own young people hatred, violence and irreverence without respecting (as recent occurrences have superabundantly proved) even the person of the Pope. When the question is posed in such terms, the answer from the Catholic point of view, as well as from a simply human point of view, is inevitably only one, and We, Venerable Brethren, do not wish to do otherwise than confirm the answer already given. Such an oath, as it stands, is unlawful. Faced as We are by grave anxieties, which We know are also yours, Venerable Brethren, especially those of you who are Bishops in Italy, We are preoccupied first of all by the fact that so many of our children, young boys and girls, are inscribed and have taken membership with that oath. We deeply pity so many consciences tortured by doubts (torments and doubts concerning which We have incontrovertible evidence) precisely because of that oath as it has been interpreted, especially after the recent occurrences. Realizing the many difficulties of the present hour and knowing that membership in the party and the oath are for countless persons a necessary condition of their career, of their daily bread, and even of their life itself, We have sought to find a way which would restore tranquillity to these consciences, reducing to a minimum the external difficulties of the situation. It seems to Us that such a means for those who have already received the membership card would be to make for themselves before God, in their own consciences, a reservation such as “Saving the laws of God and of the Church” or “In accordance with the duties of a good Christian,” with the firm proposal to declare also externally such a reservation if the need of it arose. We would desire that Our prayer may move those chiefs of the party who decide its policy and give the orders. It is the prayer of a Father who is jealous for the consciences of so many of his children. Let the reservation just mentioned be included in the oath-formula. Better still, let the oath be dropped, seeing that an oath is an act of religion and that it is out of place on the membership-cards of a political party’ (56-60).

In other words, the pope said to the Italian Roman Catholics: ‘Since you need the membership card of the Fascist party in order to make a career for yourselves and to get your daily bread, and if you do not take the oath prescribed by the Fascist regime you can’t get that card, you are allowed to take the oath prescribed by the Fascist regime, even though that oath is wrong. However, you must take that oath with mental reservation.’ The oath which had to be taken by
everybody at that time was as follows: ‘I swear I will execute the orders of the Duce (the Chief, that is, Benito Mussolini) without discussion, and I will defend with all my strength, and if necessary even with my blood, the cause of the fascist revolution.’

Confutation

To swear an oath with mental reservation is to swear falsely for he who swears an oath with mental reservation swears with the firm intention of breaking his oath for he adds to his oath a mental reservation which – according to him - in due time will enable him to break the oath. The law says: “Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:12 – NIV). As you can see, the law condemns those who swear falsely. God will be a swift witness against perjurers (cf. Malachi 3:5).
STATUES AND IMAGES

The venerable and holy images should be set forth in the places of worship, in houses and by the wayside in order to be honored and revered

The Second Council of Nicaea (787 A.D.) stated the following things about the so called holy images: ‘We, therefore, following the royal pathway and the divinely inspired authority of our Holy Fathers and the traditions of the Catholic Church (for, as we all know, the Holy Spirit indwells her), define with all certitude and accuracy that just as the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross, so also the venerable and holy images, as well in painting and mosaic as of other fit materials, should be set forth in the holy churches of God, and on the sacred vessels and on the vestments and on hangings and in pictures both in houses and by the wayside, to wit, the figure of our Lord God and Saviour Jesus Christ, of our spotless Lady, the Mother of God, of the honourable Angels, of all Saints and of all pious people. For by so much more frequently as they are seen in artistic representation, by so much more readily are men lifted up to the memory of their prototypes, and to a longing after them; and to these should be given due salutation and honourable reverence (aspasmon kai timhtikhn proskunh-sin), not indeed that true worship of faith (latreian) which pertains alone to the divine nature; but to these, as to the figure of the precious and life-giving Cross and to the Book of the Gospels and to the other holy objects, incense and lights may be offered according to ancient pious custom. For the honour which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents, and he who reveres the image reveres in it the subject represented. For thus the teaching of our holy Fathers, that is the tradition of the Catholic Church, which from one end of the earth to the other hath received the Gospel, is strengthened’ (The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church, trans H. R. Percival, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 2nd Series, ed. P. Schaff and H. Wace, (repr. Grand Rapids MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1955), XIV, page 550)

Confutation

God forbids us to make for ourselves any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth, and also to bow down before them and to serve them. For it is written: “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments” (Exodus 20:4-6).

Therefore, in the light of what the Word of God says, the so called holy images spoken of in the decree of the Council of Nicaea are nothing but idols, and the honour which is paid to these images is nothing but idolatry. No matter how is called this honour paid to the images, it is idolatry in the sight of God. So, brethren, keep yourselves from idols and flee from idolatry, lest you provoke the Lord to jealousy and to wrath.

Do not become idolaters as many of the children of Israel were in the wilderness, as it is written: “And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in
the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them unto me. And all the people brake off the golden earrings which were in their ears, and brought them unto Aaron. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And when Aaron saw it, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made proclamation, and said, To morrow is a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play” (Exodus 32.1-6).

Hold fast the Word of God, and continue to worship God in spirit and truth for “those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24 – NKJV). Let no one deceive you with empty words.

I conclude by saying this: if you have some so called holy statues and images in your houses or places of worship I urge you to destroy them.
MARK OF THE BEAST

Denominationalism is the mark of the beast

William Marrion Branham taught that denominationalism is the mark of the beast spoken of in the book of Revelation. Here is what he said in his sermon called The Ten Virgins And The 144,000: ‘And he had power to give life unto the image... (Now, that is, unto the Protestant churches, the Protestant churches.)... The image of the beast, the Protestant denomination, not the Catholic .... Jesus died; you don't have to serve sin no more. You don't have to be bowed down to creeds and denominations. "He who the Son has made free is free indeed." If you want to go free and be free in the Son, cut loose from all things and serve Him. Come on. Amen. But if you don't want to, then your organization, your master, whoever you're serving, will put a mark on your ear and you won't be able to hear it anymore. If God ever speaks to your heart to "Come, this is the time," and you refuse it, then you receive his mark, hardened from the truth. There's the seal of the Devil, mark of the beast. You see? What does the mark of the beast do? Puts you right back to Romanism, denominationalism, and you'll never come in and be free: serve that forever. There's the mark of the beast' (Excerpted from his message called The Ten Virgins And The 144,000, which he delivered on Sunday morning, 11th December 1960 at the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana, U.S.A.). And here is what he said in his sermon called Broken Cisterns: ‘That's a whole lot like our churches today. I think that we have left... One of the great sins that the church has done today, just like Israel then, it left Him, the Fountain of living Water, and has hewed themselves out manmade cisterns. And it become a habitation of everything that loves that kind of water. Lizards, frogs, and all kinds of unclean gems live in it, because it's a manmade tank; and in this tank these things stay. A perfect example of our denominations today. "Now," you say, "Brother Branham, why do you strike at those people so hard?" It ought to be struck at. It's got to be struck at. Flee it, because it will finally form the mark of the beast. Remember, that is the Truth. It will be the mark of the beast; denomination will lead right to it. It's on its road right there now to force by power... Look, in the old Roman empire that's exactly what led them to that mark of an apostasy. You found out that no man could buy or sell without the mark of the beast. He had to have it. There's only two classes of people will be on the earth; those with the Seal of God, and those with the mark of the beast, only two classes. So you'll have to have one or the other. And it'll be an apostasy, a--a mark of--of religion, apostate religion. And it's going to have a image unto the beast. As we study we find out that Rome was, is, and always will be the--or the beast. Exactly. There's no way to get anything else. Rome... And what did Rome do? Was converted from pagan Rome unto papal Rome and organized a system, a universal system, that forced everybody to that one religion or be put to death. And it's a strange thing that this United States appears on the scene, and it's a--like a lamb. And a lamb has two small horns, civil and ecclesiastical rites. And after while when that was a lamb, we found out that it spoke then like a dragon and exercised all the power the dragon had before it. And the Bible tells us that they said, "Let us make a image unto the beast." A image is something like something else. And we can see it right now that in its apostate condition the church is forming the World Council of Churches, which is the image to the power of Rome, and will force upon the people the same thing that pagan Rome done--or papal Rome did. So there's no other way, no other thing, but that is the Truth. And that's why I'm striking it in my age, in my time, is because it's got to be struck at. The call come to "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins." Now, I'm liking that to these dirty, filthy cisterns. He is the Fountain of Life; He is the living Waters. And men leave that and dig for themselves cisterns which can only catch the filth. That's the only thing it can catch. And that's what denominationalism does; it catches everything that comes along, that wants to join. They're
willing to take it in if it's got some money or can dress in a certain way. No matter who they are, where they come from, they take them anyhow' (Excerpted from his sermon called *Broken Cisterns* which he delivered on Sunday evening, 26th July 1964 at the Branham Tabernacle in Jeffersonville, Indiana, U.S.A.)

**Confutation**

Here is what the apostle John wrote about the mark of the beast, which the false prophet will cause many people to receive on their right hand or on their foreheads: “And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.” (Revelation 13:11-18). As you can see, the mark of the beast is the name of the beast or the number of his name (that is, 666) which will allow those who will receive it to buy or sell.

God warns us not to receive the mark of the beast, for it is written: “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9-11 - NKJV). In the light of the Scripture, therefore, the mark of the beast has nothing to do with denominationalism. Brothers and sisters, beware of the followers of William Marrion Branham, who through this false teaching on the mark of the beast want to frighten you and to cause you to forsake your Church and to follow the teachings of Branham, who claimed to be the last messenger of God but he actually was a false prophet for he rejected the Trinity, he taught that Eve had sexual intercourse with that old serpent, he taught that God wrote three Bibles (the first was the Zodiac, the second was the pyramid, and the third the one we have on paper), and he taught many other heretical teachings. I say it again, beware of them, for they are deceivers of minds and idle talkers.

**Sunday-keeping is the mark of the beast**

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church teaches that the time is coming when those who will keep Sunday will receive the mark of the beast, for Sunday-keeping is the mark of the beast. Ellen Gould White, the prophetess of the Adventist Church, whose writings are regarded by Adventists as inspired writings, in her book *The Great Controversy* wrote: 'What then is the change of the Sabbath, but the sign, or mark, of the authority of the Roman Church--"the mark of the beast"? The Roman Church has not relinquished her claim to supremacy; and when the world and the Protestant churches accept a sabbath of her creating, while they reject the Bible Sabbath, they virtually admit this assumption. They may claim the authority of tradition and of
the Fathers for the change; but in so doing they ignore the very principle which separates them from Rome—that "the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants." The papist can see that they are deceiving themselves, willingly closing their eyes to the facts in the case. As the movement for Sunday enforcement gains favor, he rejoices, feeling assured that it will eventually bring the whole Protestant world under the banner of Rome. Romanists declare that "the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the [Catholic] Church."--Mgr. Segur, Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today, page 213. The enforcement of Sundaykeeping on the part of Protestant churches is an enforcement of the worship of the papacy--of the beast. Those who, understanding the claims of the fourth commandment, choose to observe the false instead of the true Sabbath are thereby paying homage to that power by which alone it is commanded. But in the very act of enforcing a religious duty by secular power, the churches would themselves form an image to the beast; hence the enforcement of Sundaykeeping in the United States would be an enforcement of the worship of the beast and his image. But Christians of past generations observed the Sunday, supposing that in so doing they were keeping the Bible Sabbath; and there are now true Christians in every church, not excepting the Roman Catholic communion, who honestly believe that Sunday is the Sabbath of divine appointment. God accepts their sincerity of purpose and their integrity before Him. But when Sunday observance shall be enforced by law, and the world shall be enlightened concerning the obligation of the true Sabbath, then whoever shall transgress the command of God, to obey a precept which has no higher authority than that of Rome, will thereby honor popery above God. He is paying homage to Rome and to the power which enforces the institution ordained by Rome. He is worshipping the beast and his image. As men then reject the institution which God has declared to be the sign of His authority, and honor in its stead that which Rome has chosen as the token of her supremacy, they will thereby accept the sign of allegiance to Rome--"the mark of the beast." And it is not until the issue is thus plainly set before the people, and they are brought to choose between the commandments of God and the commandments of men, that those who continue in transgression will receive "the mark of the beast." (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation, [Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950. Revised edition first published, 1911], pages 448-449)

Confutation

Here is what the apostle John wrote about the mark of the beast, which the false prophet will cause many people to receive on their right hand or on their foreheads: "And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him that hath understanding count the number of the beast: for it is the number of a man; and his number is Six hundred threescore and six.” (Revelation 13:11-18). As you can see, the mark of the beast is the name of the beast or the number of his name (that is, 666) which will allow those who will receive it to buy or sell. God warns us not to receive the mark of the beast, for it is written: "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives his mark on his forehead or on his hand, he himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation.

412
He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9-11). In the light of the Scripture, therefore, the mark of the beast has nothing to do with Sunday-keeping.
MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BIBLE

Adam

Adam was as much female as he was male

Kenneth Copeland teaches the following doctrine about Adam: ‘Adam was made in the image of God. He was as much female as he was male. He was exactly like God. Then God separated him and removed the female part. Woman means ‘man with the womb.’ Eve had as much authority as Adam did as long as they stayed together.” (Sensitivity of Heart, KCP Publications, 1984, p. 23). This teaching is taught also by many Jews who affirm that Adam was androgynous, (that is, partly male and partly female in appearance) – the word androgynous comes from Greek androgunos (andr ‘man’ + gune ‘woman’), and then God separated the female part from the male part. In order to support this teaching the following verse “Male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27 – NIV) is quoted.

Confutation

According to the Holy Scripture, Adam, the first man, was not an androgynous being, and Eve, the first woman, did not come into existence by separating Adam or removing his female part, for God made the woman from one of the ribs of man. Here is what the Scripture says about the creation of both man and woman: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. ….. And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. ….. And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:7, 18, 21, 22-23).

Therefore, I exhort you to repudiate the above mentioned false teaching. I would like to point out to you the following thing: since Copeland says: ‘Adam was made in the image of God. He was as much female as he was male. He was exactly like God’, this means that after the female part was removed from him man was no longer made in the image of God. Don’t you think so? However the Scripture teaches that man is still made in the image of God. What does the Scripture mean then when it affirms: “Male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27 – NIV)? It means that God created both man and woman, for He created man first and afterward He created the woman. The apostle Paul confirms this when he says: “For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man” (1 Corinthians 11:8-9 – NIV).

Beloved, let no one deceive you with empty words.

Adam was God manifested in the flesh

Kenneth Copeland has affirmed: “God’s reason for creating Adam was His desire to reproduce Himself. I mean a reproduction of Himself, and in the Garden of Eden He did just that. He was not a little like God. He was not almost like God. He was not subordinate to God even. … Adam
is as much like God as you could get, just the same as Jesus. ... Adam, in the Garden of Eden, was God manifested in the flesh.” (Following the Faith of Abraham I, 1989 audiotape, #01-3001, side 1)

Confutation

According to the Holy Scripture, Adam was not ‘God manifested in the flesh.’ For he was just a human being which was made by God in His image and likeness. Paul calls Adam “the first man” (1 Corinthians 15:45 – NKJV), so let’s call Adam in this way. The only man of whom it can be said that he was ‘God manifested in the flesh’ is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For before He came into this world He was in heaven with God and was God, as it is written: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God…… And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:1-2.14). Instead, Adam, before he came into existence in this world, was not in heaven with God nor was he God. He simply did not exist.

Let no one deceive you with empty words.

Adam was able to fly

Benny Hinn has affirmed: ‘Adam was a super being when God created him. I don’t know whether people know this, but he was the first Superman that really ever lived. First of all, the Scriptures declare clearly that he had dominion over the fowls of the air, the fish of the sea - which means he used to fly. Of course, how can he have dominion over the birds and not be able to do what they do? The word "dominion" in the Hebrew clearly declares that if you have dominion over a subject, that you do everything that subject does. In other words, that subject, if it does something you cannot do, you don’t have dominion over it. I’ll prove it further. Adam not only flew, he flew to space. He was-with one thought he would be on the moon’ (Benny Hinn, Praise the Lord program on TBN, December 26, 1991)

Confutation

According to the Holy Scripture, Adam was not a super being when God created him, but a human being like us, therefore he was not able to fly. You may ask then, ‘How could he have dominion over the birds if he did not fly?’ The answer is this: he could have dominion over the birds of the air, even though he did not fly, because in order to have dominion over the birds of the air, he did not need to be able to do everything the birds of the air did, but he simply needed to have more power or more intelligence than them. And Adam was more powerful and intelligent than the birds of the air.

That’s why man is still able to have dominion over the birds of the air, even though he is not able to fly; because he is more powerful and intelligent than the birds of the air. Man, therefore, is able to rule over the birds of the air. He can catch them, he can kill them, he can tame them. Furthermore, remember that after the flood God said to Noah and his sons: “And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be on every beast of the earth, on every bird of the air, on all that move on the earth, and on all the fish of the sea. They are given into your hand” (Genesis 9:2 – NKJV). That’s why the birds of the air are afraid of man.

In the days of the apostles, men were not able to fly, yet James said: “Every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind” (James 3:7 – NKJV). This means that in the days of the apostles, even though men did not fly, men had dominion over the birds of the air for at that time every kind of bird was tamed by mankind.
**Adam was deceived by Satan in the garden of Eden**

Ellen G. White, the prophetess of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, taught that Satan deceived Adam. Here are her words: “Satan, who is the father of lies, deceived Adam in a similar way, telling him that he need not obey God, that he would not die if he transgressed the law” (Evangelism, page 598).

**Confutation**

According to the Scripture, it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan but Eve, for after Adam and Eve sinned, Adam said to God: “The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the three, and I ate” (Genesis 3:12 – NKJV) while Eve said to God: “The serpent deceived me, and I ate” (Genesis 3:13 – NKJV). This is confirmed by Paul who says to Timothy: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (1 Timothy 2:14 – NKJV), and to the Corinthians: “But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:3 – NKJV).

**Mary, the mother of Jesus**

**Mary was born without sin**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary was conceived without sin, that is to say, she was born sinless. Here is what the dogma of the Immaculate Conception confesses, as Pope Pius IX proclaimed in 1854: The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin.[Pius IX, Ineffabilis Deus]

**Confutation**

“All have sinned” (Romans 3:23), Paul says, and thus among that ‘all’ is also Mary because sin through Adam entered into the world and passed upon all men. Paul says also that through one man’s offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation (Romans 5:18). That Mary was born with sin was confirmed by Mary herself when in the song she sang unto God, while she was staying at the house of Zechariah, she recognized that God was her Saviour: hear her words: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour” (Luke 1:46-47). If she were born without sin and lived a sinless life – as Roman Catholics claim - how could she call God her Saviour? Don’t you think that if she had been without sin and lived a sinless life she would not have called God her Saviour?

But there is another biblical proof that confirms what we are saying, which is the sacrifice that Joseph and Mary offered in the temple when they presented the child Jesus to the Lord, as it is written: “And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord: (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two
young pigeons” (Luke 2:22-24); in that one of those animals offered to God was offered for the sin of Mary, for according to the law of Moses it was in that way that the iniquity of the woman (who had given birth to a child) had to be expiated. Here is what the Law says with regard to what the woman had to offer when the days of her purification were fulfilled: “And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled, for a son, or for a daughter, she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, unto the priest: Who shall offer it before the LORD, and make an atonement for her; and she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female. And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean” (Leviticus 12:6-8). As for Mary, since she was poor, were offered two turtledoves or two young pigeons. Now I ask you this question: ‘If Mary had been without sin, don’t you think she would not have needed to offer that sin offering?’ Therefore, the fact that she offered a sin offering confirms that she was not born without sin and also that she did sin during her life.

One more thing, the apostle John, who knew personally Jesus Christ, in his first epistle says: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1.8). Therefore, no believer could say at that time, that he or she had no sin, and we are sure that Mary, the mother of Jesus, never said such a think. I think that Roman Catholics, by saying that Mary was born without sin and lived a sinless life, make God a liar, for His Word states that only Jesus was born without sin because He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and only Him lived a sinless life. Therefore, we believe only in the Immaculate Conception of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The so called Immaculate Conception of Mary is a lie conceived by the devil and through that lie the devil keeps many people attached to the cult of Mary, which is idolatry in God’s sight.

Mary was a virgin only at the time of conception, not at Jesus’ birth

Victor Paul Wierwille denied the virgin birth of Jesus, ‘If it is said a virgin shall bring forth a son your Bible would fall to pieces. It says plainly that Mary was a virgin only at the time of conception, not at Jesus’ birth; the theory of virgin birth has been a theological assumption and erroneous teaching. The Bible said in verse 20 that God told Joseph, ‘Take unto thee thy wife’ when Joseph took her unto himself he lived with her as a husband lives with a wife. She was a virgin when she conceived by God, but when Joseph took her unto himself she was no longer a virgin. The divine conception made Mary no longer a virgin’ (The Way Magazine, Dec. 1970, p. 6).

Confutation

The Scripture says: “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, and angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.’ So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: ‘Behold, the virgin shall be filled with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel,’ which is translated, ‘God with us.’ Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the
angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus” (Matthew 1:18-25 - NKJV).

Note that the prophet (Isaiah) foretold that the mother of Jesus would be a virgin both at the time of conception and at the time of the birth of Jesus, for he said: “Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son ……” (Matthew 1:23). Therefore, since we know that when the fullness of the time had come the words of the prophet were fulfilled, Mary remained a virgin till she had given birth to Jesus. That Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus is evident from the following words written by Matthew: “Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son” (Matthew 1:24-25).

Mary, after giving birth to Jesus, remained virgin till her death

The Roman Catholic Church teaches the perpetual virginity of Mary; thus it denies that she had other children besides Jesus. ‘The deepening of faith in the virginal motherhood led the Church to confess Mary's real and perpetual virginity even in the act of giving birth to the Son of God made man. In fact, Christ's birth "did not diminish his mother's virginal integrity but sanctified it." And so the liturgy of the Church celebrates Mary as Aeiparthenos, the "Ever-virgin" (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 499).

Confutation

Mary did not remain a virgin after the birth of Jesus, because the Bible teaches that Joseph and Mary did have sexual union after Jesus was born, and she gave birth to other children. Matthew says that Joseph “took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS” (Matthew 1:24,25). That means that Joseph, after Mary gave birth to Jesus, knew her. Note that it is not written that he never knew her after he took Mary home as his wife, but that he knew her not till she had brought forth Jesus. Thus, after the birth of Jesus, Joseph knew his wife Mary. But let me show you from the Scriptures that Jesus was not the only son Mary gave birth to, for she conceived and gave birth to other children.

- Luke says that “she brought forth her firstborn son” (Luke 2:7), thus if Jesus were her only son he would be called her only begotten son and not her firstborn son.
- Mark says: “And he went out from thence, and came into his own country; and his disciples follow him. And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From whence hath this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given unto him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended at him” (Mark 6:1-3)
- Mark says: “There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing without, sent unto him, calling him” (Mark 3:31).
- John says: “For neither did his brethren believe in him” (John 7:5).
- Luke says in the Acts: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren” (Acts 1:14).
- Paul says to the Corinthians: “Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” (1 Corinthians 9:5).
- Paul says to the Galatians: “Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother” (Gal. 1:18-19).
The 69th Psalm says about the Christ: "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children" (Psalm 69:8). Therefore, the Scripture even foretold that the virgin who would conceive and give birth to the Christ of God would not remain a virgin because she would give birth to other sons, as the Spirit of Christ said through David: "I am become an alien unto my mother's children".

Mary was the first person to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection

The late pope John Paul II made the following statement: ‘It is lawful to believe that likely the first person to whom the risen Jesus appeared was his mother’ (Corriere della Sera [The Evening Courier], 22.5.97, page 15)

Confutation

The Scripture says that the first person to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection was Mary Magdalene, as it is written: “Now when Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, he appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom he had cast seven devils [demons]. And she went and told them that had been with him, as they mourned and wept” (Mark 16:9-10).

Mary rose again and was taken up into heaven

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary died and was raised from the dead and taken up into heaven. ‘Finally the Immaculate Virgin, preserved free from all stain of original sin, when the course of her earthly life was finished, was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory, and exalted by the Lord as Queen over all things, so that she might be the more fully conformed to her Son, the Lord of lords and conqueror of sin and death.’ The Assumption of the Blessed Virgin is a singular participation in her Son's Resurrection and an anticipation of the resurrection of other Christians’ (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 966)

Confutation

We can affirm that Mary died and her soul went to heaven to be with the Lord, but we can by no means affirm that she died, was raised from the dead, and taken up body and soul into heaven. Mary is in heaven and there she – as well as all the other saints - is waiting for the resurrection, as the apostle Paul said: “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order; Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming” (1 Corinthians 15:22-23 – NKJV). Mary also is Christ's, therefore she also will be raised from the dead at the coming of Christ.

Mary makes intercession for us

The Catechism of the Catholic Church declares that Mary makes intercession for us ‘This motherhood of Mary in the order of grace continues uninterruptedly from the consent which she loyally gave at the Annunciation and which she sustained without wavering beneath the cross,
until the eternal fulfilment of all the elect. Taken up to heaven she did not lay aside this saving office but by her manifold intercession continues to bring us the gifts of eternal salvation.... Therefore the Blessed Virgin is invoked in the Church under the titles of Advocate, Helper, Benefactress, and Mediatrix’ (969). ‘We believe that the Holy Mother of God, the new Eve, Mother of the Church, continues in heaven to exercise her maternal role on behalf of the members of Christ’ (975).

Confutation

The Scripture states that “there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5 – NKJV), and also that “He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25 - NKJV). As you can see there is only one mediator between God and us, his name is Jesus Christ, and the intercession made by Him in heaven for us is sufficient, for it is written that He can save us to the uttermost.

Mary is in heaven, for when she died she went to heaven to be with the Lord, but there she does not pray for us rather she praises God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. To believe that Mary makes intercession for us means to believe a lie conceived by the devil in order to lead many people to call upon Mary rather than the Lord Jesus Christ, and to rely on her inexistent intercession rather than on the true and constant intercession made by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ at the right hand of God the Father through which every believer can be saved to the uttermost.

If you are a Roman Catholic, you must understand that in order to come to Jesus you don’t need to come to Mary first, for you can come directly to Jesus Christ for He said: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28), and through Jesus Christ you can come to God the Father. Therefore call upon the name of Jesus Christ, He can hear you, He is ready to save you from your sins and to help you, and He will reveal to you the Father. Mary can do nothing for you, on the contrary Jesus can do everything for you if you call on His name. Stop praying to Mary immediately and call on the name of Jesus in truth and in faith: I assure you that He will answer your prayer.

Mary is the mother of God

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary is the mother of God: ‘Called in the Gospels “the mother of Jesus”, Mary is acclaimed by Elizabeth, at the prompting of the Spirit and even before the birth of her son, as “the mother of my Lord”.[144] In fact, the One whom she conceived as man by the Holy Spirit, who truly became her Son according to the flesh, was none other than the Father's eternal Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity. Hence the Church confesses that Mary is truly “Mother of God” (Theotokos)’ (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 495).

Confutation

We can call Mary ‘the mother of Jesus’ but we can’t call her ‘the mother of God’ because no one called her in that way in the days of Jesus nor in the days of the apostles. Mary was just a creature of God. Of course she was chosen by God to give birth to the Son of God, however you should keep in mind that the Word which was made flesh, that is, the Son of God, was with God and was God before God created all things, therefore even before Mary was born, and even before the Son of God was born, according to the flesh, of Mary, for He was with God the Father before the foundation of the world. Moreover you should keep in mind that since all things were made through the Word, Mary also was created through the Word thus she can’t be called ‘the
mother of God’ but she must be called ‘the mother of Jesus’. We may even call her ‘the mother of our Lord’, for that’s how Elizabeth called Mary, but we can’t call her ‘the mother of God’ because no one called her in that way while Jesus was on earth, nor after He was taken up into heaven. Luke, who wrote the Acts of the apostles, calls Mary ‘the mother of Jesus’ (Acts 1:14 – NKJV), even though he believed that Jesus was God, therefore we ought to follow the example of Luke. To call Mary ‘the mother of God’ is wrong, because in this way one exalts Mary above all other creatures, and leads people to believe that Mary was the mother of the Creator, while she was just “the maidservant of the Lord” (Luke 1:38 – NKJV). No wonder that in the Roman Catholic Church Mary is regarded as a sort of Goddess who is all-powerful like the Son of God, or rather, more powerful than Him. And no wonder that the Roman Catholics worship Mary and pray continually to her thinking that she can do anything for them.

To sum up, even though Jesus was the Word made flesh, and thus, God with us, we must call Mary ‘the mother of Jesus’ or at most ‘the mother of our Lord’, but far be it from us to call her ‘the mother of God’ for that’s not a name given to her by the Scripture.

Mary is the Mother of the Church

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the mother of the Church:

‘Since the Virgin Mary's role in the mystery of Christ and the Spirit has been treated, it is fitting now to consider her place in the mystery of the Church. “The Virgin Mary... is acknowledged and honored as being truly the Mother of God and of the redeemer.... She is ‘clearly the mother of the members of Christ’... since she has by her charity joined in bringing about the birth of believers in the Church, who are members of its head.’ ‘Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of the Church’. (The Catechism of the Catholic Church, 963)

Confutation

According to the Scripture, the mother of the Church is not Mary but the Jerusalem above, for Paul says to the Galatians: “But the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written: Rejoice, O barren, you who do not bear! Break forth and shout, you who are not in labor! For the desolate has many more children than she who has a husband” (Galatians 4:26-27 – NKJV).

Peter says that Sarah, the wife of Abraham, is the mother of the Christian women, as he says to them: “You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear” (1 Peter 3:6 – NIV).

Judas Iscariot

Dogs ate Judas’ remains

Ellen Gould White, the prophetess of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, wrote about the death of Judas Iscariot: ‘His weight had broken the cord by which he had hanged himself to the tree. In falling, his body had been horribly mangled, and dogs were now devouring it. His remains were immediately buried out of sight’ (Desire of Ages, p. 722).
Confutation

To say that dogs devoured the remains of Judas Iscariot is to affirm something which is not written at all in the Holy Scripture. Let us see what the Scripture says about the death of Judas. Matthew wrote: “Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in. Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; And gave them for the potter’s field, as the Lord appointed me” (Matthew 27:3-10). And Luke wrote: “And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,) Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take” (Acts 1:15-20).

As you can see, no dog ate Judas’ remains.

Unfortunately Ellen White was accustomed to adding to the Scriptures things which were nothing but the fruit of her imagination. Her writings, which the Adventists consider divinely inspired, contain many lies like the above mentioned one. Therefore, beware of all those who consider her writings inspired.

Moses

**Moses did not die, but was translated and taken into heaven**

Mormons teach that Moses did not die but he was translated and taken into heaven. Here is what we read in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism: “Along with Elijah, he returned to the mount of transfiguration spoke with Christ, and bestowed certain keys of the priesthood upon the chief apostles. Because he needed a body of flesh and bones to perform this errand and because the resurrection was yet forthcoming, Moses was translated and taken into heaven, like Enoch and Elijah …” (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 2, page 959).

Confutation

First of all, let me tell you that when Elijah and Moses appeared on the holy mountain they did not bestow the keys of the priesthood upon the apostles Peter, James and John.

As for Moses, the Scripture does not teach that Moses was translated and taken into heaven like Enoch and Elijah, but it teaches that Moses saw death, as it is written: “And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan, And all Naphtali, and the land of
Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar. And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I sware unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither. So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day. And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses. And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel” (Deuteronomy 34:1-12). To confirm that Moses died I remember you that God said to Joshua: “Moses, my servant is dead” (Joshua 1:2) and that in the epistle of Jude we read as follows: “Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” (Jude 9)

John the beloved

**The apostle John did not die**

Mormons teach that the apostle John did not die but was given power over death. Here is what we read in the *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*: ‘Later, the Lord told Peter that John would remain (on earth) until the Lord’s second coming, giving rise to the early Christian tradition that John did not die. The prophet Joseph Smith confirmed and corrected that tradition in a revelation that states that John, having been given ‘power over death’, remains on earth as flaming fire and a ministering angel…. For those who shall be heirs of salvation’ until the Saviour returns (D & C 7). The resurrected Christ also mentioned John’s continued earthly ministry during his visit to the people of the Book of Mormon (Encyclopedia of Mormonism, New York-Toronto 1992, vol. 2, page 758). According to the ‘revelation’ of Joseph Smith, the power over death was given by the Lord to John because John asked the Lord for it, as we read in *Doctrine and Covenants*: ‘And the Lord said unto me, John, my beloved, what desirest thou? For if you shall ask what you will, it shall be granted unto you. And I said unto him: Lord, give unto me power of death, that I may live and bring souls unto thee. And the Lord said unto me: Verily, verily, I say unto thee, because thou desirest this thou shall tarry until I come in my glory, and shall prophesy before nations, kindreds, tongues and people’ (D & C 7:1-3. This revelation is a translated version of the record made on parchment by John and hidden up by himself).

Confutation

The Scripture teaches that the apostle John did die, for it is written: “So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou
knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedest whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me. Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper, and said, Lord, which is he that betrayeth thee? Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true” (John 21:15-24). As you can see, Jesus did not say to John that he would not die but he said to him a different thing. That John did not receive power over death is confirmed by the fact that before His death Jesus had said to John and his brother James: “Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized” (Mark 10:39).

In the light of the above mentioned Scriptures I affirm, therefore, that the above mentioned revelation of Joseph Smith is a false revelation; reject it for it has nothing to do with the truth.

Paul

**Paul learned the Gospel from men**

Ellen Gould White wrote: ‘Paul must receive instruction in the Christian faith and move accordingly. Christ sends him to the very disciples whom he had been so bitterly persecuting, to learn of them. ... Now Paul was in a condition to learn of those whom God had ordained to teach the truth. Christ directs Paul to His chosen servants, thus placing him in connection with His church. The very men whom Paul was purposing to destroy were to be his instructors in the very religion that he had despised and persecuted’ (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 430).

**Confutation**

The Scripture does not teach such a thing, rather it teaches that the apostle Paul received the Gospel by revelation from Jesus Christ. Here is what Paul wrote to the Galatians: “But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus. Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother. Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not” (Galatians 1:11-20). As you can see, when Paul was converted he did not consult any man, nor did he go to see the apostles of the Lord, but he went immediately into Arabia. However, Paul received from Jesus by revelation also the various teachings he delivered to the saints, because, for instance, when he wrote to the Corinthians about the Lord’s Supper He said to them: “For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night
he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me’. In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying: ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me’ (1 Corinthians 11:23-25 – NIV).

Jews-Israelites

Anglo-Israelism

Anglo-Israelism is a theory which affirms that the Anglo-Saxons are the descendants of the ‘lost’ ten tribes of Israel, that is, those tribes of Israel which were carried away captive to Assyria in the eighth century before Christ. The first person who seems to have held this theory was a man named Richard Brothers (1757-1824). In 1822 Brothers published his ‘Correct Account of the Invasion of England by the Saxons. Showing the English Nation to be Descendants of the Lost Ten Tribes.’ Anglo-Israelism is held by many people all over the world, among whom are the followers of Herbert W. Armstrong.

Now let me expound briefly this theory. After the death of king Solomon the kingdom of Israel was divided into two kingdoms: the northern Kingdom (formed by ten tribes of Israel) which was called ‘the house of Israel’ or ‘the kingdom of Israel’, and the southern Kingdom (formed by the tribes of Judah and Benjamin) which was called ‘the house of Judah’ or ‘the kingdom of Judah.’ In 721-718 before Christ God caused the house of Israel to be invaded and conquered by the kingdom of Assyria. These Israelites were removed from their farms and their cities and taken to Assyria on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea as slaves. The Israelites were all removed – completely (but the house of Judah - the Jews - was not invaded until 605 B.C.) Two or three generations after the captivity of Israel, however, the Chaldeans rose to world power. Under Nebuchadnezzar the Chaldeans (Babylon) invaded Judah (605-586 before Christ) and carried the Jews away to Babylon. None of the house of Israel dwelt in the land of Israel at the time of this captivity of Judah. The Assyrians - before 604 B.C. - left their land north of Babylon and migrated northwest - through the lands that are now Georgia, the Ukraine, Poland, and into the land that is called Germany today. Today the descendants of those Assyrians are known to us as the German people. The people of ten-tribed Israel also migrated northwest. Though the Assyrians had taken Israel into captivity, the Israelites did not remain as slaves of the Assyrians in Europe. They continued on a little further - into Western Europe (France, Belgium, Holland), the Scandinavian peninsula, and the British Isles – where they are to this day, except for the tribe of Manasseh, which much later migrated to North America and became the United States. They came to be known as the ‘lost ten tribes’ for they had lost their national identifying sign, that is, the Sabbath-day, as well as the Hebrew language. They lost their national identity, while the Jews did not lose it for they kept the Sabbath in Babylon as well the Hebrew language. However, in their migration of the Mediterranean area across Europe to the British isles, the ‘lost’ tribes left behind them landmarks, bearing names of the tribes. Thus, the Danube River and Danzig are clear indications of the tribe of Dan! To support Anglo-Israelism its proponents affirm that there is a connection between some customs, traditions and beliefs of the British Isles and some customs, traditions and beliefs of the Israelites. There is even a connection between the Anglo-Saxon tongue and the Hebrew language, which would confirm the Hebrew origins of the Anglo-Saxons! Herbert W. Armstrong, in order to prove that the Anglo-Saxons are the descendants of the Israelites who were carried away captive to Assyria, said the following things: ‘The house of Israel is the covenant people. The Hebrew word for covenant is beriyth, or berith .... The Hebrew word for man is iysh, or ish. In the original Hebrew language, vowels were never given in the spellings, so omitting the vowel e from berith, but retaining the i in its
Anglicized form to preserve the y sound, and you have the Anglicized Hebrew word for covenant, brith. The Hebrews, however, never pronounced their h’s. The Jew, even today, in pronouncing the name Shem will call it Sem. Incidentally, this ancient Hebrew trait is also a modern British trait, so the Hebrew word for covenant would be pronounced, in its Anglicized form as Brit. And the word for covenant man or covenant people would therefore be Brit-ish. So the true covenant people today are called the British. And they reside in the British Isles. To Abraham God said: ‘In Isaac shall thy seed be called,’ and this name is repeated in Romans 9:7, Hebrews 11:18. In Amos 7:16 they are called the ‘house of Israel.’ They are descended from Isaac, and therefore are Isaac’s sons. Drop the ‘i’ from Isaac, vowels are not used in Hebrew spelling, and we have the modern name, Saaic’s sons, or, as we have spelled it in shorter manner, Saxons’ (The United States and British Commonwealth in Prophecy, pages 17, 18). As for the return of the remnant to Jerusalem 70 years after the Judah’s captivity, the Anglo-Israelites affirm that those who returned to Israel to rebuild the Temple and restore worship were all of the house of Judah – that is, all Jews - all of those whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away.

In the light of all this, the terms ‘Jews’ and ‘Israelites’ are not two names for the same nation. Herbert Armstrong has stated: ‘We want to impress here that Israel and Judah are not two names for the same nation. They were and still are, and shall be until the Second Coming of Christ, two separate nations. The house of Judah always mean Jew. This distinction is vital if we are to understand prophecy. Because most so-called Bible students are ignorant of this basic distinction; they are unable rightly to understand prophecy! The next place where the term ‘Jew’ is mentioned in the Bible, the house of Israel had been driven out in captivity, lost from view, and the term only applies to those of the House of Judah. There are no exceptions in the Bible’ (Where Are the Ten Lost Tribes? Herbert W. Armstrong, page 8). In other words, Jews are Israelites, just as Californians are Americans. But most Israelites are not Jews, just as most Americans are not Californians. The Jews are the house of Judah only, a part of the Israelites. But when these people are spoken of as nations, rather than as collective individuals, the term ‘Israel’ never refers to the Jews. ‘House of Israel’ never means ‘Jews.’ Furthermore, since the Jews are the descendants of the tribe of Judah they are still under the divine curse, while the Israelites – that is, Ephraim and Manasseh - have been greatly blessed by God for they have inherited the unbreakable promises to Abraham of national greatness, resources, wealth and power. Manasseh (the United States of America) has become the world’s greatest single nation, while Ephraim (Great Britain) a great commonwealth of nations!

Confutation

The Scripture says that the Assyrians carried the Israelites captive to Assyria twice. The first time it was Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria (747-727 before Christ) who carried them captive, as it is written: “In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maacha, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria” (2 Kings 15:29 – NKJV), while the second time it was Shalmaneser (727-722), the successor of Tiglath-Pileser, as it written: “Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him; and Hosea became his vassal, and paid him tribute money ..... In the ninth year of Hosea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halab and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes” (2 Kings 17:3, 6 – NKJV – Actually it was his successor Sargon II – 722-705 - who carried the Israelites captive for Shalmaneser died while Samaria was being besieged by the Assyrian army). These passages of the Scriptures refer to the northern Kingdom (or the Kingdom of Israel), which was formed of ten tribes of Israel, and not to the southern Kingdom (or Kingdom of Judah), which was formed of the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, for the people of the southern Kingdom were carried away captive to Babylon by the Babylonian army in 606, in 597 and in 586, in the days of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon (606-561).
However, when the Scripture says that the people of the northern Kingdom were carried away captive to Assyria it does not mean that all the Israelites were removed, so that there were no more Israelites in the Kingdom of Israel, for the Scripture teaches that the kings of Assyria left some Israelites (just as the king of Babylon left some people in the Kingdom of Judah, as it is written: “… the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed to him men, women, children, and the poorest of the land who had not been carried away captive to Babylon …. Likewise, when all the Jews who were in Moab, among the Ammonites, in Edom, and who were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, then all the Jews returned out of all places where they had been driven, and came to the land of Judah ….” Jeremiah 40:7, 11-12 – NKJV). We deduce this from the following incident which happened in the Kingdom of Judah in the days of king Josiah (639-608), thus after the kings of Assyria had carried the Israelites captive to Assyria. It is written: “In the eighteenth year of his reign, when he had purged the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the Lord his God. When they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of God, which the Levites who kept the doors had gathered from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, from all the remnant of Israel, from all Judah and Benjamin, and which they had brought back to Jerusalem” (2 Chronicles 34:8-9 – NKJV). As you can see, the following words ‘from the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, from all the remnant of Israel’ show that even after the kings of Assyria had carried the Israelites captive to Assyria there were some Israelites in the northern Kingdom, for if there had been no Israelites in the Kingdom of Israel the Scripture would not have stated that in 621 B.C. (that is, 100 years after the last Assyrian captivity) there was a remnant of Israel (you must bear in mind that it was in the sixth year of king Hezekiah – 721 B.C. - that Shalmaneser had carried away the Israelites captive). In the light of what the Scripture says, therefore, the Anglo-Israelites are wrong when they affirm that all the Israelites were removed from the northern Kingdom, for a remnant of Israel was left in the Kingdom of Israel at the time of the second Assyrian captivity which took place in 721 before Christ. And as a result the Anglo-Israelism theory is wrong, for how could the Anglo-Saxons be the only true descendants of the Israelites who were carried away captive to Assyria if 100 years after the captivity, which had taken place in 721, there were still some Israelites in the northern Kingdom? Furthermore, it must be said that we can’t affirm that the so called lost ten tribes of Israel surged westward through Northern Europe and eventually became the British or some other European people for it is a well known fact that every time the Jews were carried away captive they kept their beliefs and customs in the countries where they had been carried. Thus it is absurd to think that the English people are the descendants of the Israelites carried captive to Assyria for they do not hold the Jewish beliefs nor do they follow the Jewish customs.

Let us see now if the Jews who returned from the Babylonian captivity must be called Jews, and not Israelites, for they belonged to the kingdom of Judah and not to the kingdom of Israel. In other words, let us see if after the Babylonian captivity returned only descendants of Judah and Benjamin to the land of Israel or also descendants of the other tribes of Israel who were in the kingdom of Babylon (which was the kingdom which arose after the Assyrian kingdom). According to the book of Ezra and the book of Nehemiah, those who returned to Israel after the Babylonian captivity can be called Jews and Israelites as well, and among the exiles who returned from Babylon to Israel there were also descendants of the ten tribes of Israel. In the book of Ezra it is written: “The priests, the Levites, the singers, the gatekeepers and the temple servants settled in their own towns, along with some of the other people, and the rest of the Israelites settled in their towns” (Ezra 2:70 – NIV), and again: “Some of the Israelites, including priests, Levites, singers, gatekeepers and temple servants, also came up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of King Artaxerxes” (Ezra 7:7 – NIV). That among the exiles who returned from captivity there were also some descendants of the ten tribes of Israel and not only descendants of the tribe of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin is evident from the fact that when they arrived in Jerusalem “they sacrificed burnt offerings to the God of Israel: twelve bulls for all Israel, ninety-
six rams, seventy-seven male lambs, and as a sin offering, twelve male goats” (Ezra 8:35 - NIV).

– Bear in mind that Ezra 2:70 refers to the return which occurred in 536 before Christ, while Ezra 7:7 and Ezra 8:35 refer to the return of the exiles which occurred in the year 457. In the book of Nehemiah it is written: “The priests, the Levites, the gatekeepers, the singers and the temple servants, along with certain of the people and the rest of the Israelites, settled in their own towns” (Nehemiah 7:73 – NIV – This passage is very similar to Ezra 2:70). Therefore, the fact that in the book of Ezra and in the book of Nehemiah the term ‘Jews’ and the term ‘Israelites’ are used alternately (cf. Ezra 3:1; 4:12; Nehemiah 1:2; 2:10: 11:20) to indicate the remnant shows that after the Babylonian captivity the difference between the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel ceased, thus the Jews were called Israelites, and the Israelites were called Jews: the two terms became synonymous. However, it shows also that among the exiles who returned from Babylon there were some people who were descendants of those Israelites who had been carried captive to Assyria in the days of king Hezekiah. – I remember you, however, that not all the exiles returned from the Assyrian captivity and the Babylonian captivity; that's why in the days of Jesus and of the apostles there were communities of Jews in the province of Asia, in Achaia, Egypt, Cyprus, Rome and in many other places around the Mediterranean sea. - The fact that after the Babylonian captivity the difference between the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel ceased (that difference began to exist in the days of king Rehoboam) was the fulfilment of the following words God spoke through the prophet Ezekiel: “Moreover, thou son of man, take thee one stick, and write upon it, For Judah, and for the children of Israel his companions: then take another stick, and write upon it, For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel his companions: And join them one to another into one stick; and they shall become one in thine hand. And when the children of thy people shall speak unto thee, saying, Wilt thou not shew us what thou meanest by these? Say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel his fellows, and will put them with him, even with the stick of Judah, and make them one stick, and they shall be one in mine hand. And the sticks whereon thou writest shall be in thine hand before their eyes. And say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the heathen, whither they be gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land: And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all: and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all” (Ezekiel 37:16-22). So, after hundreds of years, the God who – after the death of king Solomon - had divided the kingdom of Israel in two kingdoms because of the rebellion of Solomon, made them one nation. The Anglo-Israelites affirm that in the days of Jesus the Jews were the descendants of the Jews who had returned from the Babylonian captivity, which means – according to their way of thinking – that among them there were no descendants of the ten tribes of Israel. How is it then that Anna was “of the tribe of Asher” (Luke 2:36 – NIV), which was one of the tribes that were carried captive to Assyria? It is evident, therefore, that in the days of Jesus there were some descendants of the tribe of Asher in the land of Israel. We do not know if Anna descended from some Asherites who had returned from Assyria, or from some Asherites who had been left in Israel; one thing is sure, the fact that there was a descendant of the tribe of Asher shows that the words of the Anglo-Israelites are empty.

In the New Testament there are some other evidences that prove that in the days of Jesus there was no difference between the Jews and the Israelites, for both the term ‘Jews’ and the term ‘Israelites’ indicated the members of the Jewish nation, and not of two different nations. For instance, Paul, who was of the tribe of Benjamin, said to the Romans: “I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin” (Romans 11:1 – NKJV), and to the Corinthians: “Are they Israelites? So am I” (2 Corinthians 11:22 – NKJV), so Paul called himself an Israelite, yet at the same time he declared he was a Jew, for he said to the commander Claudius Lysias: “I am a Jew from Tarsus, in Cilicia, a citizen of no mean city ….” (Acts 21:39 – NKJV). As you can see, Paul, who descended from the tribe of Benjamin, that is, one of the tribes of the southern kingdom (or kingdom of
Judah), affirmed that he was an Israelite and a Jew as well. So he identified all the Jews as Israelites, and all the Israelites as Jews.

The apostle Peter also identified the Jews as Israelites, for on the day of Pentecost, when he preached to those Jews from every nation under heaven who were dwelling in Jerusalem and to the Jews who lived in Jerusalem, he called them “men of Israel” (Acts 2:22 – NIV), and at the end of his sermon he said to them: “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36 – NKJV).

If in the days of Jesus the Jews were not Israelites, but a different nation, Jesus would have known it and would have told it somehow; but Jesus never stated such thing, rather He stated the contrary, that is to say, the Jews were Israelites. When He saw Nathanael coming toward Him. He said of him: “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” (John 1:47 – NKJV). Now we don’t know from which tribe of Israel Nathanael descended; however there is no doubt that if he was of one the tribes who had formed the kingdom of Israel that indicates that in those days in the holy land there were still some of those Israelites, while if he descended from Judah or Benjamin that indicates that to Jesus a Jew was an Israelite. Let me cite another evidence which shows that according to Jesus the Jews were Israelites. When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus He said to him: “Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?” (John 3:10 – NKJV), and John says that Nicodemus was “a ruler of the Jews” (John 3:1 – NKJV). As you can see, the Jews were Israel.

I could cite many more passages of the Scriptures to show you that the Jews are Israelites, and the Israelites are Jews, but I think that the ones I have cited so far are sufficient. Finally, as for the fact that the ten tribes of Israel are called ‘lost’, I want to say this: in the days of Jesus as well as in the days of the apostles, the ten tribes of Israel were known, for Paul said in the presence of king Agrippa: “And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers. To this promise our twelve tribes, earnestly serving God night and day, hope to attain” (Acts 26:6-7 – NKJV), and James wrote to the saints who belonged to the twelve tribes of Israel: “James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (James 1:1 – NKJV).
PLACES OF THE BIBLE

The Garden of Eden was located in the state of Missouri (U.S.A.)

Mormons teach that the Garden of Eve was located in the state of Missouri. Here is what we read in the Encyclopedia of Mormonism: 'Latter-day revelation specifies that as a mortal, Adam lived at ADAM-ONDI-AHMAN in what is now Daviess County, Missouri (D & C 107:53-56; 116:1; 117:8). Several early LDS leaders, among them Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball, stated that the Prophet Joseph Smith taught them that the Garden of Eden was located in what is now Jackson County, Missouri’ (vol. 2, page 534).

Confutation

According to the Holy Scripture, the Garden of Eden was located in the East (in what is called now Iraq). Here is what the Scripture says: “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the LORD God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good: there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is it that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates. And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Genesis 2:7-15)
OCCULT PRACTICES

**Spiritism**

Spiritism is the name given to the belief that the living can communicate with the spirits of the dead so as to receive from them intelligent messages and proofs of their identity and survival, and to the various practices by which such communication is attempted. Today spiritism is also known as spiritualism. The National Spiritualist Association (USA) has adopted the following definition concerning spiritism: ‘Spiritualism is the Science, Philosophy and Religion of continuous life, based upon the demonstrated fact of communication, by means of mediumship, with those who live in the Spirit world.’

Spiritism is a very ancient belief and practice. According to the Bible, it was practiced in the land of Canaan by its inhabitants around 1400 before Christ (cf. Deuteronomy 18:11), and also in the days of king Saul (cf. 1 Samuel 28:3) and in the days of the prophet Isaiah (cf. Isaiah 8:19). ‘Modern spiritism’ arose in 1848 at Hydesville, New York State, in the family of John D. Fox, out of mysterious knockings which appeared to be intelligent. One of the daughters suggested a code, three raps for yes, one for no, two for doubtful; and communication was established with what claimed to be a spirit. The Fox sisters became the first ‘mediums’, and the practice of sitting in circles (holding séances) for the purpose of communicating with spirits, who answered by raps, tilts of table, or other signals, rapidly spread over the whole world. With the passing of the time, the phenomena of spiritism became very various. These phenomena are classified as psychical and physical. The former include the various forms of automatism, of speech, of writing, of vision, obsessions, impersonations, trances, apparitions, hallucinations, clairvoyance, clairaudience, prophecy, and the like. While the latter include inexplicable movements of bodies, sounds, lights, ‘direct’ spirit writing, the passage of solids through solids, the ‘materialization’ of human and other forms, the bringing in of objects from a distance (‘apports’), levitations (raising of objects from the ground by supposed supernormal means), spirit photographs, immunity from the effects of handling fire, etc.

The basic teachings of spiritism can be found in *The spirits’ book, The Principles of Spiritist Doctrine*, which was published in 1857 by French spiritist Allan Kardec (1804 - 1869). This book is presented in the form of questions posed to mediums and the answers from spiritual entities. It answers over a thousand questions concerning God, the immortality of the soul; the nature of spirits and their relations with mankind; the moral law; the present life; the future life, the laws of the universe and the destiny of the human race. Most spiritists consider this book their Bible. Spiritists claim that the teachings of spiritism, which I remind you are teachings transmitted to men by spiritual entities, are Christian teachings. For Allan Kardek stated in *The spirits’ book*: ‘The point which we here desire to establish is this, viz., that the teaching of the spirits who proclaim it is eminently Christian, that it is founded on the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, of future rewards and punishments, of the justice of God, of human free-will, and the moral code of Christ; and that, therefore, it cannot be anti-religious.’ (page 146-147)

In Italy, too, there are many spiritist associations, among which we mention Cerchio Firenze 77, Cerchio IFIOR of Genova, and Il Movimento della Speranza.

The basic teachings of the spirits

**God.** God is eternal, immutable, immaterial, unique, all-powerful, sovereignly just and good. He has created the universe, which comprehends all beings, animate and inanimate, material and immaterial. The material beings constitute the visible or corporeal world, and the immaterial beings constitute the invisible or spiritual world, that is to say, the spirit-world, or world of spirits.
The spirit-world is the normal, primitive, eternal world, pre-existent to, and surviving, everything else (Allan Kardec, *The spirits' book*, pages 31-32)

**Man.** Man consists of three things: (1) The body, or material being, analogous to the animals, and animated by the same vital principle; (2) The soul, or immaterial being, which is a spirit incarnated in the body, yes because spiritism teaches reincarnation, so man’s body is just the envelope of an incarnated spirit; (3) The link – which is called perispirit - which unites the soul and the body, a principle intermediary between matter and spirit. The perispirit is a sort of semi-material envelope, and when man dies the material body, which is the grossest of man's two envelopes, is destroyed; but the spirit preserves his other envelope, viz., the perispirit, which constitutes for him an ethereal body that is invisible to us in its normal state, but can become occasionally visible and even tangible (cf. Allan Kardec, *The spirits' book*, page 32)

**Spirits.** Spirits belong to different classes, and are not equal to one another either in power, in intelligence, in knowledge, or in morality. Those of the highest order are distinguished from those below them by their superior purity and knowledge, their nearness to God, and their love of goodness. The other classes are more and more distant from this perfection; those of the lower ranks are inclined to most of our passions, hatred, envy, jealousy, pride, etc.; they take pleasure in evil. Spirits do not belong perpetually to the same order. All are destined to attain perfection by passing through the different degrees of the spirit-hierarchy. This amelioration is effected by incarnation, which is imposed on some of them as an expiation, and on others as a mission. Material life is a trial which they have to undergo many times until they have attained to absolute perfection; it is a sort of filter, or alembic, from which they issue more or less purified after each new incarnation. When a person dies, the soul re-enters the world of spirits from which it came, and from which it will enter upon a new material existence after a longer or shorter lapse of time, during which its state is that of an errant or wandering spirit. The qualities of the soul are those of the spirit incarnated in us; thus, a good man is the incarnation of a good spirit, and a bad man is that of an unpurified spirit. Spirits exert an incessant action upon the moral world, they are incessantly in relation with men. The good spirits try to lead us into the right road, sustain us under the trials of life, and aid us to bear them with courage and resignation; the bad ones tempt us to evil: it is a pleasure for them to see us fall, and to make us like themselves. Spirits manifest themselves spontaneously, or in response to evocation. All spirits may be evoked: those who have animated the most obscure of mortals, as well as those of the most illustrious personages, and whatever the epoch at which they lived; those of our relatives, our friends, or our enemies; and we may obtain from them, by written or by verbal communications, counsels, information in regard to their situation beyond the grave, their thoughts in regard to us, and whatever revelations they are permitted to make to us. The moral teaching of the higher spirits may be summed up, like that of Christ, in the gospel maxim, ‘Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you;' that is to say, do good to all, and wrong no one (cf. Allan Kardec, *The spirits' book*, pages 33-35)

**Jesus Christ and the atonement.** It is an absurd idea that Jesus was any more divine than any other man, for he was the Son of God, just as also all men are sons of God; the miraculous conception of Christ is merely a fabulous tale; advanced spirits do not teach the atonement of Christ – nothing of the kind; the doctrine of atonement is the very climax of a deranged imagination, and one that is of the unrighteous and immoral tendency (cf. Walter Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, page 275).

**Hell and heaven.** The doctrine of eternal fire comes ‘from taking a figure of speech for a reality, as men have done in so many instances’ (Allan Kardec, op. cit., page 388); ‘Heaven’ and ‘hell,’ then, as men have imagined them, have no existence? “They are only symbols; there are happy and unhappy spirits everywhere. Nevertheless, as we have also told you, spirits of the same order are brought together by sympathy; but, when they are perfect, they can meet together wherever they will,’ (Ibid., 404)

**Resurrection.** ‘Physical science demonstrates the impossibility of resurrection according to the common idea. If the relics of the human body remained homogeneous, even though dispersed and reduced to powder, we might conceive the possibility of their being reunited at some future
time; but such is not the case. The body is formed of various elements, oxygen, hydrogen, azote, carbon, etc., and these elements, being dispersed, serve to form new bodies, so that the same molecule of carbon, for example, will have entered into the composition of many thousands of different bodies (we speak only of human bodies, without counting those of animals); such and such an individual may have, in his body, molecules that were in the bodies of the men of the earliest ages; and the very same organic molecules that you have this day absorbed in your food may have come from the body of some one whom you have known; and so on, Matter being finite in quantity, and its transformations being infinite in number, how is it possible that the innumerable bodies formed out of it should be reconstituted with the same elements? Such a reconstruction is a physical impossibility. The resurrection of the body can, therefore, be rationally admitted only as a figure of speech, symbolising the fact of reincarnation; thus interpreted, it has in it nothing repugnant to reason, nothing contrary to the data of physical science.' (Ibid., 403-404)

Confutation

Spiritism is of the devil

Spiritism is a work of the devil and therefore it must be rejected, for the Scripture warns us against it saying: "Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God" (Leviticus 19:31 – NIV), and again: "When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness" (Isaiah 8:19-22 – NIV). Know this, that anyone who is a medium or a spiritist or who consults a medium or spiritist does something which is an abomination to the Lord (cf. Deuteronomy 18:12), and according to God’s righteous decree he deserves death (cf. Romans 1:32). God put to death king Saul for this reason also, for he "consulted a medium for guidance, and did not inquire of the Lord" (1 Chronicles 10:13-14 – NIV).

The teachings of the spirits refuted

As we saw before, spirits deny the deity of Jesus Christ, His virgin birth, His atonement, they deny also the existence of hell and heaven, and they deny the resurrection from the dead which they have replaced with reincarnation. It is clear, therefore, that their teachings are false for they contradict the Holy Scripture, which is the Word of God. And since we know that every falsehood is of the devil, for he is the father of lies, we declare that their teachings are of the devil. Now someone may point out that spirits believe in the existence of God. Yes, they believe that God exists. However, it must be said that while some spirits believe in the existence of a personal God (Kardec considered God a personal being) others believe that God is all and all is God, that is, they believe pantheism. That is one of the numerous contradictions which are present in spiritism and which are justified by spiritists in this way: they affirm that not all the spirits belong to the same order, for there are ‘higher spirits’ and spirits ‘of the lower ranks’; the former are trustworthy while the latter are liars! As for the fact that there are some spirits who affirm that God exists, we are not surprised for James says that even the demons believe there is one God (cf. James 2:19). Even the fact that from time to time the spirits speaks of Jesus, making it clear that He lived on the earth, does not surprise us, for the demon-possessed men who met Jesus on the earth knew that He was the Son of the Most High God (cf. Mark 5:7); but they did not love Him nor worship Him till the demons were in them for the demons hindered them from loving and worshiping Jesus. In the same way, today spiritists – even though they
speak of God (no matter what they say) and of Jesus, do not love God or the Son, but they hate both God and His Son, for they are possessed and guided by spirits. Are there any good spirits?

No there are no good spirits, for all the spirits who speak and act through mediums or spiritists are wicked; spirits differ in rank for in the spiritual realm the spirits belong to different ranks (the principalities, the powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places – cf. Ephesians 6:12); and they differ also in wickedness, for Jesus said: “When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, ‘I will return to my house from which I came.’ And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there …” (Matthew 12:43-45 – NKJV);

but all spirits are wicked and liars. There is no such distinction between good and evil spirits. Therefore the distinction between higher spirits and lower spirits, of which spiritists speak, is just a satanic device through which they deceive people into thinking that even among the spirits who are evoked there could be some spirits who do not tell the truth and therefore one cannot trust in them fully.

Therefore we must be very careful when we hear spiritists speaking of God or Jesus, for they actually mention God or Jesus only to deceive people into accepting all kinds of lies. Yes, they mention the name of God or the name of Jesus, but remember that they say all kinds of lies against them. For as we saw before they deny the incarnation and the divinity of Christ (to them Jesus Christ is a good inspiring spirit) and the fact that Jesus purged our sins through the shedding of His blood for they say that men must purify themselves through reincarnation (so they denigrate the purification of sins performed by the blood of Christ and have replaced it with an illusory purification which man can attain through reincarnation). We saw that they deny also hell and heaven, even though they say that God is just. They deny what the Scripture teaches on sin. Therefore, as you can see, the spirits of which the spiritists speak deny the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and it can’t be otherwise for we know that their master is Satan, the father of lies, who – as Jesus said – “does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him” (John 8:44 – NKJV). When Kardec affirmed that ‘the teaching of the spirits who proclaim it is eminently Christian’ he lied against the truth, for the spirits prompt people to do evil things. Do they not teach that the spirits of the dead may be evoked, that is to say, that spiritism can be practiced? How can one say then that their teaching is Christian, when the Word of God condemns spiritism, for it is written: “Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:31 – NIV)?

Brothers in the Lord, let no spiritist deceive you with his vain words, for the so called Christian morals taught by the spirits is nothing but a lie told by the spirits in order to deceive the living into communicating with the demons (for actually the spirits of the dead which are evoked by the spiritists during spiritual séances are nothing but demons) who are willing and ready to enter people and to manifest through them.

Now let me refute briefly the spiritistic doctrine on man’s composition and the soul’s destiny after death. First of all I say that the Scripture teaches that the human being consists of a spirit, a soul and a body, for Paul says to the Thessalonians: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:23 – NKJV). The spirit and the soul are the immaterial part of man, while the body is the material part of him. As for the so called perispirit (which according to the spiritists is a sort of semimaterial envelope which unites the soul and the body), however, it must be said that the Scripture does not speak of it, that is to say, there is not one hint or suggestion in the whole Scripture that the perispirit exists; therefore we consider the perispirit something which does not exist. Second, I want to say that the soul is not a spirit incarnated in the body for the following reasons. The Scripture teaches that the soul of every man is created by God in the womb of his mother. So every person has his own soul, and cannot have the soul of another man who lived on the earth before him. In other words, the soul of every man came into being in the womb of his mother and did not preexist in the body of someone else. Furthermore, the Scripture teaches that when a man dies his soul leaves the
body and goes either to heaven or to hell, which are two different places located in the hereafter; the former is a place of comfort and the latter is a place of torment. The righteous go to heaven and there they await the resurrection and the reward for their work; the wicked go to hell and there they await the resurrection in order to be judged according to their works and cast into the eternal fire. However, notice that the spirits who speak through the mouth of the spiritists deny the existence of heaven and hell, even though they claim to be the spirits or the souls of the dead. That is a clear evidence of the fact that the spirits which appear or manifest themselves during spiritualistic séances are not the spirits of the dead, but demons who deceive people into thinking that they are the souls of the dead. They are neither in heaven nor in hell, but they are in the air and they are able to see and hear men and to appear to men when they are evoked. Yes, because demons – unlike the souls of the dead – can see and hear those who are on the earth. But the souls of the dead, according to the Scripture, are not able to see or to hear us, or to minister to us or to attack us or to guide us or to led us astray or to appear to those who evoke them, nor do they wander for a longer or shorter period of time after which they will enter upon a new material experience, for when they leave the bodies of men they go either to heaven or to hell, where they will remain till the resurrection, so they are not able to communicate with the living. The Scripture clearly states that “the dead know nothing” (Ecclesiastes 9:5 – NKJV), and that when the wicked has died “his sons come to honor, and he does not know it; they are brought low, and he does not perceive it” (Job 14:21 – NKJV). So the Scripture refutes the spiritistic doctrine according to which the souls of the dead re-enter the world of the spirits from which they came and from which they are able to communicate with us.

Having demonstrated that the soul of man is not a spirit incarnated in the body and that when a person dies his soul leaves the earth and goes either to heaven or to hell (if he is saved he goes to heaven, but if he is lost he goes to hell), I want to speak of those strange and supernatural phenomena which take place during the spiritualist séances and which are attributed to the spirits of the dead evoked by mediums, whose presence is considered necessary during the spiritualist séances so that the spirits may manifest themselves (for it is said that a medium is able to communicate between the dead and the living for he has a perispirit which is better than those of the other human beings which contacts the perispirit of the spirit which is evoked). Now many people when they hear about these strange phenomena – above all about tables who are raised from the ground or about other objects which move from one place to another - think that they are only tricks performed by the medium to deceive those who are present into thinking that there are some spirits in the room where they are seated. There’s no denying that in some cases these manifestations are nothing but tricks (which are exposed in due time). However, the fact still remains that in some cases these manifestations cannot be attributed to the craftiness of the medium, for they are phenomena worked by demons. I mean that we as believers must not think that those things are bad tricks worked by mediums in order to fool people and to make money; for actually the Scripture teaches us that the ministers of Satan, guided and helped by evil spirits, can work wonders like the above mentioned ones. Let us not forget that the Egyptian magicians, who opposed Moses and Aaron, also were able to perform by their occult arts some of the wonders which were worked by Moses and Aaron, as it is written that they turned their rods into serpents: “But Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers, so the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents …” (Exodus 7:11-12 – NKJV); they turned water into blood (cf. Exodus 7:22); and they brought up frogs on the land of Egypt (cf. Exodus 8:7). How could those men have performed those wonders without the help of demons? They could not have worked them. Don’t you think so? So keep in mind that mediums, assisted by demons, can perform things which men cannot explain with their mind for they are manifestations worked by evil spirits. So all those strange manifestations which take place during the spiritualist séances, which are not fraudulent, are to be attributed to the evil spirits, which are ruled by the devil.

What shall we say then about those spirits who appear during spiritualist séances and speak with a voice which is very similar to the voice of the dead who have been evoked? We shall say this: since they cannot be the souls of the dead for the above mentioned reasons, they are evil
spirits who manage to mimic the voice of the dead so well that those who attend the spiritualist séances think that they are their loved ones who have been evoked. And what shall we say about the fact that sometimes what these spirits have said about the life of some people who participated in the spiritualist séances have proved to be true? Well, we are not surprised, for we know that the evil spirits see what men do, they know their identity and in certain cases they can reveal these things. Let me give you some biblical examples to show you this. The evil spirits which were cast out by Jesus Christ knew that Jesus was the Christ, as it is written: “And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ” (Luke 4:41 – NKJV); the spirit of divination which was in the slave girl of Philippi knew that Paul and his fellow workers were servants of God, as it is written: “Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, ‘These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation” (Acts 16:16-17 – NKJV); the evil spirit which prevailed against the seven sons of Sheva, a Jewish chief priest, knew who Jesus and Paul were, for he said to the seven sons of Sheva: “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” (Acts 19:15 – NKJV).

At this point, someone will ask me, ‘If the dead cannot communicate with the living, for they are either in heaven or in hell, how is it then that Samuel, who was dead, spoke with Saul when he was evoked by that woman who was a medium at En-Dor?’ In this case, God permitted Samuel to be brought up, therefore it was by God’s will that he could speak to Saul. However, you must remember that Saul was put to death also because he consulted that medium, as it is written: “So Saul died for his unfaithfulness which he had committed against the Lord, because he did not keep the word of the Lord, and also because he consulted a medium for guidance. But he did not inquire of the Lord; therefore He killed him, and turned the kingdom over to David the son of Jesse” (1 Chronicles 10:13-14 – NKJV). As you can see, according to the judgement of God, those who consult mediums deserve death. Why? Because they inquire of the dead rather than the living God. The Scripture is very clear with regard to this: “There shall not be found among you anyone who .... Conjures spells, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For all who do these things are an abomination to the Lord .... You shall be blameless before the Lord your God. For these nations which will dispossess listened to soothsayers and diviners; but as for you, the Lord your God has not appointed such for you” (Deuteronomy 18:10,11, 13-14 – NKJV). Therefore those who consult the spirits commit an abominable act in the sight of God, just like those who have sexual relations with a beast or those men who have sexual relations with other men, and according to the law they are deserving of death. Note that God told the Israelites that He had not permitted them to do so, which means that while the other nations consulted the dead on behalf of the living, God had commanded the Israelites to consult Him through the prophets He would raise up for them. So under the Old Covenant we have many examples of men who inquired of God by the prophets of God. Here are some of these examples: Ben-Hadad king of Syria sent Hazael to enquire of God by the prophet Elisha (cf. 2 Kings 8:7-10); Jehoshaphat king of Judah and Jehoram king of Israel inquired of God by the prophet Elisha (cf. 2 Kings 3:1-27); Jehoshaphat king of Judah and Ahab king of Israel inquired of God by the prophet Micaiah (cf. 1 Kings 22:1-25), the remnant of Jerusalem inquired of God by the prophet Jeremiah (cf. Jeremiah 42:1-22); Jeroboam king of Israel sent his wife to the prophet Ahijah to inquire of God by him (cf. 1 Kings 14:1-17). So God wanted men to inquire of Him and not the dead. Today also, since God has given some to be prophets, it is right to inquire of God by His prophets. Someone may ask, ‘What should a Christian do if he does not know any prophet of God?’ Well, he should inquire of God without the help of a prophet, for God is willing to answer directly those who inquired of Him: He answers by visions or dreams or an audible voice. Brothers, have faith in the Word of God which affirms: “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3 - NKJV). This is a word which was spoken by God and it is true, and the person who is writing to you has experienced the truthfulness of it several times. At this point, however, it is good to specify that
the revelations which one asks of God must be revelations he really needs to receive from God, that is to say, the person who asks for them must be led by the Spirit to ask for them. Let me give you some examples: a Christian may be led by the Spirit to inquire of God so that He may reveal him which ministry he must fulfill or the nation or region or city where he should go to preach the Gospel, or who is his wife or her husband or the place where a certain object he has lost and so on. All this is absolutely normal, so no wonder, I say it again, so no wonder that some brothers have asked God to reveal them one of the above mentioned things and God has answered their prayers. Our God “is a revealer of secrets” (Daniel 2:47 – NKJV), and has not ceased to reveal them, for He said that He does not change (cf. Malachi 3:6) and the Scripture says that the secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him (cf. Psalm 25:14). Of course, I know that such testimonies are unusual among the people of God, yet they exist and when we hear them we glorify God for they prove that our God has not changed.

The main reasons why people consult mediums

Now let me say something about the main reasons why people attend spiritualist séances. Most people, when one of their loved ones has died, wonder where he/she is or if he/she is happy or sad in the afterlife. That happens also to some believers when one of their relatives has died, and they think that he/she – even though he/she had heard the Gospel many times from their lips and had refused in their presence to repent and believe - might have repented and asked God to forgiven him/her just before breathing his/her last. The reason is clear, therefore, the grief caused by the loss of their loved one is great and they want to know if he/she is with the Lord for if they knew that he or she went to be with the Lord they would be greatly comforted. But the grief caused by the loss of a relative leads unbelievers to consult spiritists for spiritists claim that they can communicate with the dead, so they attend the spiritualist séances where they are deceived by all kinds of spiritistic manifestations which according to spiritists prove that their loved one is among them. It is wrong for a man to consult mediums, who are ministers of Satan, for by their work these people manage to cause him to trust in their occult arts, and to enslave him of their occult arts, and to deceive him into believing all kinds of lies. Furthermore, he who consults a medium defiles himself, as it is written: “Do not turn to mediums or seek out spiritists, for you will be defiled by them. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 19:31 – NIV), even if he does not realize this. Instead, sometimes the grief for the loss of a relative – of whom nobody knows if he died in the Lord for when he died he was alone - leads a believer to call upon God so that He might show him in heaven or might tell him that he is in heaven. There is no harm in this behaviour, I mean that a believer who asks God to show or tell him if his loved one is in heaven does not defile himself, for He inquires of the One who lives for ever and ever, who is the Holy One and the True Witness. Know this, that if God has saved that person just before his death and He wants to answer that prayer, He will surely reveal him that he is in heaven. However, God may decide not to answer that prayer even though that person is in heaven. Obviously, if that person has died in his sins, God can permit the Christian to see the soul of that person while he is tormented by the fire of Hades or He can reveal him that the person died in his sins, or He can hide it from him. Many people attend spiritualist séances in order that the dead might tell them about the afterlife, or about heaven or hell; these people also commit a sin in consulting the dead, and they also are deceived by the evil spirits who tell them that heaven and hell are human concepts and not real places. The best thing to do in order to know what heaven or hell is like is to read the Bible, for there are enough references to heaven and hell in the Bible. If then a Christian, after reading what the Bible says about heaven and hell, decides to ask God to show him heaven or hell, he does not commit any sin. Obviously God will answer his prayer if what the Christian asks of Him is according to His will for him. While if it is not according to His will, the Christian will see heaven when he dies, and he will see the everlasting fire when God will cast the wicked into it, that is, on the Judgement Day.
Conclusion

To conclude I say this: in the light of the Scriptures, the teachings of the spirits are lies and thus they must be rejected without hesitation. Therefore the spirits must not be inquired of. Spiritism is a work of the devil, which is condemned by the Scripture, and spiritists are under condemnation just as all those who consult them. On the other hand, we who are sons of God know that we have a living God in heaven, a God who reveals the mysteries He wants to reveal, who can be inquired of, or rather who must be inquired of by each one of us when we need a specific revelation. However, I say it again, even if God does not show us where our dead ones are, even if God does not show us heaven or hell, we must hold on to the Holy Scripture, that is, to what the Scripture says about the state of the dead and the places where the souls of men go after death. Let no one of you attend spiritualist séances out of curiosity, just to know if there is some truth in spiritism, for his curiosity would lead him to be unfaithful to the Lord and his unfaithfulness would expose him to the influence of demons, and would lead him to the everlasting fire. So I conclude with the following words God spoke through the prophet Isaiah: “When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? To the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn. Distressed and hungry, they will roam through the land; when they are famished, they will become enraged and, looking upward, will curse their king and their God. Then they will look toward the earth and see only distress and darkness and fearful gloom, and they will be thrust into utter darkness” (Isaiah 8:19-22 – NIV). Amen.

Astrology

Astrology (which comes from the Greek aster ‘star’ + logos ‘discourse’) is a ‘science’ which claims that the stars and other celestial bodies determine the character, the health and the activity of every human being, and that by observing the position of the celestial bodies at a given time one can foretell future events. So, according to astrology (I refer to traditional astrology), the character of every human being, his health, the length of his life, his outward aspect, his social status, and his fate, depend on the map of the sky at the moment of his birth. In other words, all these things depend on the position of the stars and planets at the moment of his birth. The map of the sky at that time is called horoscope (from the Greek hora ‘time’, and skopos ‘observer’). Therefore when a person consults an astrologer in order to know his personal horoscope, called also birth chart, the astrologer tells him the map of the sky over his birthplace at the moment of his birth, and the fortunes and misfortunes which depend – according to the astrologer – on that specific map of the sky. However, there is another kind of horoscope cast by astrologers for their clients; it is called horary horoscope and it concerns specific problems. In this case the client tells the astrologer a specific problem he is facing, and the astrologer – after complicated calculations – tells him the outcome of that problem and gives him the ‘solution’ of the problem, on the basis of the map of the sky at the time the question is asked. We can say, therefore, that according to astrology our fate is determined by the stars and planets; what we will do, what we will be, our outward aspect, our health, where we will go, etc. depend on the celestial bodies for they are the rulers of our life, so we should consult astrologers in order to know our future and how to solve our problems. In addition to this, according to astrology even all the future worldly events, such as wars, famines, earthquakes, etc., are determined by the celestial bodies for they are the rulers of all the events which take place on the earth. On the basis of what astrology affirms, we can conclude that astrologers believe in an astral predestination.

We do not know when and where astrology originated. Some say that it originated in Mesopotamia around 2300 before Christ. For sure we know that around 1400 before Christ,
astrology was being practiced in the land of Canaan by its inhabitants, for God warned the Israelites against all kinds of occult arts which were practiced at that time by the inhabitants of the land of Canaan, among which was also astrology (cf. Deuteronomy 18:10 – “An observer of times” was a person who practiced astrology). We know also for sure that there were astrologers in Babylon in the days of the prophet Isaiah (cf. Isaiah 47:13) and the prophet Daniel (cf. Daniel 2:2). As for the way in which astrology originated, it is said that some people came to the conclusion that since many natural phenomena which occur on the earth are strictly linked with the functions of the celestial bodies (light and heat, which are indispensable to the life on the earth, come from the sun, while the moon causes tides), the celestial bodies must necessarily influence through their power even the human affairs; therefore, just as one is able to understand the end of a period of time and the beginning of another by observing the position of the sun or the position of the moon, so by observing the position of the sun, the moon, the planets and the stars, one could understand what was the fate of the kings and of the kingdoms. Afterwards that determinism was extended to the common individuals. Astrology is practiced and believed by millions of people all over the world.

Confutation

Introduction

Astrology is a fraud, whose father is the devil, a trap in which millions of people all over the world have fallen. And I am going to demonstrate it through the Holy Scriptures.

I think it is necessary for me to start this confutation by speaking about the host of heaven. The prophet Isaiah affirms: “Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these? He who brings out the starry host one by one, and calls them each by name …. “ (Isaiah 40:26 – NIV). What’s His name? His name is Yahweh, which means ‘He who always is,’ the great God of heaven and earth, who by His great power and endless wisdom created out of nothing all things, among which the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets. For the Scripture says: “And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs, and for seasons, and for days, and years: And let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth: and it was so. And God made two great lights; the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night: he made the stars also. And God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, And to rule over the day and over the night, and to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good.” (Genesis 1:14-18). Someone may say, ‘The planets are not mentioned!’ Yes, you are right in saying that the word ‘planets’ is not mentioned, however planets also were created by God for somewhere else it is written that God “made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them” (Acts 4:24 – NKJV). It is evident, therefore, that just as on the earth and under the earth or into the sea there is nothing that was not created by God, so also in the heavens there is nothing that He did not create, and thus the planets are among the things which were created by God. Furthermore, it must be said that the Hebrew word ‘kowkab,’ which means ‘star,’ which is mentioned by the Scripture in Genesis 1:16, refers not only to the stars but also to those heavenly bodies which are known as planets - such as the known planets of our solar system: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, and Pluto - for the origin of the word planet is a Greek term which translates as ‘wandering star’. Is it not true that the nearby planets and the distant stars both appear to be pinpoints of light in the night sky? So, since planets also have light or gives light, no wonder that the Bible calls them stars.

As you can see, God made the sun, the moon and the stars to give light on the earth; the sun to give light during the day, while the moon and the stars to give light during the night. As for the sun, it does another important thing for the earth, for it generates heat, as it is written: “And there is nothing hidden from its heat” (Psalm 19:6 – NKJV). Besides giving light on the earth, the sun and the moon mark seasons, days and years, for God said: “Let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years” (Genesis 1:14 – NIV). Is it not true that by observing the position
of the sun during the day we can understand the part of the day in which we are (morning, midday, afternoon, evening), and that by observing the position of the sun in heaven during the year we can understand which season (autumn, winter, spring, summer) we are in, and so on? Instead, by observing the moon during the night we can understand if we are at the beginning of the month or at the end of it. What shall we say then? We shall say that God is mighty and wise and He made the heaven wonderfully, and every thing He made is in the right place and does a specific work at God's command. Therefore, lifting our eyes and looking to the heavens, we are moved to say together with Paul that “since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities – his eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made ...” (Romans 1:20 – NIV). Amen.

Man’s destiny

Now, do these wonderful and awesome works of God, which He set in the firmament of the heavens, influence directly the lives of men, so that their position at the time of their birth determine their destiny? The answer to this question is 'No,' for there is not one hint or suggestion in the whole Scripture that the host of heaven is able to determine the destiny of men. In the Bible there are many passages which refer to the sun, the moon, the stars and all the host of heaven, but not one of them teaches us that the acts of men are determined by the position of the stars and the planets. God uses His works, such as the sun, the moon, and the stars, to do good to men (let us consider just the function of the sun to realize how much good God does to us by the sun). And some time before the return of Jesus God will use the sun and the stars to punish the wicked, for it is written in the book of Revelation: “Then the fourth angel poured out his bowl on the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire” (Revelation 16:8 – NKJV), and again: “And the stars of heaven fell to the earth, as a fig tree drops its late figs when it is shaken by a mighty wind” (Revelation 6:13 – NKJV), for all these things serve God and obey His orders, as it is written: “All things serve you” (Psalm 119:91 – NIV). But no passage of the Scripture declares that men serve the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets, as if these things were the masters of our life. For all these things have no power to influence somehow human actions. Only God has the power to influence the life of men; the following biblical passages confirms it in a marvellous way: “... and the God who holds your breath in His hand and owns all your ways, you have not glorified” (Daniel 5:23 – NKJV); “The deceived and the deceiver are his” (Job 12:16 – NKJV – The Italian Bible Riveduta Version reads: “Da lui dipendono chi erra e chi fa errare” that is, “The deceived and the deceiver depend on Him”); “A man’s steps are of the Lord; how then can a man understand his own way?” (Proverbs 20:24 – NKJV); “There are many plans in a man’s heart. Nevertheless the Lord’s counsel – that will stand” (Proverbs 19:21 – NKJV). Someone may ask, ‘What about the devil?’ Well, the devil also influences people, but it is not the devil, but God, who determines the destiny of a man; for the devil, even though he is the prince of this world and influences the lives of men negatively, is still subject to the will of God, thus he is bound to keep (or to act) within the limits set by God to his authority. I mean that even the devil, who is a wicked being able to influence man’s behaviour deceiving them into doing evil things or to kill people, cannot act beyond the limits set to him by God, for the counsel of God must stand and will stand: the example of Job who was struck by the devil for God permitted him to struck His servant Job, and the example of Judas Iscariot who was prompted by the devil to betray the Master by the determined purpose of God, show clearly what I have said so far.

The Scripture, therefore, denies that the destiny of man is in the hands of the host of heaven, and teaches that man’s destiny is in the hands of God, He who created the host of heaven. In order to explain to you that it is God who determines the destiny of man even before he is born, and therefore the position of the sun, of the stars and of the planets has nothing to do with man’s destiny, I am going to cite some examples taken from the Scriptures.

Samson was predestined by God to deliver His people out of the hand of the Philistines before he was conceived in the womb of his mother, as it is written in the book of Judges: “And there
was a certain man of Zorah, of the family of the Danites, whose name was Manoah; and his wife was barren, and bare not. And the angel of the LORD appeared unto the woman, and said unto her, Behold now, thou art barren, and bearest not: but thou shalt conceive, and bear a son. Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing: For, lo, thou shalt conceive, and bear a son; and no razor shall come on his head: for the child shall be a Nazarite unto God from the womb: and he shall begin to deliver Israel out of the hand of the Philistines.” (Judges 13:2-5). What the angel of the Lord said to that woman came true, for that woman became pregnant and at the set time she gave birth to a son and called his name Samson, and when he was grown up he delivered the Israelites out of the hand of the Philistines.

Jeremiah was predestined to be a prophet before he was born, for God said to him when he was only a child: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5 – NKJV), and so it came to pass that God appointed him prophet to the nations.

Cyrus king of Persia was predestined by God to rule the kingdom of Persia not only before he was conceived but even before the kingdom of Persia arose. Here is what God said about Cyrus through the prophet Isaiah: “Thus says the Lord to His anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have held to subdue nations before him …. For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me ….” (Isaiah 45:1,4 – NKJV). And so at the time set by God, God raised up Cyrus and appointed him king of Persia, and He destroyed the kingdom of Babylon through him, and He set free the exiles of Israel, who had been carried away captive to Babylon by king Nebuchadnezzar.

John the Baptist was predestined by God, before he was conceived, to be the messenger who would go before the face of the Messiah, for the angel who appeared to Zechariah in the temple said to him: “But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John. And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” (Luke 1:13-17). So the child was born, and when he was about thirty years of age he went before the Christ to bear witness of Him and to prepare His way.

Esau and Jacob, who were twins, were both predestined by God to play a specific role, before they were born, for God said to their mother while they were in her womb: “Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; One people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger” (Genesis 25:23 – NKJV). And that was exactly what happened, for Esau, who was the older, served Jacob, who was the younger.

As you can see, the destiny of a man is determined by God and not by the position of the planets at the time of his birth, as the astrologers assert wrongly. If the destiny of a man were determined by the position of the planets at the time of his birth, it would follow that those who are born on the same day of the same year will have the same destiny, but things are not so at all for there are people who live in the same country or in the same town who were born on the same day yet their destiny is different from one another. There is nothing new under the sun, for Esau and Jacob were born on the same day, yet their destiny was different. Let us look at some of the differences between these two brothers. Esau became a skilful hunter, a man of the field; while Jacob became a mild man dwelling in tents (cf. Genesis 25:27); Jacob dwelt for many years in Padan Aram while Esau never went to Padan Aram; the wives of Jacob were daughters of Laban (the brother of Jacob’s mother), while the wives of Esau did belong to the daughters of Canaan (cf. Genesis 27:46; 28:8-9); Jacob, who was the younger, bought the birthright of Esau and thus Esau served Jacob.

Still today there are people who were born in the same year, month, day and hour, who were predestined by God to play different roles in this world. So one will become a prime minister or a
senator or a major, another will become a prophet of God, another a pastor, another an apostle, another will be an engineer, another a mason, and so on. Therefore astrologers deceive themselves and those who consult them when they claim that they are able to foretell the destiny of a man on the basis of the map of the sky at the moment of his birth, for the destiny of men has already been determined by God and cannot be read in the sky, that is, on the heavenly bodies, for the destiny of men is written in the heavenly books which only God knows. One should consult those books to know the destiny of a man before his birth – by destiny here I refer only to the work he will do on the earth by God’s set purpose – and not the books of the astrologers who are full of lies; but we cannot consult the heavenly books. However, in certain cases God may reveal beforehand what a person will do, and when He reveals it His prediction will be fulfilled. However, the fact still remains that the map of the sky at the moment of a man’s birth does not influence his life at all.

But the astrologers even go as far as to affirm that the length of a man’s life depends on the map of the sky at the moment of his birth, but the Scripture nullifies what they affirm for it teaches that there is a time to die and this time has been set by God before one is born. David says: “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:16 – NKJV). So what has the map of the sky to do with the length of man’s life? Nothing, for – as Job said to God – “his days are determined, the number of his months is with You; You have appointed his limits, so that he cannot pass” (Job 14:5 – NKJV), and his limits are in the mind of God, God knows them, and He may reveal them in certain cases. So we have seen so far how the earthly occupation of a man and the length of his life are determined by God and not by the heavenly bodies.

Besides determining what kind of occupation men will have on earth and the number of their days even before they were born, God determined also that some men will be saved and others lost, that is to say, He appointed some to be saved and others to go to perdition. The apostle Paul teaches this when he says to the Romans: “Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (Romans 9:21-24). So the eternal destiny of men was determined by God even before they were born, in order that “the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works but of Him who calls” (Romans 9:11 – NKJV).

Therefore, to sum up what I have said so far; men were all born in sin and do not know the work they will do nor their eternal destination, but God has already determined everything and men, not knowing what God determined, at the time set by God will do what God has decreed for them. For example, if according to God’s decree some men must emigrate to another continent God will work so that they might go to that continent; if according to God’s decree one must be a mason God will work so that he might become a mason; and so on. As for the length of man’s life, God will work so that men will live how long He has decreed. And as for salvation, God will work in some men – who do not know that God predestined them to be saved - so that they might repent and believe in the Gospel, while He will harden the hearts of the others, lest they should be forgiven, so that they might go to perdition. It is impossible for me to explain in detail how God does all these things, for we can’t comprehend fully how God works in the heart of a man, without him knowing that God is turning his heart wherever He wishes. The life of every man consists of an exceedingly great number of circumstances they are not able to control or to change, but God is able to do so, and therefore He can lead men to do what He has decreed without them knowing His decrees. This is why God can foretell the destiny of a man, for He can fulfill all His decrees, no one is able to prevent Him from doing what He has foretold. Many biblical examples confirm this.

I firmly believe that I have proved that according to the Holy Scripture the position of the heavenly bodies has nothing to do with the destiny of man for his destiny depends on God. So what the astrologers affirm is a lie; their work is useless.
Astrology asserts that all the world events are determined by the heavenly bodies, therefore also wars and famines and earthquakes depend on the position of the sun, the moon, the stars and the planets, that is, on the map of the sky. This also is a lie, for what happens all over the world happens by God’s set purpose. God has not changed and He still punishes the nations by sending against them foreign armies, famines and earthquakes; yes, He punishes them in this way just as He did in ancient times. It is hard to accept this, but it is the truth, for the Scripture says that God is “He that chastiseth the heathen” (Psalm 94:10), and it says also: “When disaster comes to a city, has not the Lord caused it?” (Amos 3:6 – NIV).

Now through the Scriptures I will show you how God in ancient times chastised the nations because of their wickedness (He foretold those chastisements long before), so that you may see that it is not the planets which cause the above mentioned disasters but the God of heaven and earth, the One to be feared.

Wars.

God, through the prophet Jeremiah, foretold His judgement on the kingdom of Babylon: “Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple. …… And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.” (Jeremiah 51:11,24). And so it happened; the Persian army came against Babylon and destroyed it. The ruins of that city can still be seen by those who go there. The reason why God punished Babylon was that it was arrogant and it had done much harm to Jerusalem. I remind you that at that time in Chaldea astrology was widespread. Now we do not know what the astrologers had foretold for the kingdom of Babylon, but one thing is sure, their presages of peace were not fulfilled for God had decreed the end of the kingdom of Babylon. As you can see, the war the Persians made against Babylon occurred by God’s set purpose, and not because of the influence of the heavenly bodies.

God, through Jesus, foretold the destruction of Jerusalem because of its wickedness, that is to say, because it had rejected the Messiah. Jesus said: “For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, And shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation.” (Luke 19:43-44), and again: “And when ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies, then know that the desolation thereof is nigh. Then let them which are in Judaea flee to the mountains; and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck, in those days! for there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled” (Luke 21:20-24). And this is what happened in 70 A.D. when the Roman soldiers destroyed Jerusalem and killed thousands of people. Also in this case God executed His judgements on some rebellious people using a foreign army.

In the Scripture there are many other similar examples; but I think that the above mentioned ones are sufficient to demonstrate that it is God, and not the planets, who causes a nation to make war against another nation.

As for wars I want to say something else which I think is important: the wars which are still to break out are all written in a heavenly book called the book of truth, and when God wishes He reveals what is written in this book. That’s what we learn from what an angel of God said to the prophet Daniel. I will quote all the words spoken by that angel to Daniel: “But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these
things, but Michael your prince. Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. And now will I shew thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided toward the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those. And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion. And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times. But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, which shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land. But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress. And the king of the south shall be moved with choler, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it. For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years with a great army and with much riches. And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. So the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fenced cities: and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither shall there be any strength to withstand. But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in the glorious land, which by his hand shall be consumed. He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter of women, corrupting her: but she shall not stand on his side, neither be for him. After this shall he turn his face unto the isles, and shall take many: but a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease; without his own reproach he shall cause it to turn upon him. Then he shall turn his face toward the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found. Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle. And in his estate shall stand up a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honour of the kingdom: but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflown from before him, and shall be broken; yea, also the prince of the covenant. And after the league made with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do that which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: yea, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. And he shall stir up his power and his courage against the king of the south with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but he shall not stand: for they shall forecast devices against him. Yea, they that feed of the portion of his meat shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain. And both these kings' hearts shall be to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end shall be at the time appointed. Then shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be
against the holy covenant; and he shall do exploits, and return to his own land. At the time appointed he shall return, and come toward the south; but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. For the ships of Chittim shall come against him: therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have indignation against the holy covenant: so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall take away the daily sacrifice, and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but the people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits. And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, and by captivity, and by spoil, many days. Now when they shall fall, they shall be holpen with a little help: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries. And some of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end: because it is yet for a time appointed. And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvellous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper till the indignation be accomplished: for that that is determined shall be done. Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate shall he honour the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honour with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things. Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain. And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over. He shall enter also into the glorious land, and many countries shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, even Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon. He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps. But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him." (Daniel 10:21; 11:1-45).

Famines.

God, through two dreams, foretold Pharaoh that there would be a very severe famine in all lands. Here is what the Scripture says: “And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river. And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow. And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river. And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke. And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good. And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them. And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream. And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh. Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day: Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker: And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream. And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret. And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged. Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily
out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it. And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace. And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river: And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fatfleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow: And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness: And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine: And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke. And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good: And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them: And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me. And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do. The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one. And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine. This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh. Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt: And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land; And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous. And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass" (Genesis 41:1-32). And so it happened: there were seven years of great plenty, and after them seven years of famine, and as you know God used that famine in order to send the sons of Jacob to Egypt. God told the Israelites that if they forsook Him He would strike them with scorching heat and drought: “And your heavens which are over your head shall be bronze, and the earth which is under you shall be iron. The Lord will change the rain of your land to powder and dust; from the heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed” (Deuteronomy 28:23-24 - NKJV). And this is what happened in the land of Israel when the Israelites forsook God: He did not send rain on the earth and reduced the Israelites to poverty; this happened in the days of Elijah and in the days of Joel. Therefore when the rain ceases to come down from heaven and because of this there is a famine, that is a judgement of God; no matter what the meteorologists and the astrologers say, that lack of rain is due to the fact that God has decided to punish those people in that way. Earthquakes. God foretold Israel that He would send a great earthquake because of their wickedness. Here is what the prophet Amos said: “Will not the land tremble for this, and all who live in it mourn? The whole land will rise like the Nile; it will be stirred up and then sink like the river of Egypt” (Amos 8:8 – NIV). That earthquake occurred in the days of king Uzziah. As for earthquakes, I remind you that before the return of Christ God will strike the earth with the greatest earthquake of all times, for this is what is written in the book of Revelation (cf. Revelation 16:17-20). I have demonstrated that also wars, famines and earthquakes, being judgments of the Almighty, depend on God. The planets have nothing to do with these events, that is, these events do not depend on the position of the planets, but on the will of God. Our God rules the whole universe and not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from His will: we believe in Him. Astrologers, instead of examining the position of the planets in the heaven, you should rather examine your position in the sight of God and repent of your wickedness. That’s what you ought to do; then you will come to the knowledge of the truth, which will set you free from your deceitful arts that you practice and you will stop trusting in this nonexistent influence of the planets on the destiny of men, and you will put your trust in God, the One who created the planets.
Character, health and outward appearance

Astrologers affirm that planets determine even the character, the health and the outward appearance of men; I do not need to talk at length to refute this other nonsense. Suffice it to say that even in these things God rules over men and that the heavenly bodies do not determine such things.

As for the character of a person, it must be said that each one of us is born with a different character: some have a character similar to that of their father, some others have a character similar to that of their mother; surely one inherits his natural character from his parents. In addition to this, it must be said that our character is influenced somehow by many events which occur in our life, for Solomon says that all depend on time and circumstances (cf. Ecclesiastes 9:11). However, if there is a character which is inherited from our parents through the hereditary types there is another character which is inherited from God when one is born again, for the Holy Spirit comes into him and through the Word He transforms him making him good, humble, righteous, glad, peaceful. That's what God does in those whom He foreknew, for this is what God determined beforehand to do in them, as it is written: “For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren” (Romans 8:29 – NKJV). It is evident, therefore, that the heavenly bodies have no influence on the natural character nor on the spiritual character of a person. It is a very sad thing to hear astrologers say that he who is born under the sign of Taurus has a certain character while he who is born under the sign of Pisces has another character so they do not agree on this or that and so on; this is nothing but the fruit of their imagination, yet many people believe their words and are strongly influenced by them. The serious thing is that astrologers are the cause of the ruin of all those who have decided to be guided by astrology; if you read a book on love written by an astrologer you will come to know the diabolic devices plotted by astrologers against married people. You will read the most shameful things, the strangest things: women born under a certain sign are this or that and therefore they have certain tendencies (lesbian tendencies, or bisexual tendencies, or bestial tendencies, or sadomasochistic tendencies, or the tendency to betray her partner, etc. etc.), so sin is passed off as the solution of their marriage problems. These horoscopes surely undermine the foundations of marriage for they encourage women to sin. So astrologers, after saying that the heavenly bodies determine a specific character and cause certain problems, advice women to give themselves over to fornication, to adultery, to lesbianism, and to other sins; that’s in short their message. The words of these ministers of Satan, therefore, must be rejected for instead of resolving people’s problems they increase them by their craftiness and fraud.

As for health, I say that it is not true that a person born under a certain sign is predisposed to a specific disease while a person born under another sign is predisposed to another disease, for the signs of the Zodiac have no influence on our body. Why then are people sick? What’s the cause of sickness? Some are born with certain diseases because they have inherited them from their parents, who lead a sinful life (they are drunksards, fomicators, homosexuals, etc.), and with this the Word of God agrees, as it is written: “For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me” (Exodus 20:5 – NKJV), and again: “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7 – NKJV). Therefore if the children of some people are sick from their mother’s womb is because of the sin of their parents or one of their parents (some other children are born with diseases not because their parents sinned but that the works of God should be revealed in them, as in the case of the man born blind to whom Jesus gave the sight – John 9:1-7). Some fall ill a short time after their birth because of the wickedness of their parents; for instance the child whom Bath-Sheba bore to David, after David committed adultery with her, was struck by God with a disease and died of that disease after a few days because of the sin committed by David. Other people are sick for they have sinned against God and so He has struck them with diseases to punish them; among the numerous biblical examples of people stricken by God with
diseases. I remind you that of those believers of the church in Corinth who were sick for they had partaken of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:29:31), and also that of king Jehoram who was stricken in his intestines with an incurable disease because of his rebellion (cf. 2 Chronicles 21:18). Some other people are sick—despite of their right conduct—because God has decided to test them by a disease, and to make them patient by it; the example of Job, who afterward was healed, confirms this. Therefore, we do not believe at all that the health of a person depends on the heavenly bodies; it depends on God, but it surely depends on us also, for if we disobey to God and sow to our flesh we will of the flesh reap corruption, and thus sickness; for instance, if we eat too much or drink too much wine we will lose good health.

As for the outward appearance of a man, it also depends on God, who uses the parents of a child to give the child who is to be born the appearance He wishes, for it is God who forms every child in the womb of his mother, as it is written: “For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother’s womb” (Psalm 139:13 – NKJV). Therefore, Joseph, son of Jacob, “was handsome in form and appearance” (Genesis 39:6 – NKJV), for God had made him that way; Moses, when he was born, was a beautiful child, for God made him beautiful; David “was ruddy, with bright eyes, and good-looking” (1 Samuel 16:12 - NKJV), for God made him that way; and last of all, Jesus “had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2 – NIV), for God decided to give Jesus that appearance. The position of the planets at the time of their birth had no influence on their outward appearance.

Guidance in our life and the solution of our problems

Now I am going to examine the horary astrology, which claims to be able to help people to take the right decision in the things that pertain to this life, and to provide the solution of any problem. - That's why many people go to consult astrologers when they need to take an important decision or when they have got a problem in their life to be solved - Without any doubt horary astrology also is a lie, for the simple reason that the position of the planets cannot help people to take the right decision nor can it have any influence on the solution of a problem, no matter what kind of problem a person has.

Only God can tell us what is the right decision to take when we are to take a decision. A young man wants to know if he must marry the young woman with whom he has fallen in love, he is not sure, he does not know if she is the woman God (and not the position of the planets) has appointed for him; what must he do? He must pray and wait on God with patience, for God will surely show him if he must marry her or not. We do not know when and how God will answer his prayer, but we know that God will answer his prayer for He has promised to guide His children. God does not leave them in doubt about what to do but He always enlightens their darkness and infuses into them in a glorious way the assurance they need whenever they are doubtful about what to do in certain circumstances. For it is written: “He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way… Who, then, is the man that fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way chosen for him” (Psalm 25:9,12 – NIV). I have experienced all this, therefore I speak also from personal experience. However, one may have to take a decision about something else; for instance one may desire to know whether he must move from a place and go to another or not, or he may desire to know whether he must start to work on his own account or not, or whether he must rent a house rather than another, and so on. What must he do? The same thing I said before, he must pray to God in faith and wait on Him for the answer to his prayer will not tarry, it will come in due time, neither late nor in advance. Someone may say: ‘You are speaking in the abstract!’ It may be so for those who have no faith, but not for those who have faith in God because to them my words are based on the Word of God. This is what the Word of God teaches us, to trust in God (and not in ourselves or in the position of the planets) with all our heart and to make all our requests known to Him, and to wait patiently for the answer. If we keep this teaching we will be greatly blessed and we will avoid many troubles.
Even if one needs health, money, a house, a wife, children, a car, and so on, he must not consult astrologers for the planets cannot help him. God is the one who can resolve our problems, and so He is the one we must call upon when we are in trouble: “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me” (Psalm 50:15 – NKJV), says God. Are you sick and you want to be healed? Ask God to heal you, He is the one who heals all your diseases. Do you need a wife? Ask God for her. Have you received notice to quit and you see yourselves in the midst of a road without knowing where to go? Pray to God and He will give you a house. Do you need some money and you do not know how to get it? Ask God for it, He meets this kind of need also. Are you unemployed and you think that there is no chance to find a job where you live? Ask God for a job, for He gives a job to those who need to work. Do you want to have some children for your wife is barren? Do not worry, pray to God for it is the One who gives children. What else shall I say? For the time would fail me to speak of all the other distresses in which a man is called to call upon God for He is able to deliver him out of every distress. However, let me speak to you of those circumstances in which one needs to know what is the right thing to do. Do you want to know how to bring up your children? Read the Word of God. Do you need to know how to behave toward your wife in certain circumstances? Read the Word of God. Do you need to know how you must behave toward your employer or one of your fellow workers who is annoying you or exploiting you? Read the Word of God. Do you want to know how to use wisely your money? Read the Word of God and you will avoid wasting money. You may ask me, ‘Why do you speak in this way? Because the Word of God is “a light that shines in a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19 – NKJV), and a lamp to our feet and a light to our path (cf. Psalm 119:105), and if one wants to see good days and love life he must keep the commandments of God which are written in the Bible.

Predictions

Astrologers claim that by observing the map of the sky they can foretell the future. But – as I have just demonstrated – astrology is a false science which cannot foretell the future of a man or of a nation, for only God knows the future of a person or of a nation, and thus He only can make known what is still to come. But the impostors (that is, the astrologers) of every generation, being under the power of Satan and thus without the fear of God, have foretold the future of nations and of some people, basing their predictions on the map of the sky, hoping that their predictions would be fulfilled, but their hope was frustrated by God who caused the omens of these babblers to fail.

Let me cite some of these famous predictions from the book of Paul Couderc, *Astrology*, which was published in Italian in 1977.

In 1179 the world was seized with terror for a certain John of Toledo foretold that by the year 1186 there would be a conjunction of all the planets under the sign of the Scales, so the year 1186 would be an unlucky year and in the month of September of that year the earth would be shaken by earthquakes and great storms. His predictions spread all over the world, in Germany many people dug caves, the archbishop of Canterbury commanded people to fast; in Constantinople the windows of the Royal Palace were bricked in; in Persia some caves were settled. The month of September, in 1186, arrived but there was no cataclysm, there were no storms (except in the north of France, but those storms did not cause damages).

In 1499, John Stoffer, announced that in the month of February, 1524, there would be terrible floods, another universal flood, for many planets would be in conjunction by that year under a damp sign. Despite of the opposition of the astronomers, people were frightened. Some couriers were sent to Charles V so that he might provide some refuges; some people sold their houses and furniture to take refuge on the ships; some others went mad as a result of their anguish. In Brandenburg the margrave and its court gathered together on the mount Kreuzberg, near Berlin, to wait for the fateful days. The month of February in 1524 was unusually dry!

Girolamo Cardano, an Italian scientist, was the most eminent astrologer in his days. In 1552 he went to Scotland to cure a high-ranking prelate. During his return he stayed with Sir John Clerke,
who was the tutor of king Edward VI, who at that time was fifteen years of age. The young prince was in bad health and Cardano was asked to cast the horoscope for the king. Cardano, observing the map of the sky, foretold the king would live a long and happy life, and that when he would reach the age of 55 years and 3 months and 17 days, the king would begin to be sick of various diseases. The following month of July, 1553, that is, nine months after the prediction of Cardano, Edward died. He was just 16 years old.

All these examples of predictions which did not come true are the fulfilment of the following words of God: “I am the Lord ….. who frustrates the signs of the babblers, and drives diviners mad” (Isaiah 44:25 – NKJV), and also of these ones: “Present your case,' says the Lord. ‘Bring forth your strong reasons,’ says the King of Jacob. Let them bring forth and show us what will happen; let them show the former things, what they were, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare to us things to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that you are gods; yes, do good or do evil, that we may be dismayed and see it together. Indeed you are nothing, and your work is nothing; he who chooses you is an abomination” (Isaiah 41:21-24 – NKJV). That’s what he who chooses to consult astrologers is in the sight of God: an abomination! So know this, that astrologers are idle talkers who, taking advantage of the credulity of people and their desire to know the future, foretell events which will not happen. God is just and puts them to shame by frustrating their predictions, showing thus that they are false and that the heavenly bodies can’t reveal the future. Even some people of this world believe that astrologers are impostors! Only God can foretell the future, for only Him knows the things which are still to come. Many biblical passages affirm this, I will quote just some of them: “Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come – yes, let him foretell what will come” (Isaiah 44:7 – NIV); “Remember the former things of old, for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure,’ calling a bird of prey from the east, the man who executes My counsel, from a far country. Indeed I have spoken it; I will also bring it to pass. I have purposed it; I will also do it” (Isaiah 46:9-11 – NKJV); “Even from the beginning I have declared it to you … You have heard; see all this. And will you not declare it?” (Isaiah 48:5,6 – NKJV).

We saw before that God foretold the birth and work of Samson, the birth and work of John the Baptist, the birth of Cyrus and what He would do, as well as what would happen to Esau and Jacob, and that all His predictions came to pass. Who foretold all those things? God. Who brought them to pass? God. But the time would fail to me to tell all the predictions written in the Bible and their fulfilment. I could speak also of the flood which God foretold Noah, of the things which God foretold Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph; and then I could speak of the numerous things God foretold through the prophets which at God’s appointed time were fulfilled. Particularly I could speak of the things which God foretold about the Christ; I could write a whole book on the biblical predictions which came to pass just as God had said. If you are interested in them, take a Bible and read it, and you will recognize that God alone declares from ancient times things that are not yet done, and at His appointed time He brings them to pass. So you can trust with all your heart in what God foretells, for He watches to see that His word is fulfilled. Therefore if you want to know something concerning the future, you must call upon God, who – through the word of wisdom, which is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit - reveals things still to come. Yes, because our God does not change, He still can foretell a marriage, the birth of a child, a war, a famine, a flood, an earthquake, the death of somebody (even the exact time) and many other things. Inquire of Him, call upon Him in faith, desire also the word of wisdom for it is one of the gifts given by God for the profit of all. But I urge you not to consult astrologers, who are idle talkers, greedy for money, people under the power of the devil.

Conclusion
Visualization (that is, the fourth-dimensional thinking)

Paul Yonggi Cho, pastor of a Pentecostal Church in South Korea, has written: ‘If you have not visualized clearly in your heart exactly what you hope for, it cannot become a reality to you ….. The things you really hope for can only be possessed as you visualize them clearly in your heart and mind. When they are clear in your mind the deep desire for God to grant that request now becomes a vision in your heart as well as a prayer. You will dream about it day in and day out as you are in prayer and as you go about your daily work. Without visualizing them you cannot have those things in the realm of the ‘hoped for.’ ….. We have got to learn how to use our visions and dreams.’ (Paul Yonggi Cho, The Fourth Dimension, Volume 2, So. Plainfield, NJ, USA, 1983, pages 25-26). So, according to this pastor, when we pray as well as after we have prayed we must visualize God’s answer to our prayer. In other words, we must fill our mind with visions and dreams. For to him to visualize and to have visions and dreams are the same thing, for somewhere else in his book The Fourth Dimension, after saying that in the Old Testament God often gave visions and dreams concerning future events and that in the New Testament Ananias, Paul and Cornelius had prophetic visions and dreamed dreams, he says: ‘This does not necessarily mean that we should all remain in ecstatic states. However, it does mean that we are to participate in God fulfilling His will in our lives by first envisioning His purpose and then filling our imagination with it through dreaming. Consequently, the believer should not be limited to the three-dimension plane, but should go beyond that into the fourth-dimensional plane of reality’ (Ibid, page 55). To confirm this teaching of his, Paul Yonggi Cho, cites the example of Abraham, who, according to Cho, became father of many nations because ‘he used fourth-dimensional thinking.’ (Ibid., page 59), and the example of Sarah as well, who became mother at the age of ninety for ‘she began to visualize the return of her youth’ (Ibid., page 62).

Confutation

Whenever we plead with God to give us something, we are called to have faith, that is to say, we are called to make known our request to God in faith. If we do so – provided that what we have asked for is according to the will of God for us - we will receive what we have asked of Him. For
Jesus said: “If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer” (Matthew 21:22 – NIV). What does it mean to pray to God in faith? It means to be sure that we will receive what we have asked of Him, for Jesus said: “Whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11:24 – NKJV). Therefore, if we want God to answer our prayer, in our mind there must be no doubt when we pray to God as well as after we have prayed. Doubt makes prayer of no effect: for James said that if one of us lacks wisdom, he must ask of God, “but let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” (James 1:5-8 – NKJV).

Should we visualize what we have asked for, for “believe that you receive them” means that we must visualize them in our mind? Not at all; the Holy Scripture does not teach this thing. If one reads carefully all those examples of men and women who prayed to God both under the Old Testament and the New Testament he will find no trace of this visualization, of which pastor Cho speaks, which is an occult technique rather than a biblical practice. That is confirmed by the fact that Cho puts much emphasis on the mind of man, and on the power the mind exercises on a person, for after saying that Sarah visualized the return of her youth, he says: ‘If a woman begins to think of herself as attractive, she can be. Not only will physical changes take place, but her self-image will change and she will begin to take better care of herself and start do dress as an attractive person’ (The Fourth Dimension, page 62). The visualization of which Paul Yonggi Cho speaks – or the fourth dimension, as he calls it – is very similar to the creative visualization which is widespread in the New Age (the big social-religious movement full of occultism, esoterism and all kinds of lies), which is a meditative technique that can be found in eastern religions and occultism. Through this technique – say its supporters - one can by his imagination, which is very often accompanied by positive confessions, determine all kinds of positive things, such as health, prosperity, etc. In other words, creative visualization is a technique by which one discovers that he is the ‘architect of his life’, that is, God. Shakti Gawain, whose books on creative visualization are very much appreciated by many New Agers, affirms: ‘Creative visualization is the technique of using your imagination to create what you want in your life. There is nothing at all new, strange, or unusual about creative visualization. You are already using it every day -- every minute in fact. It is your natural power of imagination, the basic creative energy of the universe, which you use constantly, whether or not you are aware of it. … Creative visualization is magic in the truest and highest meaning of the word. It involves understanding and aligning yourself with the natural principles that govern the workings of our universe, and learning to use these principles in the most conscious and creative way. If you had never seen a gorgeous flower or a spectacular sunset before, and someone described one to you, you might consider it to be a miraculous thing (which it truly is!). Once you saw a few yourself, and began to learn something about the natural laws involved, you would begin to understand how they are formed and it would seem natural to you and not particularly mysterious. The same is true of the process of creative visualization. What at first might seem amazing or impossible to the very limited type of education our rational minds have received, becomes perfectly understandable once we learn and practice with the underlying concepts involved. Once you do so, it may seem that you are working miracles in your life … and you truly will be! Physically, we are all energy, and everything within and around us is made up of energy. We are all part of one great energy field. Things that we perceive to be solid and separate are in reality just various forms of our essential energy which is common to all. We are all one, even in a literal, physical sense. The energy is vibrating at different rates of speed, and thus has different qualities, from finer to denser. Thought is a relatively fine, light form of energy and therefore very quick and easy to change. Matter is relatively dense, compact energy, and therefore slower to move and change. Within matter there is great variation as well. Living flesh is relatively fine, changes quickly, and is easily affected by many things. A rock is a much denser form, slower to change, and more difficult to affect. Yet even rock is eventually changed and affected by the fine, light energy of water, for example. All forms of energy are interrelated and can affect one another’ (Excerpted from Creative Visualization by Shakti Gawain, 1995).
Therefore, the teaching of Cho on visualization, even though he affirms that it is God who fulfils His purpose in our life, is substantially contaminated with occult teachings. Cho has secretly introduced into the Church some occult principles which are taught by many eastern religions and by occultists. So, brothers and sisters, see to it that you do not give place to the creative visualization, or the fourth dimension, for it is of the devil. There is another untrue thing in the teaching of Yonggi Cho, for according to him imaginations and thoughts are visions and dreams, and he cites the examples of the prophets of old and those biblical passages which speak of visions and dreams to support this. By saying this he has perverted the meaning of these words, that is, ‘visions’ and ‘dreams’, for he deceives believers into believing that to think about something is to receive visions and dreams from God, and therefore they will come true just as in ancient times the visions and dreams of the prophets and other people came true at God’s appointed time. We are really disgusted at what Cho says about dreams and visions. Know this, brothers, that the visions and dreams recorded in the Scripture, which had Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Daniel, Paul, Ananias, Peter and all the others, have nothing to do with the visions and dreams Yonggi Cho speaks of when he speaks about visualization, for the dreams and visions of Cho are nothing but a mental exercise performed by a believer, or rather some thoughts he thinks in his mind, while the visions and dreams one receives from God are supernatural manifestations which comes from God, through which God, in a glorious and inscrutable way, enables us to see certain things. As for visions, they can be seen with open eyes while we are conscious, as in the case of the vision of angels the women saw at the tomb (cf. Matthew 28:1-7), and of the vision of the two angels the disciples of the Lord saw when Jesus was taken up into heaven (cf. Acts 1:9-11); they can also be seen with closed eyes, as in the case of the vision that Saul of Tarsus saw while he was in the house of Judas in which vision he saw a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him (cf. Acts 9:10-12); and they can also be seen while one is into a trance (that is, while one’s physical senses are suspended during a trance) as in the case of the vision Peter saw while he was on the housetop of the house of Simon, a tanner (cf. Acts 10:9-18). As for dreams, one can have divine dreams only while he is asleep; among the dreams mentioned in the Bible we cite the dreams dreamed by Joseph (cf. Genesis 37:5-11); those dreamed by Pharaoh (cf. Genesis 41:1-32), the dream dreamed by Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 3:5-15), and the dreams dreamed by king Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Daniel chapters 2 and 4). Therefore, I urge you not to call your thoughts and imaginations ‘visions’ or ‘dreams’ for they are not visions nor dreams. Of course you can think about a certain thing as many times as you wish and even in faith, but if that thing is not according to the will of God for you, you will never receive it. Instead, if you receive from God a vision or a dream in which God promises to give you something, then be sure that you will receive that thing for that vision or dream is the Word of God and God will bring it to pass at His appointed time. You can think about that vision or that dream as many times as you desire (and you’d better think about it for that vision or dream has come from God and is not something you have invented) and you will be blessed every time you think about it, and believing that that vision or dream will come true at God’s appointed time by God’s set purpose you will rejoice and be comforted greatly during the most difficult times you will have to face – during which it seems that God has forgotten the word He spoke to you in that vision or dream - before seeing that vision or dream come true. Do not call your wishes ‘visions’ or ‘dreams’ either, for the Scripture doesn’t call them in that way. Take heed to yourselves, brothers, for it is wrong and very dangerous to call one’s thoughts or one’s wishes ‘visions’ or ‘dreams’, for in this way one puts them on the same level with the ‘visions’ and ‘dreams’ given by God, and one begins to think that they will surely be fulfilled when it is not necessarily true that they will come true. Of course, if one of your wishes is according to the will of God, He will give it to you, but I say it again, if it is not according to the will of God for you, you will never see the fulfilment of your desire, for it was just a thought. Brothers, may God give you visions and dreams for your edification and grant all your requests. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.
EASTERN PRACTICES

**Yoga**

Yoga is a Sanskrit word which literally means ‘yoking’ and it refers to practices – originated from Hinduism - whose purpose is to unite the individual’s mind with the Divinity, that is, the only true reality which is called Brahman. In other words, yoga consists of some practices which are designed specifically to induce a state of trance which supposedly allows the mind to be drawn upward into a yoking with Brahman. It is a means of withdrawal from the world of illusion (for according to Hinduism all is illusion) to seek the only true Reality.

Yoga consists of eight steps whose aim is to free the individual’s mind from its impurities which hinder man from realizing and knowing the Atman which is within him. According to Hinduism, Atman is the God that is within all human beings, which is nothing but what is called Brahman (the universal Atman which pervades the universe) for Atman and Brahman are one thing. Therefore, at the core of yoga – no matter what kind of yoga - is the following doctrine: the Divinity is within every man, and unless one purifies (or frees) his mind from all the impurities which hinder him from realizing his Divinity he cannot realize that he is divine. Yoga is a means through which a man can realize that he is Brahman (which is falsely called God). Furthermore, it must be said that yoga is strictly linked with the doctrine of reincarnation for it is the means through which one can attain *moksha*, that is, the liberation from the cycle of reincarnation. This liberation is achieved when one realizes his essential union with Brahman.

The eight steps of yoga are these: yamas, niyamas, asanas, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi. The yamas and the niyamas are the major do’s and don’ts. The asanas are meditative postures. Pranayama is breath control. Pratyahara is the withdrawal from the senses; that is the stage at which an adept learns how to control the ‘tentacles’ of consciousness that are called ‘indriyas’ in Sanskrit. Dharana is the discipline of concentration. Dhyana is the discipline of meditation which leads into samadhi. Samadhi is a consciousness of pure detachment from the world in which the soul abides in its essence alone, and in which the yogi discovers his true identity as transcendent spirit and perceives the basic unity of existence. Afterwards, the yogi gets to Nirvana, which is a stable Mergence with the Consciousness of God. The term “Nirvana” means ‘complete burning away’, i.e. obliteration of one’s individuality in the Mergence with God; at that a man, having expanded and dissolved in Him, feels that he is God.

Through samyama (that is, through dharana, dhyana and samadhi) one can obtain some occult powers. In addition to this, it must be said that the aim of pranayama is not only to control prana, that is, the vital energy, but also to arouse the kundalini. Kundalini is the latent power believed to rest at the base of the spine. When aroused it rages like a vicious serpent inside a person with a force that it is impossible to resist. The kundalini produces supernatural psychic powers having their source in demonic beings.

There are about ten forms of yoga. The names of some of them are: raja-yoga, bhakti-yoga, jnana-yoga, karma-yoga, tantra-yoga, kundalini-yoga, and hatha-yoga. The most famous form of yoga in the Western world is hatha-yoga, which many consider merely a neutral form of exercise, a soothing and effective alternative for those who abhor jogging.

**Confutation**

Yoga is of the devil for its purpose is to lead man to realize that he is God (that is, he and God are one and the same) or to discover within himself his godhood. Yes, because according to the philosophy that underlies yoga man is ignorant of his divine nature and thus he needs to
discover it, and yoga is the means which will lead him to this discovery! Listen to what brother Rabindranath R. Maharaj, who used to practice yoga every day when he was a guru, says in his book *Death of a Guru*: ‘What I experienced in meditation agreed with the Vedic teaching about Brahman, but my experience of life at other times disagreed. In Yogic trance I felt a oneness with the whole universe; I was no different from a bug or cow or distant star. We all partook of the same Essence. Everything was Brahman, and Brahman was everything. ‘And that thou art!’ said the Vedas, telling me that Brahman was my true Self, the god within that I worshiped sitting in front of a mirror’ (Rabindranath R. Maharaj with Dave Hunt, *Death of a Guru*, Hodder and Stoughton, Great Britain 1986, page 97). Whereas the Holy Scripture teaches that man is just a creature of God and can never become God, and that those who believe they are God are God’s enemies for they are full of pride. In ancient times God rebuked sharply the prince of Tyre for he believed that he was God, as it is written in the book of the prophet Ezekiel: ‘The word of the LORD came again unto me, saying, Son of man, say unto the prince of Tyrus, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thine heart is lifted up, and thou hast said. I am a God, I sit in the seat of God, in the midst of the seas; yet thou art a man, and not God, though thou set thine heart as the heart of God: Behold, thou art wiser than Daniel; there is no secret that they can hide from thee: With thy wisdom and with thine understanding thou hast gotten thee riches, and hast gotten gold and silver into thy treasures: By thy great wisdom and by thy traffick hast thou increased thy riches, and thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Because thou hast set thine heart as the heart of God; Behold, therefore I will bring strangers upon thee, the terrible of the nations: and they shall draw their swords against the beauty of thy wisdom, and they shall defile thy brightness. They shall bring thee down to the pit, and thou shalt die the deaths of them that are slain in the midst of the seas. Wilt thou yet say before him that slayeth thee, I am God? but thou shalt be a man, and no God, in the hand of him that slayeth thee. Thou shalt die the deaths of the uncircumcised by the hand of strangers; for I have spoken it, saith the Lord GOD.’ (Ezekiel 28:1-10). Some decades ago, God rebuked also Rabindranath R. Maharaj for the same reason, that is, because he believed he was God. Pay attention to what he says in his book *Death of a Guru*: ‘At the end of my third year in high school, Ma and Aunt Revati invited a large group of neighbors and relatives to join us in a special puja in our home. Those arriving approached to make their respectful bows and to reminisce a bit upon my father’s greatness. Their comments, overheard here and there as the room filled, bore out the admiration I read in their appraising eyes. I was a Yogi who would bring fame to our town, a guru who would one day have many, many followers. My inner conflicts were forgotten in the sheer pleasure of being worshiped. Although I was not quite 15, I knew that already I had attained a status among Hindus that was the envy of some pundits. It gave me a good, honest feeling to know that I was not among the hypocrites my Uncle Deonarine despised. Our Baba, Pundit Jankhi Prasad Sharma Maharaj, my spiritual adviser and greatest inspiration, the acknowledged Hindu leader for all of Trinidad, performed the elaborate ceremony. Proudly I assisted. It was a great occasion for me. Fingering a large, fragrant garland of flowers around my neck, I stood near the altar greeting the guests after the ceremony. A neighbor laid several pieces of money one after another at my feet, and bowed to receive my blessing – the Shakti pat that every worshiper craved because of its supernatural effect. I knew her to be a poor widow who earned pitifully little for her long hours of hard labor. The offerings I received at one ceremony would far exceed her wages for a month. The gods had decreed this system of giving to Brahmmins, and the Vedas declared it to be of great benefit to the giver, so why should I feel guilty? Uncle Deonarine’s words rose vividly before me in all their venom: ‘It’s a business with all of them; they do nothing without pay … mainly from the poor!’ I glanced at her small offering of coins uncomfortably. Of course I had much to give her in exchange. Reaching out to touch her forehead in bestowal of my blessing, I was startled by a voice of unmistakable omnipotent authority: ‘You are not God, Rabil!’ My arm froze in midair. ‘You … are … not … God!’ The words smote me like the slash of a cutlass felling the tall green cane. Instinctively I knew that the true God, the Creator of all, had spoken these words, and I began to tremble. It was a fraud, a blatant deception to pretend to bless this bowing woman. I pulled back my hand, acutely aware
that many eyes were watching and wondering. I felt that I must fall at the holy feet of the true
God and ask his forgiveness – but how could I explain that to all these people!’ Abruptly I turned
and pushed my way through the crowd, leaving that poor woman staring after me in
bewilderment. Inside my room, I locked the door, tore the garland of flowers from around my
neck with trembling fingers, flung it to the floor, and fell across my bed, sobbing’ (Rabindranath
R. Maharaj with Dave Hunt, Death of a Guru, Hodder and Stoughton, Great Britain 1986, pages
107-108). As you can see, God resists those who believe they are God. And since the purpose
of yoga is to lead men to believe they are God, we conclude that the father of yoga is the devil.
Yoga is of the devil because through it a man reaches an altered state of consciousness, which
is the doorway to the occult. In other words, yoga is of the devil because it enables those who
practice it to contact evil spirits (demons), that is, to see them, to talk with them, and to receive
occult powers from them. In some cases yoga leads to demon-posssession, as in the case of
those in whom the kundalini power is aroused. I will cite again some words of brother
Rabindranath R. Maharaj, who used to practice yoga every day when he was a guru, to show
you how dangerous is the practice of yoga: ‘Before the age of ten, in addition to my daily
meditation, I practiced Yoga – the positions, breathing exercises, and meditation – on the
veranda outside my room from midnight to 1:30 A. M., when everyone else was asleep. I did
either Brumadhya Drishti or Madhyama Drishti. This concentration, combined with the breathing
exercises, projected me into realms of consciousness totally unrelated to the world around me.
Through Yoga I experienced increasingly the presence of spirit beings who were guiding me and
giving me psychic powers. The gods were real!’ (Rabindranath R. Maharaj, op. cit., pages 89-
90); ‘Nothing was more important than our daily transcendental meditation, the heart of Yoga,
which Krishna advocated as the surest way to eternal Bliss. But it could also be dangerous.
Frightening psychic experiences awaited the unwary meditator, similar to a bad trip on drugs.
Demons described in the Vedas had been known to take possession of some Yogis. Kundalini
power, said to be coiled like a serpent at the base of the spine, could produce ecstatic
experiences when released in deep meditation - or, if not properly controlled, it could do great
mental and even bodily harm. The line between ecstasy and horror was very fine. For that
reason we initiates were closely supervised by the Brahmacharya and his assistant. During the
daily meditation I began to have visions of psychedelic colors, to hear unearthly music, and to
visit exotic planets where the gods conversed with me, encouraging me to attain even higher
states of consciousness. Sometimes in my trance I encountered the same horrible demonic
creatures that are depicted by the images in Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, and other religious
temples. It was a frightful experience, but the Brahmacharya explained that it was normal and
urged me to pursue the quest for Self-realization. At times I experienced a sense of mystical
unity with the universe. I was the universe, Lord of all, omnipotent, omnipresent’ (Ibid., 56-57);
‘Often while I was in deep meditation the gods became visible and talked with me. At times I
seemed to be transported by astral projection to distant planets or to worlds in other dimensions.
It would be years before I would learn that such experiences were being duplicated in
laboratories under the watchful eyes of parapsychologists through the use of hypnosis and LSD.
In my Yogic trances most often I would be alone with Shiva the Destroyer, sitting fearfully at his
feet, the huge cobra coiled about his neck staring at me, hissing and darting out its tongue
threateningly’ (Ibid., page 75).
Having demonstrated then that through yoga one is led to believe that he is God (as well as that
through it one can achieve the liberation from the cycle of reincarnation, which is another lie),
and that yoga induces a state of trance in which demons manifest themselves by appearing to
those who practice yoga and by taking possession of them, it is evident that every Christian
must flee yoga, lest he give place to the devil.
Let no one deceive you with vain words such as ‘You can practice yoga apart from the
philosophical and religious beliefs that are behind it!’, for it is not possible to separate yoga from
the philosophy which is behind it.
Know this, that there is but one way to have access to God, and this way is Jesus Christ. If a
man wants to know the only true God who created the universe (but He is not the universe),
whose throne is in heaven, he must repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. Only in this way he can unite himself with the Lord and become “one spirit with Him” (1 Corinthians 6:17 – NKJV). Of course, he will not become God, for he will remain a creature of God separated from His Creator. All the other ways, yoga included, are ways which don’t lead man to the knowledge of God nor to the union with Him. If a man has already come to the knowledge of God through Christ, he can have access to God only by His Son, for Paul says that in Christ Jesus “we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him” (Ephesians 3:12 – NKJV). Note that it is through faith in Jesus – and not through a practice such as yoga - that we have access to the Father. I say this because there are some people who have created the so called Christian yoga, through which – they claim – a Christian can have access to God. Brothers, let no one deceive you. Draw near to the Father through Christ, that is, in His name; whether you pray or sing do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but do not resort to this so called Christian yoga in order to draw near to God, for yoga – being an eastern practice rooted in occultism - cannot become a Christian practice, just as spiritism cannot become a Christian practice. Know this, that there is no such thing as ‘Christian yoga,’ just as there is no such thing as ‘Christian spiritism’. If a practice is Christian, that is, if a practice is biblical and thus we are allowed to follow it, it can’t be influenced by Hinduism nor by occultism, for everything the Bible commands us to do is pure and just, free from all kinds of errors or superstitions. So I warn you against the so called Christian yoga, for it is a device of the devil to introduce into the Church the Hindu philosophy which is rooted in occultism. Remember that in the days of the prophet Isaiah God forsook the Israelites for they were “filled with eastern ways” (Isaiah 2:6 – NKJV).

**Acupuncture**

Acupuncture (which literally means ‘needle piercing’) is a traditional form of Chinese medicine which consists in inserting very fine needles into the skin to stimulate specific anatomic points in the body (called acupuncture points) for therapeutic purposes. The acupuncture points are stimulated to balance the movement of life energy (called qi or yin yang) in the body to restore health. The advocates of this so called medicine claim that acupuncture can be effectively used to treat emotional problems such as anxiety and depression as well as many diseases such as headaches, ulcers, digestive disorders, arthritis, sciatica, asthma, bronchitis, etc. Acupuncture originated in China thousands of years ago, and was introduced into the West at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Today is a well-known and widespread practice in the West. In Europe there are thousands of physicians who use acupuncture to cure their patients. Acupuncture, like macrobiotics, is based on the Chinese concept of yin and yang – most often represented by two rain drop, or fish, shapes that form a circle. Yin and yang are two opposing but complementary forces which – according to the Chinese philosophy - govern the body, mind and emotions of every human being. When these two opposing forces are in balance man feels good, but if one force dominates the other, it brings about an imbalance that results in ill health. So the aim of the acupuncturist is to maintain a balance of yin and yang within the whole person to prevent illness and to restore health. In other words, these two life opposing forces called yin and yang circulate in special channels (called meridians) throughout the body; disease is caused by an imbalance of these forces and can be rectified by regulating the flow of energy (called Chi or Kì) in these meridians, and this can be achieved by stimulating acupuncture points located along these meridians. The Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine and Self-Help says: “For health to be maintained the ‘chi’ [life energy or Yin Yang] must flow without hindrance and the skill of the acupuncturist lies in his ability to free the meridians so that there is an even energy flow. This is done by the light insertion of needles of pure copper, silver or gold into the flesh at specific points along the lines of the meridians” (The Encyclopedia of Alternative Medicine and Self-Help, page 21).
Confutation

As you can see, this Chinese medicine called acupuncture – just like Transcendental meditation (MT) and Yoga which originated in the East too – claims to be able to heal many diseases. What shall we say about acupuncture then? We shall say that it must be rejected for the following reasons.

First, it is inconsistent with the will of God for us in Christ Jesus. Let me explain to you what I mean. A believer can fall ill just like any other human being on the earth; however, what does God want him to do when he is sick? The answer to this question is found in the epistle written by James: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:14-15 – NKJV). Here is what any believer who is sick must do then, he must call the elders of the church (and not the doctor, no matter if the doctor is a doctor of traditional medicine or alternative medicine) who must anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord and pray over him in faith. That’s the practice to be followed by the people of God; and we can fully trust in it for it is prescribed by God, who created all things, who is good and has an endless wisdom.

Second, because acupuncture, just like any other kind of medicine, not only leads believers to put their trust in man rather than in God (and this is wrong, according to the Holy Scripture) but it also leads them to believe the following principles of the Chinese philosophy: all of nature and the universe (including man) is eternally existing as vibrations of impersonal, polarized energy called Yin and Yang, and the key to physical well-being is to balance the positive and negative aspects of this energy. Which principles – being rooted in occultism - contradicts the truth, and therefore they are false principles; and as you know the father of lies is the devil, who is the prince of this world. And the Scripture commands us to resist the devil. Brothers, beware of the Chinese philosophy (as well as of any other kind of philosophy), lest you wander from the truth which is in Christ Jesus. Remember what Paul wrote to the Colossians: “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ” (Colossians 2:8 – NKJV).

I conclude by saying this: know this, that whoever claims to be able to manipulate the imbalance of Yin Yang energy by placing needles along some points in the human body to stimulate the increase or decrease of Yin and Yang is involved in the occult and you must beware of him, lest you come under the influence of the evil spirits which assist the acupuncturist in the practice of acupuncture or rather of which the acupuncturist is slave, for all those who are involved in the occult are slaves of the evil spirits which assist them. Well, someone may say to me now, ‘Don’t you think that one can be an acupuncturist without being involved in the occult?’ No, I don’t think so, for acupuncture is a therapy based on occult principles, and thus anyone who practices it is involved in the occult somehow, for he is assisted by occult forces. Even if he is not a magician or does not know that there are evil spirits behind acupuncture which enable him to do his work, he is performing something which needs the assistance of evil spirits and he himself is under the influence of evil spirits.

So, brothers and sisters in the Lord, you who are sick, flee acupuncture and put your trust in the Lord who is the One who heals all your diseases (cf. Psalm 103:3).

Martial arts

Martial arts is a term that applies to all forms of combat-techniques, whether the more popular oriental forms such as tai chi chuan, karate, aikido, judo, and jujitsu, or the Western forms such as fencing, boxing, and archery. This writing of mine is concerned with the Oriental martial arts,
which are so widespread also in the West and which are practiced even by many Christians all over the world.

First of all let me say something about the name 'martial arts.' All the oriental combat-techniques are called martial arts because they are 'of warfare' or 'suitable for warfare' (that's the meaning of the word martial), and they are not merely combat-techniques but also an expression of an eastern spiritual philosophy (that's why they are referred to as 'arts').

Let us now speak briefly about some of the most famous martial arts.

**Tai Chi Chuan** is a Chinese martial art. The term 'Taiji' means 'the cosmos', and 'quan' is the short form for 'quan fa' which means 'fist techniques' and refers to what westerners today would term as kungfu. So Tai Chi Chuan can mean 'supreme ultimate fist.' The real origins of Tai Chi Chuan are obscure. Many attribute it to a 15th century Taoist priest named Chang Shanfeng. Tai Chi Chuan is composed of a series of movements or forms. These movements flex joints and muscles throughout the body, which in turn massage various acupuncture points (Chi channels) and organs within the body. This helps promotes the flow of Chi energy within the body. Yes, because this martial art is based on the Chinese concept of the vital energy called 'chi' or 'ki', which pervades all universe. So, through a series of breath control exercises and techniques the practitioners of Tai Chi Chuan seek to 'collect, cultivate, and store' the chi force. In other words, their aim is to improve the flow and strength of their Chi energy. Tai Chi Chuan was created with the basic intention of strengthening internal Chi. With a stronger Chi, and with the ability to direct at will (most practitioners testify that they can feel the Chi flowing through their body and are able, to varying degrees, to direct this flow), the practitioner can concentrate Chi at one point of his or her body when attacked, making this point stronger and less susceptible to injury. When the internal force is delivered during an attack, the power releases is very great.

The advocates of Tai Chi Chuan claim that this martial art promotes physical, emotional and mental health, and in addition to this it leads to spiritual fulfilment. There are many and varied forms of spiritual fulfilment. From the Taoist perspective, which constitutes the underlying philosophy in Tai Chi Chuan, these many and varied forms of spiritual fulfilment can be categorized into three major levels: 1) attaining good health and longevity in this life; 2) become a saint or an immortal; 3) attaining the Tao, which is expressed in other cultures as attaining Buddhahood, union with Brahman, return to God.

**Aikido** is a Japanese martial art which was founded in 1942 by Morihei Ueshiba (1883-1969). Aikido does not have an attack form. The practitioners of Aikido, therefore, do not kick, punch, or in any other manner, attempt to hurt their opponents. This martial art employs a series of flowing circular movements - in conjunction with locking, holding, moving, and tumbling techniques - to turn an opponent's force against himself. In other words, the aikido practitioner concentrates on deflecting blows and checking offensive attacks by meeting, rather than blocking, a blow, and redirecting the flow of an opponent's ki (energy force), dissipating it, and then using joint manipulation (wrists elbows or shoulders) to turn the opponent's ki against him until he is thrown or pinned. As for the meaning of Aikido, ai means 'to gather or harmonize'; ki is the universal life energy; do means 'an artful path of discovery; so aikido means 'an artful path of discovering how to gather and harmonize the energy of the universe,' or 'the way of harmony with ki.' As it can be seen, aikido also is based on the concept of the Chi or Ki energy which pervades the universe. The goal of this martial art, according to Morithei Ueshiba, is 'the unification of the fundamental creative principle, ki, permeating the universe, and the individual ki, inseparable from breath-power, of each person' (Kisshomaru Ueshiba, The Spirit of Aikido, trans. Taitetsu Unno - Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1987 -, 15. See also Draeger, Modern Bujutsu and Budo, 137-62)

**Karate** ('empty hand') is a form of fighting that started on the island of Okinawa in the 1600s. Recognized for its devastating array of hand and foot strikes, karate is characterized by its demanding regimen of rigorous physical conditioning, concentrated breathing exercises, and
repetitive rehearsals of blocking, striking, and breaking techniques (for breaking boards, bricks, and the like). Karate is strictly linked with Zen Buddhism. Masatatsu Oyama says: ‘Always more vital to karate than technique or strength is the spiritual element that lets you move and act with complete freedom. In striving to enter the proper frame of mind Zen meditation is of great importance. The man who wants to walk the way of karate cannot afford to neglect Zen and spiritual training.’ (Masatatsu Oyama, Vital Karate - Tokyo: Japan Publications Trading Co., Ltd., 1983 - p. 8); and Daeshik Kim and Tom W. Leland affirm. ‘Karate is a mental and moral exercise, indeed, almost a spiritual experience. In each practice session there is a concerted effort to unite mind, spirit and body just as Bodhidharma sought to do with Zen priests almost 2,000 years ago.”(Daeshik Kim and Tom W. Leland, Karate And Personal Defense - Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1971 -, p. 4); ‘Karate is Zen -- so says Oyama and many other karate masters. Zen is a school of Buddhism that has been called the Religion of Immediate Reality. The aim of Zen is to awaken the student to his true self and thus bring about a high degree of self knowledge through inward meditation. Zen students seek peace of mind through an enlightened awakening of an intuitive wisdom which they feel is dormant now in all people. Zen meditation tries to achieve ‘no mindedness’ which may be acquired by concentration and special breathing exercises which are taught to advanced karate students. Karate when combined with Zen meditation can appreciably assist the student’s quest for peace of mind and equanimity in the face of conflict and tension.”(Ibid., p. 5). In other words, the aim of Zen is the emptying of the mind which brings about a feeling of union with the universe. This spiritually unified state is a non-dualistic state of mind in which the distinction between subject and object is no more and the practitioner feels to be one with ‘the absolute.’

It is true that not all karatekas practice Zen Buddhism as such, however, some impact of the Zen philosophy is made upon every student of the art of karate, and in addition to this it must be said that to practice karate successfully, it is essential that a karateka cultivate spiritual power through concentration, and the basic element of this power is ki. In other words, he cannot ignore the spiritual implications. Hear what Tom Harris says about the way karate works: ‘Ki is an amorphous, undefinable force, but it is generally described as the energy of life itself. It binds all living things together and gives each person his or her spiritual, physical and mental power. In most schools, beginning karatekas won’t worry too much about ki. They focus mainly on proper technique and breathing exercises. But in these basic activities, they are laying the groundwork for later ki exercises. Through the power of ki, a karateka can break through concrete blocks as if they were made of paper. As karatekas develop heightened physical control, they become more aware of the seat of ki in their body. With concentration, karatekas can move their ki up and down, so their source of energy is higher and lower. Experienced karatekas generally center their ki, in order to achieve maximum balance and power. Ki is absolutely crucial in the higher levels of karate: It gives masters the power they need to break blocks and topple much larger opponents.’ Furthermore, it must be said that the term ‘Kiai’, the karate shout of power is formed from ‘Ki’ the symbol for spirit or energy, and ‘ai’ the symbol for a meeting or union. The shout of power is but the product of the union of body mind and spirit. The Kiai is the release of energy from the Hara, located two inches (three fingers) below the navel. Ki is released through kiai. As you can see, only a small part of the karatekas’ ability to perform seemingly superhuman feats comes from physical power, for the main source of their ability is spiritual.

Judo (the ‘gentle way’) is a martial art derived from Jujutsu. It was created by Professor Jigoro Kano who was born in Japan in 1860 and who died in 1938 after a lifetime of promoting Judo. In 1964 men's Judo competition became a part of the Olympics, the only eastern martial art that is an official medal sport. In 1992 Judo competition for women was added to the Olympics. Judo is practiced on mats and consists primarily of throws (nage-waza), along with katame-waza (grappling), which includes osaekomi-waza (pins), shime-waza (chokes), and kansetsu-waza (armbars). Additional techniques, including atemi-waza (striking) and various joint locks are found in the judo katas. Judo is generally compared to wrestling but it retains its unique combat
forms. Judo also has a spiritual aspect, for its purpose is the perfection of man. Jigoro Kano said: ‘Judo is the way to the most effective use of both physical and spiritual strength. By training you in attacks and defenses it refines your body and your soul and helps you make the spiritual essence of Judo a part of your very being. In this way you are able to perfect yourself and contribute something of value to the world. This is the final goal of Judo discipline. What about the Ki energy then? Do judokas use and develop Ki energy? Yes, they do, even though Judo texts do not speak of the Japanese concept of ki energy. Listen what is written in the book History of Kodokan Judo: ‘ Typically, Judo texts do not reference the Japanese concept of Ki. This oddly distinguishes Judo from virtually all of the other Japanese martial arts, at least in the textbook area, particularly Aikido and Kendo. Yet, ‘Judo theory and training make implicit assumptions concerning this principle.’ This seeming absence of an important martial concept from Judo literature highlights the difference between Kano’s philosophy of martial practice, and those of virtually all the other modern martial art titans. Kano believed that ki as well as enlightenment and understanding would follow as a natural result of rigorous training in Judo. A modern proponent of Aikido, on the other hand, would argue that technical proficiency follows the development of Ki. Kano’s interpretation reflects the more classical approach of the Taoist philosophers; experience is the key to understanding; and not the other way around. .... Experience, not discourse, is the underlying philosophy of Tao. Kano’s attitude reflects this classical approach: Judoka practice randori to develop Ki.’ Randori is a Japanese term meaning ‘free practice.’

Wing Chun (‘glorifying springtime’) is a Chinese martial art. It is one of the most popular forms of Kung-Fu. This martial art was named after a woman known as Yim Wing Chun by her husband Leung Pok To in tribute to her superior skills as a martial artist. Yim Wing Chun was taught her art in the late 18th century by a Buddhist nun called Ng Mui. Wing Chun has three basic exercises: 1) siu nium tao ("little idea"/"minimal attention" form), which teaches the basic movements, and how to generate lim lick (mind power); 2) chum kiu ("to find the bridge" form), which teaches the integration of the upper and lower body movements and how to join one's partner; 3) biu jee ("shooting fingers" form), which teaches attacking techniques, and how to generate energy in one's limbs as needed or desired. Wing Cun practitioners, too, use and develop the ki energy. In an article titled ‘The soft force of Wing Chun’, written by Kris Eckert, we read as follows: ‘The essence of wing chun, from its inception, has been in the development of soft, yet penetrating force. All the movements, without exception, can be performed effectively by a small woman against a larger, stronger opponent. This kind of soft, feminine force does not come from hard external training. It is acquired through repetitive, precise positioning of the body. The positions and techniques are always practiced in a calm and relaxed manner. While the process to achieve this kind of force should be emphatically soft and relaxed, the end result for anyone on the receiving end of wing chun can be quite destructive’ (In Inside Kung-fu, February 1992, p. 52)

Kyudo (‘the Way of the Bow’) is the oldest of Japan’s traditional martial arts. It is a form of archery which is heavily influenced by Zen Buddhism. ‘In kyudo you don’t try to hit the target,” says Japanese Kyudoka Kanjuro Shibata. ‘It’s a matter of precision and discipline: the relationship you have with the bow, the arrow, your body, and your mind. Kyudo is like zazen, but it is standing meditation. When you shoot, you can see the reflection of your mind, as in a mirror. The target is the mirror. When you release, you cut ego. You can see your own mind.’ Kyudo practitioners, too, use and develop Ki energy. Here is what we read on the web site http://www.kyudo.org.uk: ‘Technique cannot be considered without an understanding of spiritual energy. Neither aspect can function without the other. The acquisition of technique grows with the increase in body-mind awareness to form a harmonious working together of the bow, body and spirit. Balance is taken physically and emotionally from the centre of the body. Unlike a Western bow where the focus is primarily around the shoulders and arms, with the Japanese bow the centre of attention is placed in the region below the navel known as the Tanden. The
vitality and energy of the body-mind is generated from this point, creating a sense of centredness and well being. Each movement of the shooting is co-ordinated with the breath to flow in a continuity of action which forms an inseparable whole. All the movements for shooting culminate in the full draw when the archer is in every sense, physically and mentally, centred within the arc of the bow. In this condition of the full draw, all the physical and mental balances must be fulfilled to effect a correct release. At the higher levels of practice the archer attempts a release where the expansion of energy reach its highest point and the string is ripped from the glove hand in a spontaneous and natural action. The full draw and the release is the moment where the stability of the archer's physical, mental and spiritual state is most vulnerable. At this moment the target becomes the mirror of the archer's soul. As you can see, the purpose of Kyudo practitioners is to reach an harmonious spiritual union with the bow and this union can be achieved using and controlling the ki energy which is in them. When this union is achieved, then the archer shoots spontaneously the arrow. A correct shooting therefore is the outcome of finding such union.

Kaminaga Hanshi, a famous kyudoka, describes the process of shooting as follows: 'If you consider shagi (shooting technique) in its individual parts, there is always discrimination and differentiation; but in order to perfect shagi, to unify it, and to give it life as true kyudo shooting, you must completely use up all of your energy, right down to the last ounce. When you reach the state of utter desperation where you are at the bitter end, where the bow has taken away your strength and where you can no longer apply any technique, the conviction that you yourself must take care of your own situation will come into being. That is, when your ego is stripped away, the kihaku (spiritual strength, guts, and determination) that makes the shooting crystal clear will grow like an explosion from deep within your heart and soul. It (kai) should be deep until everything quietly becomes clear and serene, since this will nurture the spirit of absolute certainty, where, no matter what the situation, there is no hurrying, no agitation, no fear, and no hesitation. In this way, you show your true Self, and then and only then will bright and open-minded sae be born. In kai, when spirit and technique merge, a spark is ignited and this becomes kai (meeting), that is, hanare (parting). The instant that kokoro and technique meet is hanare. In this instant, all idle thoughts are extinguished, and you enter the state of shinku muso, the Void of No Thought. Because you are in the Void of No Thought, the transition called hanare occurs. No matter where it is, the mathematical number one is always one and cannot be reduced further; but when the space called the Void is entered during shooting, one becomes mu (nothing), all the Universal Laws return to one (this is not the mathematical number one), that is, Great Harmony, and this one penetrates space and is restored to one, that is, ten thousand. This space is the state of munen muso (no intention, no thought), and by entering this state you are freed from all past attachments, an unpolluted light shines forth, and there is the soul, just as it was when it was born. When, through shooting, you bathe in the absolute Void, wickedness is reborn as righteousness, sloth is reborn as diligence, weakness is reborn as strength, an evildoer becomes virtuous, a darkened spirit becomes bright, and the mind and spirit are purified.' (Kyudo Manual, Vol. II, p. 55-56)

Confutation

A Christian must not practice the martial arts for the following reasons.

- The martial arts are violent, and Christians, being sons of peace, are not called to resort to violence even in defense of themselves, that is to say, Christians are not called to resist their enemies when they are beaten or threatened or robbed: ‘You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two …. You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of
your Father in heaven ...” (Matthew 5:38-41, 43-45 – NKJV), Jesus said to His disciples. So Christians, when they are attacked by their enemies, are not called to defend themselves with their hands or foot or with chains or swords or clubs or any other carnal weapon, and thus they do not need to learn any art of self-defense. Christians, by not resisting their enemies, honor the Gospel, for they follow the example of Jesus Christ who humbled Himself not resisting those who persecuted Him, beat Him and crucified Him. And thus they show that they are strong and valiant men in the Lord, even though they appear 'weak' to the world. Bear in mind that those who put the above mentioned words of Christ into practice, that is, those who have self-control (and remember that self-control is the fruit of the Holy Spirit), are better than the valiant soldiers who perform great exploits during a war, as it is written: “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city” (Proverbs 16:32 – NKJV).

- The martial arts are based on occult philosophies, which encourage martial artists to develop and use the ki energy, which is an alleged mystical force that pervades the universe. This force is from the devil, the prince of this world, and the demons which follow him, and enables martial artists to perform feats which actually go beyond the outer limits of their personal human capacity. Therefore, anyone who seeks to use this energy is actually using a demonic power, behind which there are wicked spiritual beings, and as a result he is under the influence of these spiritual beings. According to the Holy Scripture, Christians must not give place to the devil (cf. Ephesians 4:27), therefore they must avoid all practices that are rooted in occult philosophies – which have been created by the devil - lest they fall under the influence of the devil or become demon-possessed. Christians must have nothing to do with such things for their good. Christians are a holy nation, and they are called to desire the powers of the world to come, that is, the spiritual gifts, which are given by the Holy Spirit, who is the third Person of the Godhead. These powers are holy for they come from a holy person, that is, the Holy Spirit. To these powers Christians can resort for they are manifestations of the power of the Holy Spirit. By the power of the Holy Spirit signs and wonders can be performed in the name of Jesus Christ, which are useful and wonderful things through which the name of God is praised and the Gospel is confirmed.

- The martial arts encourage the individual to practice a form of meditation whose purpose is to lead to a non-dualistic state of mind in which the distinction between subject and object disappears and the practitioner becomes one with ‘god’ or ‘the absolute’, and so when the individual reaches such state of mind he believes that he is God and that all is God, and therefore this form of meditation advocates a form of self-salvation. That’s why those who practice Eastern meditation think that they do not need to accept Jesus Christ as their personal saviour, because they think that they are able to save themselves. All this contradicts the teaching of the Holy Scripture, according to which there is a clear distinction between God and His creation, and man cannot save himself through his deeds. It is evident, therefore, that Christians must not participate in such forms of meditation, lest they be deceived into believing the above mentioned lies. In addition to this, these forms of Eastern meditation can lead to demon oppression or demon-possession, for through them the individual reaches an altered state of consciousness during which demons can appear to him, talk with him, guide him, give him spiritual powers, and oppress him or even possess him. So, brothers and sisters, flee this kind of meditation.

Of course you are called to meditate, but the meditation you are called to practice is not at all like the Eastern meditation, for you are called to meditate on God, on His works, and on His Word, and this meditation will never lead you to think that you are God or that you are one with the universe, nor will it lead you to be oppressed or possessed by evil spirits. I have proved that the oriental martial arts are harmful, therefore Christians must flee them lest they come under the influence of the demonic powers which are behind the martial arts.
Transcendental Meditation (TM)

The Transcendental Meditation (TM) – which means to ‘meditate on the beyond’ and which has been renamed ‘the science of creative intelligence’ - is a Hindu meditation technique founded by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi (born in India around 1910). After graduating from Allahabad University in 1942 with a degree in physics, Mahesh became the disciple of the Indian religious leader Guru Dev, who instructed Maharishi to devise a meditation technique from the Vedas, which are part of the Hindu scripture. TM is a spiritual Hindu practice which is presented to the Western world as a scientific way of reducing stress and finding peace within oneself. TM is practiced while sitting with the eyes closed, and it involves breath control, concentration and the use of a sound, called mantra, that is repeated mentally in a particular way.

The purpose of the Transcendental Meditation is to unite the meditator with the absolute Transcendental Being, called God by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Who is the God of Maharishi Yogi? Is He the God spoken of in the Bible? No, he isn’t, for Mr. Maharishi affirms: ‘Everything in creation is the manifestation of the unmanifested absolute impersonal being, the omnipresent God’ (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Transcendental Meditation, p. 266); ‘This impersonal God is that being which dwells in the heart of everyone’ (ibid, p. 269); ‘Each individual is, in his true nature, the impersonal God’ (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Science of Being and Art of Living, Rev. Ed. 1967, p. 276). As you can see, according to Mr. Maharishi God is everything and everything is God, man also is God or part of God for he is God in his true nature (this doctrine about God is called pantheism); so his God is an impersonal God. Actually his God is nothing but Brahman which is – according to Hinduism – the ultimate reality: formless, inexpressible, both Creator and all that is created, which comprises both good and evil, life and death, health and disease. The aim of TM, therefore, is to realize one’s essential union with Brahman, that is, one’s inner divinity. When one realizes this union with Brahman, his mind loses its individuality and becomes a cosmic mind, it becomes omnipresent and reaches the eternal pure existence.

Confutation

Transcendental Meditation is from the devil for the following reasons.

First, because TM’s purpose is to realize one’s essential union with Brahman, that is to say, its purpose is to attain one’s Godhood. Whereas the Holy Scripture teaches that man is just a creature of God and he can never become God or attain Godhood for he is part of God’s creation. God is the Creator, while man is a creature; God is a personal being (who sees, hears, speaks, etc. - and not an impersonal God - so man can know Him, talk to Him, have fellowship with Him) separate from His creation. So man is not to be identified with God. It is evident, therefore, that TM’s is harmful, for it deceives the meditators into believing they are God, and those who believe they are God are God’s enemies for they are full of pride.

Second, because TM’s purpose is to induce the meditator to contact demons (that is, to see demons, to talk with them, to invite them in his life), which are evil spirits which live in the air and are ready to hurt people by oppressing or possessing them. These demons are the Hindu deities such as Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Krishna, Sarasvati, which the meditator is encouraged to invoke by repeating mantras. A mantra is a sound symbol of one or more syllables used to induce a mystical state. It must be passed on by the living voice of a guru and cannot be learned in another way. One need not understand the meaning of the mantra; the virtue is in the repetition of the sound. It is said to embody a spirit or deity (mantras actually are names of Hindu deities that have been used by worshippers in India for thousands of years to obtain the ‘blessings’ of the various gods in the Hindu religion), and the repetition of the mantra calls this being to the one repeating it. Thus the mantra both invites a particular being (demon) to enter the one using it and also creates the passive state in the meditator to facilitate this fusion of beings. Therefore mantras are not meaningless sounds that bring about deep rest, as TM teachers say to the meditators, but words addressed to demons which are invited to enter the meditator. Hear what
brother Rabindranath R. Maharaj, who was a guru before his conversion to Christ, experienced while repeating mantras during his daily transcendental meditation: ‘After the idol had been bathed and worshiped, we would all gather at about 5:30 A.M. to hear the Vedas read aloud in Hindi; then we would spend two or three hours in meditation. The first mantra assigned to me was Hari OM Tat Sat. The Brahmacharya would always begin his meditation with the repetition of the single word OM. The highest vibration and the most difficult to pronounce, like all mantras OM must be taught by a guru. In the Vedas it is said that: ‘On the lotus …. Brahma began to think: ‘By what single syllable may I be able to enjoy all desires, all worlds …. gods …. Vedas …. rewards….? He saw this OM …. allpervading, omnipresent …. the Brahman’s own symbolic syllable …. With it he enjoyed all the desires of all worlds, all gods, all Vedas …. all rewards, all beings …. Therefore the Brahmin who, desiring whatever he wants, fasts three nights, sits on sacred grass facing east, and repeats this imperishable OM, for him all objects are realized and all acts are successful’. Nothing was more important than our daily transcendental meditation, the heart of Yoga, which Krishna advocated as the surest way to eternal Bliss. But it could also be dangerous. Frightening psychic experiences awaited the unwary meditator, similar to a bad trip on drugs. Demons described in the Vedas had been known to take possession of some Yogis. Kundalini power, said to be coiled like a serpent at the base of the spine, could produce ecstatic experiences when released in deep meditation - or, if not properly controlled, it could do great mental and even bodily harm. The line between ecstasy and horror was very fine. For that reason we initiates were closely supervised by the Brahmacharya and his assistant. During the daily meditation I began to have visions of psychedelic colors, to hear unearthly music, and to visit exotic planets where the gods conversed with me, encouraging me to attain even higher states of consciousness. Sometimes in my trance I encountered the same horrible demonic creatures that are depicted by the images in Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, and other religious temples. It was a frightful experience, but the Brahmacharya explained that it was normal and urged me to pursue the quest for Self-realization. At times I experienced a sense of mystical unity with the universe. I was the universe, Lord of all, omnipotent, omnipresent’ (Rabindranath R. Maharaj with Dave Hunt, Death of a Guru, Hodder and Stoughton, Great Britain 1986, pages 56-57); ‘Often while I was in deep meditation the gods became visible and talked with me. At times I seemed to be transported by astral projection to distant planets or to worlds in other dimensions. It would be years before I would learn that such experiences were being duplicated in laboratories under the watchful eyes of parapsychologists through the use of hypnosis and LSD. In my Yogic trances most often I would be alone with Shiva the Destroyer, sitting fearfully at his feet, the huge cobra coiled about his neck staring at me, hissing and darting out its tongue threateningly’ (Ibid., page 75). As you can see, TM is very dangerous, it is the doorway to the occult. There is no doubt that through TM people can become demon-possessed or demon-possessed. A former TM Initiator has stated: ‘I have seen meditation effects ranging from insomnia and headaches to more serious problems such as dissociation, involuntary jerks and twitchss, and hallucinations. I even know of people who have needed to be institutionalized; they had no history or symptoms of mental illness prior to their involvement with TM’. So brothers and sisters in the Lord, beware of TM!

Now let me explain to you what the Bible says about meditation. A Christian must meditate, for the apostle Paul says: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8 – NKJV). How does a Christian know which things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, excellent and praiseworthy? By the Holy Spirit who dwells in him. He is truth. For instance, the Holy Spirit testifies that the Holy Scripture (that is, the Bible) is truth and so he must meditate on it; the Holy Spirit testifies also that the heaven, the earth and the sea and all that is in them is the work of God’s hands which testifies to His eternal power and Godhead, so it is good for a Christian to meditate on the work of His hands. Why must a Christian meditate on the things spoken of by Paul? In order to please God and to keep having fellowship with Him. A Christian must not meditate on these things in order to become one with
God nor to come to the conclusion that he is God, for he knows that he is and always will be a creature of God separate from His Creator. A Christian knows that no matter how long he meditates on what is right and good, he will never become God nor will he come to the conclusion: ‘I am that Being who created all things’, for the Holy Spirit will keep him from thinking these evil thoughts. Rather we can say from experience that the biblical meditation will lead the Christian to realize that he is a worm, a weak and little being, so little and full of limitations in the sight of His Creator who fills and rules the universe. Therefore the biblical meditation will lead him to humble himself before God and not to exalt himself. The Christian, while meditating, can call upon the Lord, thank Him and praise Him; he has no mantras, that is, no magical formula to use, but only thanksgivings and praises which come out of his heart spontaneously. And these words make him feel, by the Holy Spirit who is in him, in close communion with His God, they make him feel His presence in a particular way in certain circumstances.

Zazen

Zazen is a romanized Japanese term. Za literally means ‘to sit’ or ‘sitting,’ zen means ‘to meditate’ or ‘concentrate.’ Therefore zazen means ‘sitting in meditation’. ‘Zazen - say the experts on zazen - is a practice of concentration, with a focus on following or counting the breath. But more than just meditation, zazen is a powerful tool of self-inquiry, boundless in its scope and ability to reveal the true basis of reality. Through zazen, we realize the unity of the self with the ten thousand things, which has the potential to transform our lives and those of others.’ In other words, zazen is the means through which one can achieve enlightenment (satori). Through zazen one sees into his ‘own nature’ or Buddha-nature, which is from the very beginning, pure and calm, and every being in the world has it.... This is what the Buddha declared when he had just attained his Supreme Enlightenment and was recorded in the Avatamsaka-sutra (The Flower Ornament Scripture) and repeated in the Mahaparinirvana-sutra. When you see into your own nature, you know who you are, you know what and how every thing and being in the world really is. From this, your action and reaction will be in harmony with the whole and in situations around you.’ (ChonTri, Zazen practice: a guideline for beginners, 2001, from www.zenguide.com).

There are several sitting postures in zazen, the best one is called full-lotus posture: ‘This is the best sitting posture in zazen. ‘First, you have to put your right foot with the sole up on your left thigh and then put your left foot with the sole up on your right thigh. Your two knees touch the pad. Next, with your two palms up, the left one upon the right one with the ends of two thumbs lightly touch each other and with the pointing fingers make a small oval circle, which lay on your lap and closed to the area under the navel. Your backbone must be straight up but not stiff. Your nose should be in line with your navel; your left ear should be in line with your left shoulder and the same with your right ear and shoulder. In this position, your head is already in vertical position with your backbone. This posture will give you the most secure in sitting zazen.’ (Ibid.,) After one has sat in zazen, he must begin to count his breaths out and in, then he must follow his breaths out and in with his mind’s eye. Then comes the practice of silent illumination: ‘In this practice, you just sit with your awareness, always be awake. You just sit like a mountain, immovable, with an immense faith in that your own nature or Buddha-nature is manifesting in itself and you will realize it at any moment.’ (Ibid.,) Instead of counting or following their breaths, some practitioners of Zen Buddhism work with koans. The koan is usually from a saying of the Buddha, a Zen master, a conversation which happened between a student and a Zen master, or a story from the fact of everyday activity. The Zen master picks it up and gives it to the student to work with as a means to concentrate his mind’s power to break through his own deluded mind and get in the world of enlightenment. Those who work with a koan need to become one with it, in order to attain enlightenment. Now, you may ask, ‘What is the enlightenment alike?’ Well, Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch of Zen school, said: ‘It’s like a person who drinks the water will know it’s
cold or hot.’ Someone else has said: ‘It’s like a person who was in a bad dream and felt very unhappy. Suddenly, his head fell off the pillow and he woke up. There is no more dream or unhappiness.’ From a religious standpoint this enlightenment or satori is considered by some experts on Zen a new birth through which one begins to regard all things as an illusion, one ceases to look at things in a dualistic way for his mind is emancipated from the arbitrary practice of partitioning his mind.

Zazen is the cornerstone of Zen Buddhism, which is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, that in these last times has become widely known in the West. Zen was founded by an Indian Buddhist monk called Bodhidharma who came to China about the latter half of the 5th century and the first half of the 6th century after Christ. In the seventh century after Christ Zen was introduced into Japan from China. In Italy there are thousands of Buddhists, a good segment of whom are devotees of Zen. Zen is a Japanese pronunciation for the Chinese word ‘Ch’an’, and ‘Ch’an’ is in turn a Chinese pronunciation of the word ‘Dhyana’ in Sanskrit, which refers to a practice for settling the mind.

Zen Buddhism denies the existence of a personal and living God, and the existence of sin and asserts that man does not need a Saviour. According to Zen Buddhism man is unhappy because he looks at things in a dualistic way, that is, because he considers one thing right and the other wrong, one thing good and the other evil; so the root of man’s unhappiness is his wrong way of looking at things, and in order to become happy a man must extirpate this root, that is to say, he must cease to look at things in a dualistic way, becoming one with all the things which are around him. How can he extirpate this ‘evil’ root? Well, the answer is, ‘Through Zen meditation, that is, by meditating while sitting in zazen, seeing into one’s nature, keeping one’s mind from looking at things in a dualistic way.’ In other words, by emptying his own mind. Therefore men must search for peace and happiness inside themselves not outside. According to Zen, no help can come from outside, happiness comes only from within, out of the mind of man. Therefore, man must have absolute faith in his own inner being, not in a God outside him.

Confutation

I have written two articles to confute zazen.

First article

The Bible, which is the Word of God, teaches that a man, in order to be enlightened (that is, in order to see the light and walk in it), must acknowledge his own sins (and therefore he must acknowledge with his mind that he has sinned against God, which thing Zen excludes totally for it considers evil or sin an illusion), and repent of them and believe in Jesus Christ. For Jesus said: “Repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:15 – NKJV), and again: “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12 – NKJV). What will this enlightenment bring about in his mind? Will he cease to think in a dualistic way or will he realize that he is one with the universe or that the world is an illusion? Not at all, for he who is enlightened does not cease to think in a dualistic way, that is to say, when he experiences the divine enlightenment he will not begin to consider good and evil the same thing nor will he consider good and evil an illusion. Rather we can affirm that he who is enlightened by the Lord will start to regard many things, which in the past he considered good things, as evil things for he will acknowledge that in the past he had been blinded by darkness. His mind will not empty at all, as it happens in the Zen meditation, but rather on the one hand it will be filled with good and right thoughts and on the other hand it will get rid of all those evil thoughts which he obeyed prior to the enlightenment. Therefore we say that when one is enlightened by God his mind empties in this sense, that is to say, he stops thinking those evil and useless thoughts of which he was a slave prior to his enlightenment (such as ‘there is no God,’ and ‘There is no harm in fornication’). Neither does he begin to think that he is one with the universe – as those who practice zazen think – but he begins to think that he is one with all the others enlightened,
for he becomes a member of the body of Christ, and thus one with and in Christ (cf. Galatians 3:28). However, bear in mind that this spiritual union with the other saints implies the acknowledgment of the diversity between the members of the body of Christ for “all the members do not have the same function” (Romans 12:4 – NKJV), but it absolutely excludes that he may feel one with the universe. Nor does he who is enlightened by God consider the world an illusion – as those who practice Zen meditation do – for when God enlightens a man He does not take away his intelligence or his logic. It is really absurd in the sight of God to think that the world and all that is in it is a mere illusion, for the Scripture teaches that they are real things and not an illusion.

Zen meditation therefore is a work of the devil, who through it takes hold of the mind of many people, luring them into thinking and considering things in a way which is contrary to the Word of God. Beware of it and expose it.

Let me say something now about the meditation which must be practiced by Christians (the enlightened ones). Christians must not meditate in order to reach a mental emptiness or a state of mind in which good and evil become one, nor to free themselves from the illusion of being separate from the universe or to come to the conclusion that all is an illusion, for all these aims, being false aims conceived by the devil, are not among the aims of the Christians. We must meditate for this is the will of God for us, as it is written: “Meditate on all his wonderful acts” (Psalm 105:2 – Translated by myself from the Italian Bible Riveduta Version), and again that blessed is the man whose delight “is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night” (Psalm 1:2 – NKJV), and since this kind of meditation is the will of God for us, it surely does not bring us to wrong conclusions, but only to right conclusions which are in accord with the teaching of the Scripture. In addition, the biblical meditation brings about great joy in the heart of the meditator for it leads him to consider the greatness of God, His power and His wisdom.

Second article

Zen is from the devil, there is no doubt about that, for it lures man into thinking that his unhappiness is caused not by sin, which is in them and of which he is a slave (Zen denies the existence of sin and substantially affirms that those who believe in the existence of sin are wrong), but by a wrong way of thinking and the solution of his unhappiness is within him (so he just needs to find it) and not in Christ Jesus. In other words, through Zen meditation the devil deceives people into thinking that man is not a sinner who breaks the law of God and that his unhappiness is caused by his thinking in a dualistic way, but in him there is such potential that when it is discovered it eliminates unhappiness and brings happiness and enlightenment. So the devil, through Zen meditation, keeps people far from God, which is his goal for he wants people to go to perdition. No wonder that Zen Buddhism is successful both in the East and the West, therefore, for we know that it is supported by the prince of this world, that is, the deceiver. The Holy Scripture very clearly affirms that unhappiness and spiritual darkness, which are in the world, are not caused by a wrong way of thinking (I refer to the dualistic way of thinking of which Zen speaks) for actually all is an illusion and thus it is harmful to consider one thing right and the other wrong; but they are caused by sin, which is the transgression of the law that God has given to man and which is an undeniable reality. Sin entered the world through Adam when he broke the commandment of God in the Garden of Eden. It was on that day that man began to be unhappy, it was on that day that man plunged into darkness, for through sin he came to know good and evil. And sin reigns in man, so he is a slave of sin; he can’t help sinning for sin has dominion over him, he serves sin and it repays him with death, for “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23). Therefore the unhappiness and dissatisfaction which are in man are due to his rebellion against God, and because of his rebellion his conscience accuses him (Zen Buddhism tries in vain to eliminate the sense of guilt from the mind and heart of man). How can a man become happy then? By doing good deeds? No. Maybe meditating, concentrating, controlling
his breath, and assuming certain postures? Not at all. Man can't reach happiness by doing these things, for he can become happy only in this way, that is, by repenting and believing in the Gospel of the grace of God, as it is told in the Bible. Someone will ask, 'How is that possible? Well, that is possible because God, who created all things, has prescribed so. Know this, that even though this way seems to be absurd, it is the right way; many people all over the world bear witness of this for they, having repented of their sins and believed in the Gospel, have found happiness. Let me say something else about this way: to repent means to change one's way of thinking, but this has nothing to do with the change of one's way of thinking prescribed by the Zen masters, for when one repents he is sorry about his sins, that is to say, he is grieved because he has transgressed the commandments God. Man is foolish, rebellious, and wicked by nature, e he takes pleasure in sinning, and for this reason he is an enemy of God and the wrath of God is upon him. Therefore he must repent of his sins, acknowledging that they are an abomination in the sight of God and make him an enemy of God; when he does this he repents. However, it is not sufficient to repent, for he must also believe in the Gospel so that he may be reconciled to God. The Gospel says that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, he who knew no sin for he was born without sin and lived a sinless life, in the fullness of the times gave His life for us who were sinners, so that through the blood He shed all our sins we committed against God might be forgiven us and we might be reconciled to God. He was crucified so that the Scripture might be fulfilled; He was buried, but the third day God the Father raised Him from the dead and He showed Himself to many people and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. Anyone who repents and believes in the Gospel receives the remission of all his sins and he receives a new spirit, that is, the Holy Spirit, whose fruit is joy. Happiness therefore proceeds from God, who infuses it into man by His Holy Spirit when he repents and believes in Him. But when a man repents and believes in the Gospel, another thing takes place in him, for he is spiritually enlightened, thus the light of God enters him and darkness vanishes away, for God, who is light, enlightens him. He comes to know what was hidden from him before; why he was unhappy, who is the One that can make man happy, what to do in order to receive this happiness from God, just to mention some of the things he comes to know. This is the true enlightenment; that which is experienced through faith in Jesus Christ. While the enlightenment of which Buddhism Zen speaks is thick darkness! Of course, it is called light, but it is called light wrongly; we are not surprised at this, for this is the device of the devil, to pass off darkness as light!

Those who have been enlightened by God feel bound to speak to others about the way man can reach this glorious enlightenment, for the love of Christ compels them. We are among those who have been enlightened by the grace of God, and we speak with sincerity to men about this way. Men and women who practice this form of meditation, come to your senses, do not see into yourselves as if something good may come out from you, for in you nothing good dwells. You are sinners in the sight of God, who created you and whom you do not know, that's what you must acknowledge: your unhappiness is due to the fact that you rebel against God. After that believe in the Gospel, which tells the love that God manifested towards men. Believe in it with all your heart, then your sense of guilt will vanish for the blood of Jesus will cleanse your conscience from dead works, and you will find plenty of peace and joy for you will know that you are sons of the Most High by the Spirit that will come to indwell you.
ESCHATOLOGY

The New Jerusalem is not an actual heavenly city

All the sects whose teachings and practices are based on the writings of spiritist Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772) deny that the New Jerusalem is an actual heavenly city, for Mr. Swedenborg in his book *The Heavenly City* wrote: 'I will also say a little about what Jerusalem refers to in the Bible's spiritual meaning. "Jerusalem" means the religion's philosophy. It has this meaning because it was the one place in the entire land of Canaan that had the Temple and the altar, where the sacrifices took place—which means that divine worship took place in Jerusalem. Also, that was where the three yearly festivals were celebrated, which every male in the land was required to attend. So in the spiritual meaning, Jerusalem refers to the religion's worship. This amounts to the same thing as saying that Jerusalem means the religion's philosophy, since our worship is dictated by our religious philosophy and practiced according to it. It is called "the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of the sky" because in the Bible's spiritual meaning, towns and cities symbolize different philosophies. A "holy city" stands for a philosophy about divine truth, since divine truth is what the Bible calls holy. It is called "_New_ Jerusalem" for the same reason the land is called new. As I just said, "the land" stands for a religion, and "Jerusalem" means this religion's philosophy. It is described as "coming down from God out of the sky" because all divine truth comes out of heaven from God, and this religion gets its philosophy from divine truth. Even though Jerusalem was seen as a city, it does not refer to an actual city. This is very clear from the way it was described: Its height was the same as its length and width: 12,000 stadia [1,379 miles]. (verse 16) The measurement of its wall, 144 cubits [216 feet], was made "by human standards of measurement, which an angel was using." (verse 17) It was "like a bride ready for her husband." (verse 2) And later, "The angel said, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.' And he showed me the holy city, Jerusalem." (verse 9) The Bible calls religion the bride and wife of the Lord: his bride before they are united, and his wife after they have been united'.

Even some Evangelical denominations deny that the New Jerusalem, which was seen by John, is an actual heavenly city. Among them is the Italian Assemblies of God (ADI), which in 1999 published the book of J. Oswald Sanders titled *Heaven: Better By Far* in Italian, in which book we read as follows: 'The bride – a city. The lion – a Lamb. Also in this case we find ourselves in the presence of symbolisms and it is reasonable to deduce that the city symbolizes the ideal church as God conceived it at the beginning, and how it will be in the end ....' (J. Oswald Sanders, *Essere con Cristo: cosa di gran lunga migliore*, ADI-Media Roma 1999, page 132. Translated by myself).

Confutation

The apostle John wrote: "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal: And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel: On the east three gates; on the north three gates; on the south three gates; and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he that talked with me had a golden reed to measure the city, and the
As you can see, the New Jerusalem is not to be understood figuratively, for the apostle John saw a true heavenly city. In other words, John did not see something which symbolizes a philosophy about divine truth or the ideal Church of God, but he saw an actual heavenly city. That is evident not only from the detailed description of the city but also from the fact that John says that only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life will enter it (cf. Revelation 21:27). Here are some other biblical evidences which confirm that the New Jerusalem seen by John is an actual heavenly city.

The author of the epistle to the Hebrews says that Abraham “was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10 – NIV), and that “here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come” (Hebrews 13:14 – NIV). That city is “the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22 – NKJV), which at God's appointed time will descend out of heaven.

The apostle Paul says to the Galatians that “the Jerusalem above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:26 – NKJV). He calls it ‘the Jerusalem above” to distinguish it from the “present city of Jerusalem” (Galatians 4:25 – NIV), which is in bondage with her children.

In the twentieth century God showed the heavenly Jerusalem to some believers. One of them is Boris Pilipchuk, who in 1996 died and after a little while was restored to life by the Lord. Here is what our brother Boris says about his departure from the body and his brief stay in heaven:

"Then I began to ascend from the earth. The earth became smaller and smaller. It became so small, and then it disappeared totally. My transportation was accompanied by a continuous whistling in my ears. Then I ended up in an extraordinary place, that was so illuminated, that I began to feel good. I saw a golden staircase, that shone with rays of glory. The staircase was rather wide. On either side of the staircase were golden railings, along which from the end to the top were winged angels in white clothes, with golden belts. Their hair was white, their faces shone so much, like lightning, their eyes were like two lanterns. They had human faces. Their hands and legs were the color of shining copper chips. On the outside the angels were like humans. Around the staircase and under it, stood a great number of angels, and their number, I simply cannot describe. These were without wings. All the angels were singing psalms.

And the city lieth foursquare, and the length is as large as the breadth: and he measured the city with the reed, twelve thousand furlongs. The length and the breadth and the height of it are equal. And he measured the wall thereof, an hundred and forty and four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of the angel. And the building of the wall of it was of jasper: and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; The fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolite; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass. And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there. And they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life. And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever." (Revelation 21:9-27; 22:1-5).
surprisingly, I did not know, what language they were singing in, but at that moment I completely understood the words of the psalm. They sang: “O worthy are you Lord of all glory and praise. You, Lord, created the heavens and the earth. You are worthy of our praise!” Then I saw an extraordinary light at the end of the staircase. But the light wasn’t like that of the sun or of welding instrument, which has a harmful effect on the eyes. The light was extraordinarily bright, but did not hurt the eyes, warm, calming, full of joy and peace. I was full of delight, to such an extent that mere words cannot describe how I felt. My delight continued to increase and there was no limit to the joy I felt. I don’t know how to describe this vision, this feeling, in words, but I would like you to imagine the picture the Lord showed me. Later on, I heard a voice, coming from the place where the wonderful light was, which said: ‘My son, come to me and I will show you something. I will help you’. From the great number of angels, two angels walked up behind me. One stood on my left and the other stood on my right, just a short distance from me. I didn’t turn my head around, I didn’t look behind me and I didn’t gaze around me, but it appeared as if I could see 360 degrees about me. I wasn’t nervous and didn’t feel any form of discomfort. I was absolutely calm and so joyful to extent, that I cannot describe how I felt, not then and not now. I didn’t ask anyone any question, such as ‘where am I?’ ‘What happened to me? What’s going to happen later on?” I felt completely confident in myself, as if I was standing in a familiar place. I felt as if I lived there permanently. Then the Holy Spirit, transferred me to a vast open plain, in which very beautiful white horses pranced. In the center of the field, stood a great big city, in the form of a cube. When I noticed it, I began to draw close to it. But I approached it in a different way, not as a man normally walks on the ground. I moved without my feet touching the ground, it was as if I was sliding. The angels escorted me. The closer I approached the city, the more intense was the delight I experienced, from what I saw. There were very high walls, which were multiple in number and of various colors. There were 12 colors in all, which radiated and shone like a bright light. (Later on, after my resurrection, when I studied the 21-22 chapter of the book of Revelations in the Bible, I found a confirmation of what I had seen). I saw the foundation of the city, which was made up of 12 precious stones of this world. I saw a pearl gate, three on each wall. The pearl gate was very big, higher than two meters. I didn’t measure them, but one pearl was larger than two meters, in my opinion. I saw only six gates, because the Lord led me into the city through one of its corners. I saw the two sides of the cube. Then the Lord led me through one of the gates into the city, as we passed through them, I saw two inscriptions. One of them was above the gate and the second was under the gate. One of the names of the tribes of Israel was written above the gate, and under it the name of an Apostle was written. Unfortunately I do not know which gate the Lord led me through, into the New Jerusalem, but now I would like to know that. When I entered into the city through the gates, I stood still in admiration: The city was made completely of gold. The gold was so pure and I had never seen such brilliance before. I had seen how brightly gold articles in a jeweller’s store shone, but this was not comparable, to what I saw at that moment. Gold streets, houses of gold, gold doors — everything was made of gold, transparent like glass. I could never have imagined that gold could appear transparent and so pure. I read about this in God’s word, but I could not really imagine it, to me this issue was concealed. I just couldn’t imagine how a hard metal could be transparent. Now that I saw it, I just wanted to touch it. I touched the walls, I entered some houses and scrutinized everything. I did not ask the angels, where I was to go from here. I seemed to know the way. I was overcome with such a feeling as if I was in a place of my own. As I continued my way further into the city, close to the center, I saw a large tree in one spot. The tree had pear-shaped fruit on it. The size of the fruit was about the size of two average sized fists put together. The leaves on it reminded me of the leaves of a lime tree, only they were larger and like leaves of burdock. When I got near the tree, I wanted to take a fruit from it and began to reach for one. Suddenly with enthusiasm, I was surprised that the hand that I stretched out, was not like an ordinary hand, it was transparent. When I was about to pluck a fruit, the angel who stood a little distance behind me, on my right side, stretched out his hand and stopped me. Gesticulating with his finger, he told me that for now, I shouldn’t pluck the fruit. Then something I didn’t expect took place: Without any form of regret, disappointment from the angel’s action, I left the tree.
Generally speaking, within the city, I never experienced any kind of discomfort, or disorder. When I left the tree, I saw an extraordinary bright light at the center of the city. It was very interesting that I didn't see any shadow not from the trees and not from the houses. There were no shadows there and neither were there any lamps. I didn't see the sun nor any object that gave light, but the light was extraordinary bright and so pleasant to the eyes, to the extent that I was so delighted beyond measure. I cannot adequately describe in words, the extra unusual condition of my soul... When I saw the center of the illumination, I bowed my head and felt an overwhelming urge to bow my knees. But the angel supported me and I heard a voice, "My son, I have shown you all that is necessary for you at this time, and you should return now, to declare My Glory, power and dominion, to declare all that you have seen and heard". Then I began to pray and implore the Lord, asking Him to let me remain there, where I was. I cried, "Lord I don't want to return". But the Lord said, "You have a wife, and three children. You have to return to them, for it is not time for you to be here yet". Then again I began to implore the Lord, "Lord, I don't want to return. Allow me to remain with beside You". But the Lord said to me," My Son, be meek and self-controlled, do not murmur, go back. You have to declare My Glory".

The fire of hell is to be understood figuratively

Evangelist Billy Graham teaches that the fire of hell is not a literal fire. Here are some of his statements on this subject: 'Whatever Hell may be, and there are many mysteries, and I don't intend to solve them all - whatever Hell may mean, it is separation from God. Now there are three words that Jesus used constantly to describe it. One is called "Fire." Now we know that God has a fire that burns and doesn't consume like the burning bush that Moses experienced. We know that James said, "The tongue is set on fire of hell." We know that that wasn't combustion - that actual literal fire isn't down in your throat and in your tongue. It is symbolic language. And theologians through the centuries have argued and debated over what fire means. The Bible said, "For our God is a consuming fire." Jesus told the story about the rich man who went to Hell and he asked that Lazarus may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. Could it be that the fire Jesus talked about is an eternal search for God that is never quenched? Is that what it means? That, indeed, would be hell. To be away from God forever, separated from His Presence. (Billy Graham, The Challenge, Sermons from Madison Square Garden, pages 74-75); 'I think that hell essentially is separation from God forever. And that is the worst hell that I can think of. But I think people have a hard time believing God is going to allow people to burn in literal fire forever. I think the fire that is mentioned in the Bible is a burning thirst for God that can never be quenched" (Graham, Orlando Sentinel, Orlando, Florida, April 10, 1983). 'Jesus used three words to describe hell; The third word that He used is 'fire.' Jesus used this symbol over and over. This could be literal fire, as many believe. Or it could be symbolic. God does have fires that do not burn. And also there is the figurative use of fire in the Bible. I've often thought that this fire could possibly be a burning thirst for God that is never quenched. What a terrible fire that would be never to find satisfaction, joy, or fulfilment!' (Billy Graham, A Biblical Standard for Evangelists, A commentary on the 15 Affirmations made by participants at the International Conference for Itinerant Evangelists in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, July, 1983, pp. 4547). 'The only thing I could say for sure is that hell means separation from God. We are separated from his light, from his fellowship. That is going to be hell. When it comes to a literal fire, I don't preach it because I'm not sure about it. When the Scripture uses fire concerning hell, that is possibly an illustration of how terrible it's going to be not fire but something worse, a thirst for God that cannot be quenched' (Billy Graham, interview with Richard Ostling, Time magazine, Nov. 15, 1993).

This view is held by many Churches all over the world. Even many Pentecostals don't believe that the fire of hell is a literal fire. The Italian Assemblies of God (ADI) denies the reality of the fire of both Hades and Gehenna. Several years ago, during a sermon broadcasted by
RadioEvangelo (Gospel Radio), Francesco Toppi, former president of the Italian Assemblies of God, stated that when Jesus mentioned the fire of Hades in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (cf. Luke 16:24), He used a metaphorical language! And in his book A Domanda Risponde he states: 'The conception of a hell with true flames of fire, is an idea exploited by crafty and not very serious preachers, which frightens only some religious women who already see themselves burning for eternity' (Vol. 1, page 231. Translated by myself). I would like to point out, however, that I know many members of the Italian Assemblies of God who clearly affirm that the fire of hell is a real fire and not a metaphorical fire. So it cannot be said that all the members of the Italian Assemblies of God deny the reality of the fire of hell.

Confutation

Concerning Hades (Greek word which means 'the unseen world' and which is translated 'hell' ten times in the King James Version), which is the place of torment where the souls of the wicked go immediately after death, it must be said that according to the Holy Scripture in it there is a literal fire, for Jesus said about the rich man who died and found himself in Hades: “Being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. The he cried and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:23-24 – NKJV). As you can see, that man was tormented in a flame, therefore the fire of Hades is a literal fire. If the fire of hell were metaphorical, that man would not have said to Abraham: “I am tormented in this flame” or – as the New International Version reads – “in agony in this fire”.

Concerning Gehenna (or the everlasting fire), which is the place of torment into which the wicked will be cast at the end of the age and into which they will be tormented forever and ever, it must be said the same thing, that is, according to the Holy Scripture in it there is a literal fire. Let us look at some of the verses which attest this.

Jesus said that at the end of the age: “The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 13:41-42 – NKJV). As you can see, Jesus called that place of torment “the furnace of fire”.

Jesus said that when He comes in His glory, He will say to those on His left hand: “Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels .....” (Matthew 25:41 – NKJV).

Jesus said also: “If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire” (Matthew 18:8 – NKJV).

The apostle John wrote that the beast, and the false prophet who will work signs in his presence, and the devil will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where they will be tormented forever and ever (cf. Revelation 19:20; 20:10). He wrote also that those who worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark on their forehead or on their hand, will “be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:10-11 – NKJV). Note that the apostle says that the smoke of their torment will ascend forever and ever, therefore inasmuch as there will be smoke that means that there will be a fire burning. Don’t you think so? In addition to this, John wrote that in the day of judgement, all those people whose name will not be found written in the book of Life will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone (cf. Revelation 20:13-15).

Therefore, brethren, in the light of the Holy Scripture, any allegorical interpretation given to the fire of Hades or to the fire of Gehenna, must be rejected; take heed to yourselves, let no one deceive you with empty words.
When people die, they become completely nonexistent

Many sects teach that man does not possess an immortal soul that survives after death but is a mortal soul. The human soul, therefore, is not immortal but mortal. To support this doctrine – which is called ‘conditional immortality’ - they quote Genesis 2:7 and Ezekiel 18:4. Furthermore, they affirm that the Hebrew word Nephesh and the Greek word psuchēe (the biblical words which are usually translated 'soul') are nowhere in the Scripture associated with such words as immortal, everlasting, eternal. So when a man dies he becomes completely nonexistent. In the so called ‘intermediate state’ (that is, the time interval between death and the resurrection) there is no consciousness.

Seventh-Day Adventist Church: ‘The wages of sin is death. But God, who alone is immortal, will grant eternal life to His redeemed. Until that day death is an unconscious state for all people. When Christ, who is our life, appears, the resurrected righteous and the living righteous will be glorified and caught up to meet their Lord. The second resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous, will take place a thousand years later’. (Fundamental Beliefs, Article 25)

Jehovah’s Witnesses: ‘The condition of the dead is made clear at Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10, where we read: “The dead know nothing. . . There is no pursuit, no plan, no knowledge or intelligence, within the grave.” (Moffatt) Death, therefore, is a state of non-existence. The psalmist wrote that when a person dies, “his spirit goes out, he goes back to his ground; in that day his thoughts do perish.”—Psalm 146:4. Clearly, the dead do not exist…..’ (The Watchtower, July 15, 2001); ‘…. When a person is dead is completely out of existence. He is not conscious of anything!’ (You Can Live Forever In Paradise On Earth, 1982, page 88)

The followers of Herbert Armstrong: ‘Death only brings instant awakening in the resurrection. You will know absolutely NOTHING from the second you die, till the second you awake in the resurrection’ (Herbert W. Armstrong, The Incredible Human Potential, Pasadena, California, 1978, page 165)

The Way International: “No passage of Scripture teaches that there is conscious existence after death” -- they deny that believers immediately go to be with the Lord at death. Death for the believer is referred to as falling asleep because in sleep there is an awakening point. But for the unbeliever, the Christ rejector, the ungodly, their resurrection is temporary for they shall meet a second and final death (Victor Paul Wierwille, Are the Dead Alive Now?, p. 98).

The Christadelphian Church: ‘If we claim to follow Christ we should recognize that the grave is a place of unconsciuosness, which only resurrection can bring to an end’ (http://www.christadelphian.org.uk), ‘Never does the bible suggest that a person continues to live after the death of the body . . . Instead, the Bible’s offer of immortality [is] at the coming of Jesus Christ” (Why is Man Mortal, vol. 38, no. 3, May 92, p. 1, May 1992). The belief that the soul of man continues to exist after death is “rooted in man’s desperate endeavours to deny the absolute reality of death, in the hope that life will continue . . .” (p. 3). The doctrine of the immortality of the human soul is said to be “not taught within the pages of the bible. It is a philosophy which owes it [sic] origin entirely to pagan mythology, and finds no part in the faith of the ancient Hebrews; nor is it taught by Christ and his apostles in the New Testament Scriptures” (p. 5).

Even some who are regarded as Evangelicals teach ‘conditional immortality.’

Confutation

The soul’s immortality

The Word of God teaches that the human being is a living soul, for it is written that God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul (Genesis 2:7). However, the Word of God teaches also that man has a soul, which is immortal (and not mortal as his body), which after death – depending upon the spiritual state of
the individual at death – goes either to heaven or Hades (which is better known as hell). Therefore man continues to exist spiritually after death. We can say that the soul is the inward man which is in every human being; whereas the body is the outward man, in which the human soul dwells.

Some verses of the Scripture which call the human being ‘soul’

Now, the Holy Scripture calls people ‘souls,’ and the following verses confirm it:

- “For whosoever shall commit any of these abominations, even the souls that commit them shall be cut off from among their people” (Leviticus 18:29)
- “And they smote all the souls that were therein with the edge of the sword, utterly destroying them: there was not any left to breathe: and he burnt Hazor with fire” (Joshua 11:11)
- “And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles” (Acts 2:43)
- “Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls” (Acts 7:14)
- “Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” (1 Peter 3:20).

However the Scripture – as I said before – teaches also that the soul is not the body, and the body is not the soul; and that when a person dies his soul departs from the body, and if he who dies is a son of God his soul goes to heaven to be with the Lord, while if he is a son of the devil his soul is brought down to Hades, that is, the abode of the wicked (the place of the departed wicked), where there is a fire unfanned and weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Some verses of the Scripture which distinguish between body and soul

First of all, let us see some verses which affirm that the soul (in Hebrew ‘nephesh’, while in Greek ‘psuche’) is not the human body and at death it departs from the body.

- In the book of Genesis it is written: “And they journeyed from Bethel; and there was but a little way to come to Ephrath: and Rachel travailed, and she had hard labour. And it came to pass, when she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not; thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass, as her soul was in departing, (for she died) that she called his name Ben-oni: but his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died, and was buried in the way to Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set a pillar upon her grave: that is the pillar of Rachel's grave unto this day. And Israel journeyed, and spread his tent beyond the tower of Edar” (Genesis 35:16-21). As you can see, when Rachel died her soul departed from her body.
- In the book of Lamentations it is written: “They say to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? when they swooned as the wounded in the streets of the city, when their soul was poured out into their mothers' bosom” (Lamentations 2:12). As Jerusalem was besieged by the army of the Chaldeans, many children died of hunger and thirst and they yielded up their soul while they were on the bosom of their mothers.
- When the prophet Elijah prayed to God that He might raise the child of the widow with whom he lodged, he said to God: “O Lord my God, I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him” (1 Kings 17:21 - NKJV). Then the Lord heard the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived. As you can see, Elijah believed that there is a soul in the body of man, and that when a person has died it is necessary for God to let his soul come back to him in order that the dead person may revive.
- When the prophet Elijah prayed that he might die, he said to God: “Take my soul, for I am not better than my fathers” (1 Kings 19:4 - YLT). So Elijah believed that he had a soul in his own body which at his death would depart from it.
- David spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, saying: “For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Acts 2:27 – NKJV). We know that Hades is
the abode of the dead where fire is burning, for it is written that “the rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then “he cried out and said: Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:22-24 – NKJV). Therefore, when Christ died on the cross it came to pass that His soul came out of His body and descended into the abode of the dead, while his body was laid by Joseph of Arimathea in a tomb. If we should say that Jesus did not have an immortal soul inside His body, we should say also that when He died He was annihilated, that is to say, He ceased to exist not only physically but also spiritually. Thus we should conclude that Peter lied when he said that after death Christ, by the Spirit, “went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah .....” (1 Peter 3:19-20 – NKJV).

● Luke says: “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life [soul] is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. And they brought the young man alive, and were not a little comforted” (Acts 20:7-12). As you can see, that young man was taken up dead, yet his soul remained in him by the will of God and did not depart from him, for Paul said to the brethren that the soul of Eutychus was in him. So Paul believed that the soul is not the body, but a part of the human being which is inside the body.

● In the book of Job it is written: “For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?” (Job 27:8). As you can see, these words also confirm that the soul is not the body because it is inside the body. Furthermore, they are confirmed by the story of the rich man and Lazarus told by Jesus, for Jesus said that the rich man died and was buried, and being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom (Luke 16:19-31), but he had no hope of salvation, he was lost forever. And on the day of judgement he will rise in order to be judged and cast into the lake of fire.

● Jesus said to the repentant thief on the cross: “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43 – NKJV). Therefore on that same day that man went to Paradise after his death. That means that after death he continued to live but in another dimension and in another place. If that man had not possessed a soul inside the body, how could he have gone to Paradise that same day? He certainly did not go to Paradise with his body, for it remained on the earth, but he went to Paradise with his immortal soul, which was inside his body and which could not be killed.

● Jesus said to the Sadducees, who denied both the resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul (Josephus Flavius, a Jewish historian who was born in 37 A.D. and died after the year 100, tells us that the Sadducees denied also the immortality of the soul for they said that souls die with the bodies - Jewish Antiquities, XVIII, 1 § 4): “But even Moses showed in the burning bush passage that the dead are raised, when he called the Lord ‘the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’. For He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to Him” (Luke 20:37 – NKJV). As you can see, in His reply Jesus corrected not only their denial of the resurrection but also their view of the intermediate state because He said that ‘all live to God’.

Therefore, according to Jesus, all those who die in the faith die in the flesh but they continue to live to God, therefore they are actually living. For God is not the God of the dead but of the living. Therefore when we say that the God whom we serve is the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob, we say a right thing for God Himself said to Moses: “This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations” (Exodus 3:15 – NKJV), however, it is clear that the patriarchs must live somewhere so that God may be called the God of Abraham,
the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. Now, we can say that at their death, which took place many centuries ago, their bodies returned to dust; but we can by no means affirm that after their death they ceased to exist because God is not ashamed to be called their God (Hebrews 11:16).

Now, since their bodies saw corruption, how can we affirm that they are living now? Well, we can affirm this because the souls of the patriarchs are living, for the Living God is the God of the living. And where are they living? They are living in the kingdom of heaven. While the patriarchs lived on the earth they confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, showing thus that they sought a homeland, that is, a heavenly country which is far better than the country from which they had come out.

- Paul says to the Romans: “Whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8 – NKJV). That means that we belong to Christ and are in His hand while we are at home in the body and even after we depart from the body because not even death will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ; no, not even death. Didn’t Jesus say about His sheep: “They shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28 – NKJV)? Now, suppose that when a person dies he ceases to exist completely (that is, he lapses into non-existence) because he does not have an immortal soul, how could we affirm that after our death we will continue to belong to Christ and to be in His hand? We could not affirm these things rather we should affirm that death will be able to snatch us out of His hand!! However, we know that “the righteous and the wise and their works are in the hand of God” (Ecclesiastes 9:1 – NKJV).

- In the book of Revelation it is written that John saw the souls of those who had been killed for the Word of God and they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. Here are the words of the apostle: “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection” (Revelation 20:4-5). As you can see, the souls of those who had been killed for the Word of God lived, that is, they returned to live within immortal bodies, for John saw the resurrection of those who had been killed for the Word of God. However, in the meanwhile, that is, between their death and their resurrection, they had continued to live with their souls only, for John saw their souls. These words of John confirm the existence of a soul inside the human body and the soul’s immortality.

- In the Gospel according to Matthew we read that Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves, and He was transfigured before them; His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light “and behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him” (Matthew 17:3 - NKJV). Now, the Scripture says about Moses that he died and was buried by God, as it is written in the law: “So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And he was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day” (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). Notice that it is written that Moses died and was buried, therefore nobody can say that his body was not buried. Jude confirms that Moses really died, for he says that “Michael, the archangel, in contending with the devil, when he disputed about the body of Moses, dared not bring against him a reviling accusation …” (Jude 9 – NKJV). Therefore, since Moses had died, who was that man who appeared together with Elijah on the holy mountain and was seen and heard by the disciples of the Lord? The answer is simple, it was Moses without his body, that is to say, it was the soul of Moses. The appearing of Moses on the holy mountain, therefore, confirms that the soul is not the body, and the body is not the soul, and that after death the soul of man which is inside him departs from his body and lives on.

- Jesus said: “And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [Greek: geenna]” (Matthew 10:28 – NKJV). As you can see, the soul is not the body and vice versa because Jesus said that the body can be killed whereas the soul cannot be killed. So, unlike the body, the soul of a man cannot be
killed but it can be destroyed in Geenna (the fire that will never be quenched) together with the body.

Some verses of the Scripture which indicate the places in the hereafter where the souls of men go

Let us see now some passages of the Scripture which affirm that the souls of the wicked go to Hades, while the souls of the righteous go to heaven.

- Jesus said: “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell [Greek: Hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:19-24). As you can see, that rich man, after death, found himself in Hades, in torments, because he had refused to listen to Moses and the prophets.

- In the book of Revelation it is written: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?” (Revelation 6:9-10). John saw under the altar (which is in heaven before God) the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God. Note that those souls were able to cry out with a loud voice and to remember that they had been killed and also the persons by whom they had been killed. As you can see, the expression “the souls of them that were slain” shows that the soul of a person is not the person himself, that is, the body of a person, but something which is different from his body; and it shows also that, unlike the body, the soul cannot be killed.

In the light of the above mentioned verses, therefore, we affirm that man has a soul inside his body, and after death his soul lives on; either in Hades (or Hell) in the midst of awful torments, if he dies in his sins; or in heaven (Paradise) before God and Jesus Christ joyfully, if he dies in Christ.

Where sinners go after death

The Word of God teaches that there is a place of torment in the unseen world, a horrible and dreadful place where fire burns continually and where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, and where the souls of those who have not repented of their sins and believed in the Gospel of the grace of God go after death.

This place is called “soggiorno dei morti” (that is, ‘abode of the dead’) – in Greek: Hades, while in Hebrew: Sheol – and it is mentioned many times in the Scriptures. Before proving you from the Scripture the existence of this place, I want to tell you the following things.

First of all, both the Hebrew word Sheol and the Greek word Hades, which is equivalent to Sheol, mean also ‘sepolcro’, that is, ‘sepulchre, grave, tomb’. That's why in the Bible sometimes the word Sheol (in Greek Hades) is translated ‘sepolcro’.

For instance, Diodati [1] translated Sheol ‘sepolcro’ in the following passages:

“Non lasciare scendere la sua canutezza in pace nel sepolcro” that is, “Do not let his gray hair go down to the grave [Sheol] in peace” (1 Kings 2:6);

“Così chi scende nel sepolcro non ne salirà più fuori” that is, “So he who goes down to the grave [Sheol] does not come up” (Job 7:9);

“Periocchè il sepolcro non ti celebrerà” that is, “For the grave [Sheol] will not praise you” (Isaiah 38:18). [2]
I have said ‘sometimes’ and not ‘always’, because this Hebrew word refers also to the abode of the souls between death and the resurrection [3], that’s why some other times it is translated ‘inferno’ (that is, ‘hell,’) or ‘soggiorno dei morti’ (that is, ‘the abode of the dead’).


Furthermore, I want you to know that the word ‘inferno’ – which is not present in the Riveduta Version – comes from the Latin word *infernus* which means ‘lower, underground’. As for the English term ‘hell.’ it comes from the Old English word *helan,* which means ‘to hide or cover’

Someone will say: ‘Why wasn’t this word translated always in the same way?’ Because sometimes the context did not allow the same rendering. In other words the same word has a different meaning in different contexts. Therefore, sometimes Sheol or Hades indicates the unseen place where the souls of the dead go, while some other times Sheol or Hades indicates the grave where the body is laid. Let me give you an example taken from the book of Isaiah. The prophet says: “Hell from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming; it stirs up the dead for you, all the chief ones of the earth; it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. They all shall speak and say to you: ‘You also have become as weak as we, and you have become like us’ (Isaiah 14:9-10 – Translated from the IBDV). Here Diodati translated the word Sheol as ‘inferno’ - Luzzi translated it as ‘soggiorno dei morti’ – because it does not mean grave, in that the text speaks of people staying in Sheol who at the coming of the king of Babylon speak to him.

Therefore, in the light of the Scriptures, those who deny that the word Sheol (or the equivalent Greek word Hades) refers also to the place of torment where sinners continue to exist after death (and they stay there till the resurrection) are greatly mistaken.

Now I am going to prove from the Scriptures the existence of this place of torment (called Sheol or Hades) in the unseen world; I will tell you where it is located and how the Bible describes hell.

● It is written: “There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell [Greek: Hades] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence. Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment. Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16:19-31).

This is a story which was told by Jesus Christ. It teaches that people continue to exist after death and that the souls of the sinners continue to live in an unseen world. It is clear that we do not see our soul, yet we know that it dwells in our body made of flesh and bones; and just as we
can't deny the existence of the soul just because we do not see it, so we can't deny the existence of Hades just because we do not see it or we have not seen it. The fact is that while the soul is in our body, Hades is in the lower parts of the earth. According to the Word of God, Hades is a real place where the soul of the sinner, after it has gone out of the body, goes to stay and where it will be waiting for the judgement. In other words, while the sinner lives on the earth his soul enjoys the pleasures of life and takes delight in doing evil things using the human body, but when the body in which the soul dwells temporarily dies, the soul departs from the body and goes to Hades where it will be tormented by the fire which is in this horrible place. The story of the rich man tells us that he lived in luxury every day while he was on the earth and that when he died he was buried, but he found himself in a place of torment called Hades. It was his body which was buried not his soul, because man's soul cannot be seized by any man nor can it be buried. According to what God said to Adam, it is the human body which returns to dust: “For dust you are and to dust you shall return” (Genesis 3:19 – NKJV), and not the soul because the soul is not made of destroyable matter. On one occasion Jesus said that we must not fear “those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (Matthew 10:28 – NKJV); therefore, unlike the body, the soul of man cannot be killed nor seized by any man. As you can see, the rich man, who had enjoyed himself on the earth, was still able to talk, to remember, while he was in Hades, and according to what he said to Abraham his tongue could have been cooled by some water, but there is no water in Hades; water is just a memory for those who are in the fire of Hades. Now, we can't understand how the soul of a man can burn continually in the midst of the fire of Hades without burning out, nor can we understand how the soul of a man can weep and gnash the teeth in Hades. However, this does not keep us from believing that those who are in Hades are tormented by fire and they weep and gnash their teeth continually. If we were to believe the things the Scripture speaks of only when we fully understand them, we would end by disbelieving the things the Scripture speaks of; we would not believe even in the existence of God. But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ for He has given us faith, by which we accept all the things the Word of God teaches us without doubting them. So we do believe all the details of this story told by Jesus, they are all true. As I said before, even though that man did not have a body any longer, he was able to talk and remember.

The rich man asked Abraham to send Lazarus that he might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue for he was in agony in the fire of Hades, but Abraham told him that such a thing was not possible. Abraham told him to remember that in his lifetime he had received his good things, and furthermore he told him that between them (Abraham and Lazarus) and him there was a great gulf fixed, so that those who were in Abraham's bosom could not go from there to those who were tormented in Hades to help them. God had no mercy on that man; just as he had been merciless toward his neighbour during his lifetime, so God was merciless toward him after he died. In this we see a manifestation of the justice of God. Even under the Old Covenant He did not leave unpunished those who refused to heed His Word.

After the rich man had heard the answer of Abraham, he asked Abraham to send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his five brothers of that place of torment so that they would not come to that place of torment. He thought that if his brothers had heard Lazarus, they would have repented and they would not have gone to that place of torment. However, Abraham answered him saying that his brothers had Moses and the prophets, so they had to listen to them in order not to go to that place of torment. However, the answer of Abraham did not satisfy that man, for he told Abraham that in his opinion the testimony of Lazarus would be more efficacious because if someone from the dead went to them they would repent. But Abraham did not agree with him, for he told him that if his brothers did not listen to Moses and the Prophets they would not be convinced even if someone rose from the dead. (I would like to point out to you the following things: first of all, that man believed that Lazarus could go back to the earth and speak to his brothers; secondly, he did not ask Abraham to grant him to go back to the earth; thirdly, Abraham confirmed that Lazarus was dead). The words of Abraham were hard words, and they show that those who do not believe what God says (through the Holy Scriptures) about Hades and the torments which people suffer in it, will not believe in the existence of this place of
torment even if one goes to them from the dead and speaks to them about hell and the torments of this horrible place.

This is the truth, brothers: some people will not believe in the existence of hell neither will they repent of their sins, even if one of their loved ones rises from the dead and tells them the things he saw in hell. However we are called to warn people about this place of torment, because God Himself has warned us of this place with His Word. If God did not want people to know what will happen to them after death if they do not repent and bear fruits worthy of repentance, He would not have caused some persons to write so many clear references to Hades and to the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the place of torment where the wicked will be cast after they are judged in that day.

Let us see some other verses of the Scripture which confirm the existence of hell, and that hell is located in the lower parts of the earth and the wicked are brought down to it.

● In the Psalms it is written: “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psalm 9:17 – NKJV), and again: “Like sheep they are cast into the abode of the dead; death is their shepherd” (Psalm 49:14 – Translated from the IBRV).

● Job said about the wicked: “They spend their days in wealth, and in a moment they go down to the abode of the dead” (Job 21:13 – Translated from the IBRV).

● Isaiah said about those who did not regard the work of the Lord but followed intoxicating drink: “Therefore the abode of the dead has enlarged itself and opened its mouth beyond measure, the splendour of Zion, its multitude and its pomp, and he who is jubilant among it, shall descend into it” (Isaiah 5:14 – Translated from the IBRV). Isaiah, in his prophecy against the king of Babylon, said to Israel: “It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: ‘…. The abode of the dead from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming; …. Your pomp and the sound of your stringed instruments are brought down to the abode of the dead” (Isaiah 14:3,9,11 – Translated from the IBRV).

● God foretold through the prophet Ezekiel what He would do to Tyre: “Then I will bring you down with those who descend into the Pit, to the people of old, and I will make you dwell in the lowest part of the earth, in places desolate from antiquity, with those who go down to the Pit …. “ (Ezekiel 26:20 – NKJV), and He told what He did to Pharaoh: “In the day when he went down to the grave I caused a mourning: I covered the deep for him, and I restrained the floods thereof, and the great waters were stayed: and I caused Lebanon to mourn for him, and all the trees of the field fainted for him. I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth. They also went down into hell with him unto them that be slain with the sword; and they that were his arm, that dwell under his shadow in the midst of the heathen” (Ezekiel 31:15-17).

● When Jesus rebuked Capernaum He said: “And you, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, will be brought down to Hades” (Matthew 11:23 - NKJV). And when He predicted that He would be in the abode of the dead for three days and three nights He said: “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40 – NKJV), and we know that the soul of Jesus Christ went down to Hades, from which God brought it up on the third day when He raised Him from the dead, as it is written: “You will not leave my soul in Hades” (Acts 2:27 – NKJV).

As you can see, from all the above mentioned verses of the Scripture we clearly learn that the abode of the dead is a place which is in the lower parts of the earth, or rather, as Jesus said: “In the heart of the earth”, and that the sinners who refuse to heed the voice of God go down to this place.

However, the Scripture even describes hell.

● Job called hell “the land of darkness and the shadow of death. A land as dark as darkness itself, as the shadow of death, without any order, where even the light is like darkness” (Job 10:21-22 – NKJV).
Bildad the Shuhite, in speaking of the destiny of the wicked, said: “He is driven from light into darkness” (Job 18:18 – NKJV).

Zophar the Naamathite said about the wicked: “An unfanned fire will consume him” (Job 20:26 – NKJV). As for these words they are confirmed by the following words the rich man said to Abraham: “I am tormented in this flame” (Luke 16:24 – NKJV). The fire which is in hell is not a fire which was lit by man, but by God, that's why no one can put it out. As you can see, the Bible describes hell as a place of darkness where people are tormented by an unfanned fire.

Hell is not a pleasant place where to dwell; some people scoff at it saying that those who go down to hell have a great time there! But I can assure you that it is a dreadful and horrible place. Some people have seen it, for God granted them to see it, and they have a clear and indelible memory of it. Yes, because even in this generation God has allowed some men and women to see hell. These people, after they came back to life, have tried to tell as clearly as possible the horrible things they saw in that place; they still recognize that the best words they can use to describe hell, which they saw by the grace of God, are those which are written in the Holy Scripture. Indeed there are no better words to describe hell than those written in the Word of God.

The testimony of a man who died in his sins and came back to life

The late Kenneth Hagin (1917-2003) saw Hell at the age of 16. Here is what he tells us in his book I believe in visions: “I gave my heart to the Lord and was born again the very first night I became bedfast. That was Saturday, April 22, 1933 at 7:40 p.m. in the south bedroom of 405 North College Street in McKinney, Texas. Earlier that evening, my heart had stopped beating and the spiritual man who lives in my body had departed. When death seized my body, my grandmother, my younger brother, and my mother were sitting in the room. I had time only to tell them "goodbye." Then the inner man rushed out of my body and left my body lying dead, with eyes set and flesh cold. I went down, down, down until the lights of the earth faded away. I don't mean I fainted - I don't mean I was unconscious - I have proof that I was actually dead. My eyes were set, my heart had stopped beating, and my pulse had ceased.

The Scriptures tell us about the lost being cast into outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt. 25:30). The farther down I went, the blacker it became, until it was all blackness - I could not have seen my hand if it had been one inch in front of my eyes. And the farther down I went, the hotter and more stifling it became.

Finally, far below me, I could see lights flickering on the walls of the caverns of the damned. The lights were caused by the fires of Hell. The giant, white-crested orb of flame pulled me, drawing me as a magnet draws metal to itself. I did not want to go, but just as metal jumps to the magnet, my spirit was drawn to that place. I could not take my eyes off of it. The heat beat me in the face. Many years have gone by, yet I can see it just as clearly today as I saw it then. It is as fresh in my memory as if it just happened.

I came to the entrance of Hell. People ask, "What does the entrance of Hell look like?" I cannot describe it, because if I tried, I would have to have something with which to compare it. (Similarly, if a person had never seen a tree in his life, it would be impossible to tell him what a tree looks like.) Coming to the entrance, I paused momentarily, because I did not want to go in. I sensed that one more foot, one more step, one more yard, and I would be gone forever and would not come out of that horrible place! Upon reaching the bottom of the pit, I became conscious of some kind of spirit being by my side. I had not looked at him, because I could not take my gaze off of the fires of Hell. But when I paused, the creature laid his hand on my arm to escort me in.

At that same moment, a voice spoke from far above the blackness, above the earth, and above the heavens. I don't know if it was the voice of God, Jesus, an angel, or who. I did not see him, and I do not know what he said, because he did not speak in English; he spoke in some other tongue. When he spoke, his words reverberated throughout the region of the damned, shaking it
like a leaf in the wind, and causing the creature to take his hand off my arm. I did not turn around, but an unseen power, like suction, pulled me up, away from the fire, away from the heat, and back into the shadows of the absorbing darkness.

I began to ascend until I came to the top of the pit and saw the lights of the earth. I saw my grandparents' home, went through the wall back into my bedroom, and it was just as real to me as it was any time I had entered through the door (my spirit needed no door). I slipped back into my body as easily as a man slips into his trousers in the morning. It was the same way in which I had gone out - through my mouth. I began to talk to my grandmother. She said, "Son, I thought you were dead."

My great-grandfather had been a medical doctor, and Granny had worked with him. She later told me, "I dressed many people for burial and laid them out in days gone by. I have had much experience with death, but I learned more about death in dealing with you and your experiences than I ever knew before. You were dead. You had no pulse or heartbeat, and your eyes were set."

"Granny," I said, "I am going again. I am dying. Where is Momma?" "Your mother is out on the porch," she replied. And about that time I heard my mother praying at the top of her voice as she walked up and down the porch. "Where is my brother?" I asked. "He ran next door to call the doctor," Granny answered. If you're not ready to go, you want somebody with you. You're afraid! I said, "Granny, don't leave me! Don't leave me! I'm afraid I'll go while you're gone! I want somebody with me! Don't leave me!" So she gathered me into her arms again. I said, "Tell Momma I said goodbye. Tell Momma I love her. Tell Momma I appreciate everything she has ever done for me and for all of us. And you tell Momma that I said if I've ever put a wrinkle in her face, or a grey hair in her head, I'm sorry, and I ask her to forgive me." I felt myself slipping. I said, "Granny, I'm going again. You were a second mother to me when Momma's health failed. I appreciate you. Now I'm going, and I won't be back this time. "I knew I was dying, unprepared to meet God. I kissed her on the cheek and said goodbye.

My heart stopped beating for the second time. It's almost as real to me today, nearly half a century later, as it was that day. I felt the blood cease to circulate. The tips of my toes went numb - then my feet, ankles, knees, hips, stomach, and heart. I leaped out of my body and began to descend: down, down, down. Oh, I know it was just a few seconds, but it seemed like an eternity. I began to descend again into the darkness until the lights of earth had faded. Down below, the same experience occurred. The voice spoke from Heaven and again my spirit came up out of that place - back into my room and back into my body. The only difference this time was that I came up at the foot of the bed. I began to talk to Granny again. I said, "Son, you know your Granddad went down to the east part of town to collect rent off of some of his rent houses."

"Oh," I said, "I remember that now. I just forgot momentarily." I said, "Granny, tell Grandpa goodbye. I've never known what it means to have a daddy. He's been the nearest to a daddy I've known. He gave me a home when I had none. Tell him I appreciate him. Tell him I love him. Tell Grandpa that I said goodbye." Then I left a word for my sister and two brothers, and my heart stopped for the third time. I could feel the circulation as it cut off again - and I leaped out of my body and began to descend.

Until this time, I had thought, this is not happening to me. This is just a hallucination. It can't be real! But now I thought, this is the third time. I won't come back this time! Darkness encompassed me 'round about, darker than any night man has ever seen.

I wish I had adequate words to describe the horrors of Hell. People go through this life so complacently, so unconcerned, as if they will not have to face Hell. But God's Word and my own personal experience tell me differently. I know what it is to be unconscious - it is black when you are unconscious - but there is no blackness to compare with outer darkness.

As I began to descend in the darkness this third time, my spirit cried out, "God, I belong to the church! I've been baptized in water!" I waited for Him to answer, but no answer came - only the echo of my own voice as it came back to mock me. It will take more than church membership - it
will take more than being baptized in water - to miss Hell and make Heaven. Jesus said, "Ye must be born again" (John 3:7). Certainly I believe in being baptized in water - but only after a person is born again. Certainly I believe in joining the church - but only after a person is born again. If you merely join the church and are baptized in water without being born again, you will go to Hell! The second time I cried a little louder, "God! I belong to the church! I've been baptized in water!" Again I waited for an answer, but there was no answer, only the echo of my own voice through the darkness.

It would frighten a congregation out of their wits if I ever imitated the way I screamed the third time, although, if I could scare them out of Hell and into Heaven, I'd do it! I literally screamed, "GOD! GOD! I BELONG TO THE CHURCH! I'VE BEEN BAPTIZED IN WATER!" And all I heard was the echo of my own voice. I came again to the bottom of that pit. Again I could feel the heat as it beat me in the face. Again I approached the entrance, the gates into Hell itself. That creature took me by the arm. I intended to put up a fight if I could to keep from going in. I only managed to slow down my descent just a little, and he took me by the arm.

Thank God that voice spoke. I don't know who it was - I didn't see anybody - I just heard the voice. I don't know what he said, but whatever he said, that place shook; it just trembled. And that creature took his hand off my arm. It was just as if there was a suction to my back parts. It pulled me back, away from the entrance to Hell, until I stood in the shadows. Then it pulled me up headfirst. As I was going up through the darkness, I began to pray. My spirit, the man who lives inside this physical body, is an eternal being, a spirit man. I began to pray, "0 God! I come to You in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I ask You to forgive me of my sins and to cleanse me from all sin." I came up beside the bed.

The difference between the three experiences was that I came up on the porch the first time; I came up at the foot of the bed the second time; and I came up right beside the bed the third time. When I got inside my body, my physical voice picked up and continued my prayer right in the middle of the sentence. I was already praying out of my spirit. Now, we didn't have all the automobiles in 1933 that we have today - that was in the Depression. But they tell me that between me and Momma praying so loud, traffic was lined up for two blocks on either side of our house! They heard me praying from inside the house, and they heard my mother as she walked the porch praying at the top of her voice.

I looked at the clock and saw it was 20 minutes before 8 o'clock. That was the very hour I was born again due to the mercy of God through the prayers of my mother. I felt wonderful - it was just like a two-ton weight had rolled off of my chest. Although I was rejoicing and was happy in my spirit - although I felt wonderful spiritually - I felt no better physically. The doctors had been called, and they told my family that I was going to die. I thought I would die that night, but it no longer bothered me. I knew I was ready to go. My experience of being brought back from the dead is not new. Jesus raised three people from the dead: Lazarus, Jairus' daughter, and the widow's son. The Apostle Peter raised Dorcas from the dead; the Apostle Paul raised a young man from the dead; and others throughout Church history have had similar experiences.

Through my experience, God brought me to knowledge of salvation, which is the best thing in the world to know. I was so thankful to know that my heart was right with God, and to know that if I should die before morning I would go, to be with Him" [6]

Conclusion

Brothers in the Lord, I conclude by saying to you: rejoice and be exceedingly glad for Christ Jesus in His mercy has saved you from the fire of hell, from the unspeakable torments of hell people suffer in this horrible place because of their iniquities; and warn sinners of this terrible place of torment, exhorting them to repent and to believe in Jesus Christ, because if they do not repent and believe in Jesus they will go to hell when they die.
Where Christians go after death

When a Christian dies, his soul departs from his body and goes to heaven to be with the Lord. There are several verses of the Scripture which teach that that when one dies in the Lord, he departs from the body and enters the heavenly kingdom of our Lord Jesus. Here are these verses.

- Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1 – NKJV).

Therefore we believers have an eternal house in the heavens, not built by human hands but by God. All those who die in faith go there on the same day they die, or rather they enter this eternal house a few moments after their death, for the entrance into the heavens takes place a very short time after death. The apostles had a desire to depart from the body and be with the Lord, for Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “So we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:6-8 – NKJV. The IBRV reads ‘partire dal corpo’ that is, “to depart from the body” instead of “to be absent from the body”), and to the Philippians: “I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far” (Philippians 1:23 – NIV). We also have the same desire as Paul and his fellow workers had, for we know that to be with the Lord in heaven is far better than to live on earth. Of course, it is a wonderful thing to live with the Lord on earth (for the Lord is always with us), however, it is far better to live with the Lord in His heavenly kingdom.

- The apostle Peter wrote in his second epistle: “I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things” (2 Peter 1:13-15 – NIV).

The apostle knew that within a short time he would die and go to be with the Lord in heaven, and compared his death to a departure for he said that he would shortly put off his tent. Now, it is clear that since death is called departure that means that there is something inside the body which departs from the body at death, otherwise what Peter said would not make sense. And we know that this ‘something’ is the soul which is in man. Furthermore, if the soul of man departs from his body there must be a place where the soul goes after death, otherwise it would make no sense to call death ‘departure’, and we know that this place is Paradise, that is, the third heaven, the same place into which Paul was caught up (however he did not know whether he was caught up to heaven in the body or out of the body) and where he “heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4 – NKJV).

- John, in the vision he had while he was on the island called Patmos, saw among other things the souls of those believers who had been slain for the Word of God. He said: “And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled” (Revelation 6:9-11).

According to the above mentioned words of John, therefore, it is clear that those who die in Christ go to heaven, and they are fully conscious in heaven. In addition to this, what John saw in vision confirms the following words of Jesus: “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul” (Matthew 10:28 – NKJV), for the souls which John saw were the souls of those who had been killed for the name of Christ. Therefore, not even death can separate the disciples of Christ from their Lord and Saviour.

- In the vision John had while he was on the island called Patmos, he heard a voice from heaven saying to him: “Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on, “Yes,” says
the Spirit, “they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them” (Revelation 14:13 – NIV).

Why are the dead who die in Christ blessed then? Because they rest from their labor. And where do they rest? In heaven, for a short time before John said that he saw in heaven under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held, who cried out with a loud voice asking God to avenge their blood, and “it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed” (Revelation 6:11 – NKJV). Note that according to what was said to those souls, they were already resting, however it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer till a certain time. Therefore we proclaim that he who enters heaven “rests from his own work, just as God did from his” (Hebrews 4:10 – NIV). Glory be to God for ever. Amen.

However, I want to say something also about those who do not die in Christ. They are not blessed for they do not rest at all since they are in the fire of Hades where there is no rest for them. Could there be any rest in a place of torment, a horrible place, where billions of souls weep and gnash their teeth because of the terrible pains they suffer there? Therefore those who die in their sins are wretched because they go to Hades to be tormented by fire. Thanks be to God through Christ Jesus for saving us from the horrible and dreadful destiny awaiting the lost. Amen.

● Paul says to Timothy: “If we die with him, we will also live with him” (2 Timothy 2:11 – Translated from the IBRV).

What does he mean by that? He means that if we die in faith (or in Christ) we will go to heaven to live with Christ. Then at the resurrection (which will take place at the coming of the Lord from heaven), our body will be transformed and made incorruptible. Our soul will enter our new body (that is, the resurrected body) and with that new body we will continue to live with the Lord.

● Paul, a short time before his death, said to Timothy: “The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18 – NIV).

This is the confidence Paul had, that at his death the Lord would bring him to His heavenly kingdom. Many centuries before Asaph had said: “You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory” (Psalm 73:24 – NIV). As you can see, the words of Paul agree with the words of Asaph.

● Jesus said: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die” (John 11:25-26 – NKJV).

That means that though a believer may die in the flesh he will continue to live. Where will he live on? He will live in the third heaven, where the Lord of glory is sitting on His throne, for Jesus said: “Where I am, there My servant will be also” (John 12:26 – NKJV). Beloved, we have great joy and consolation because we know that where our Lord is we will be also if we stand firm in the faith. We are not at all afflicted at the thought that one day we will have to leave this earth, because we know that the world where we will go is far better than this. While on the one hand sinners go to a world which is far worse than this; on the other hand we believers, by the grace of God, will go to a far better place. While sinners do not know where they are going because they walk in darkness, we know where we are going, we are going to the place where Jesus went when He had by Himself purged our sins, and we know also the way which leads to that place, for Jesus said to His disciples: “And where I go you know, and the way you know” (John 14:4 – NKJV). Jesus Christ is the way which leads to the Father and we want to follow His steps in order to enter His everlasting kingdom. And what shall we say about death? Death is surely a bitter thing, because it is not a pleasant thing for those who remain on earth to see the corpse of a brother in Christ, but remember that “precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” (Psalm 116:15 – NKJV).

To God, who in His mercy has given us eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, be the glory now and forevermore. Amen.
The testimony of a man who died in Christ but God brought him back to life

The Lord resurrected me to life

1. An interview with Boris – an officer in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ukraine.

Who he was before his death.

INTERVIEWER: - I introduce to you, Mr. Boris Pilipchuk, 36 years of age. Please, Boris tell us about yourself a bit.

BORIS: - I am an officer, a Senior Lieutenant in the police force. I worked as a strategic duty officer in one of the operation sections of the police force in Khemlnitskij District of Ukraine. I fought in the Afghanistan war. I am married with three children. We live in a village called Novaya Siniavka, in the Starosiniavskij region of Khemlnitskij District.

INTERVIEWER: - Boris, I know that you are a Believer. How did you get saved?

BORIS: - I was a strong atheist, but my wife and her parents were Believers and they always wanted me to be saved. One day, on the 16th of September 1996, the Pastor Nikolai Ivashenko, of the Full Gospel Church in the town of Mariopol, came to our village, on a visit to his relatives. My wife asked him to speak to me a bit, but with care, because at that time I was very aggressive, lacked temperance and rude. The training I got from the army left a scar on my character.

When I saw Pastor Nikolai, I thought to myself, “Now, I’m going to teach you a lesson…” However, Nikolai walked up to me and began saying something and suddenly, I began feeling such peace, such tranquillity in my heart, such that I had never experienced since my childhood days. I was only used to giving orders, receive orders and carry them out blindly. I was trained in this sort of environment, in which normal human interaction was so rare. Something on the inside of me was transformed as I listened to the words of Nikolai and when I heard the phrase, “Now, we’ll pray, repeat after me…”. I repeated the sinner’s prayer. The power of the Holy Spirit came upon me and the Lord baptized me in the Holy Spirit. Ever since then, I dedicated my life to serve the Lord.

INTERVIEWER: - How did those around you react to this change in your life?

BORIS: - My mother reacted to all this very indignantly, at the beginning, because she had not known the Lord yet. Later on, opposition at my work place began, they threatened to lay me off the job or demote me, they even went to the extent of trying to make me backslide, but I wasn’t perturbed by this, neither did I worry. Formerly, I would likely have been in a state of confusion…to relinquish my officers rank, simply because of some sort of incident, to me, seemed absurd. God’s Word says, that if you are taken to court, do not be anxious over what to say, for I will speak for you. So not being worried over my fate, I said, “ You cannot do anything to me, because the Lord is with me’. So my superior officers had to condescend to this. Not only did colleagues condescend to this, but they also began listening, with pleasure, to me preach during my break period. I told every one about the Lord, in the hope of at least leading one soul to the Lord. I will not go on to describe what hideous things I did before repentance, because the Lord has forgiven me of all of them. I praise and thank the Lord for this. The Lord forgives every sin, of anyone who earnestly repents.

INTERVIEWER: - You are a serviceman and a Believer. This is very unusual. Do people consider this as being normal?

BORIS: - I tell every one that Jesus Christ is Lord over everyone, and servicemen as well. The Lord loves each and everyone just the same. I have been asked several times, “ How can you
serve God, being a serviceman, handling weapons?" The fact is that God's word teaches us how to serve the Lord. When John the Baptist baptized people in River Jordan, servicemen came up to him and asked, "What shall we do?" John the Baptist's reply to that question was such that they should be content with their wages, so that they should no longer complain and so that they wouldn't go beyond their bounds. There is no place in the word of God where it is written, servicemen should not serve the Lord. On the contrary, we know from the Holy Scriptures that two roman officers repented and that they and all their household served the Lord Jesus Christ. Each and every Believer, has a discrete ministry in God's sight.

INTERVIEWER: - Boris, I can see that you are in perfect health. Before your remarkable ordeal, were you in the same state of health?
BORIS: - Yes. Perfect health is a prerequisite to join the force. It was mandatory for us to undergo routine medical test.

INTERVIEWER: - Please, tell me what happened to you.
BORIS: - I will narrate how the Lord raised me from the dead. On the 27th of July, 1998, I returned home from work, to my village. Something happened to me at that time. I cannot describe what happened to me exactly. I was completely paralyzed and I lost consciousness. According to my wife's account, after I lost consciousness, I was rushed to the hospital, to the reanimation unit. Their diagnosis was - Brain haemorrhage. I remained there for several days in an unconscious state. I was transferred to the reanimation unit of the Khelmitskij District Clinic. The doctors continued to fight for my life. However, the heart attack, which was now progressing didn't leave them with a chance of my survival.

INTERVIEWER: - How serious was your brain haemorrhage?
BORIS: - As I found out later on, the doctor diagnosed a internal bleeding in 95% of my brain. All the equipment and the sensors that were attached to my body, testified of death. In their medical report the doctors diagnosed a haemorrhage that had spread all over my brain, all of the nine tests made confirmed death.

2. Death registered by the Doctors.

INTERVIEWER: - Boris, from what you were later on told, after the doctors certified your death, did they immediately call your wife?
BORIS: - Yes, they did and she was not the only person they informed. Actually, what happened was that every 15-20 minutes my colleagues called the hospital to inquire of my health. They were told that I was no longer alive, that I was already dead. At my working place, money was already being collected for my burial, a coffin was already ordered for me, the burial viennese and every other thing necessary for the occasion. In a nutshell, preparation was made for my burial. In my opinion, I think the sudden death of such a healthy police officer was a very stunning occurrence, which took everyone aback. This was clear, from the numerous phone calls to the hospital, from my colleagues.

INTERVIEWER: - Was your wife present with you when you died?
BORIS: - Yes, she was, but she was not allowed in the reanimation room itself. Later on my wife told me, that she constantly prayed to God over my salvation. When the doctors began to desperately fight to save my life, my wife called Pastor Nikolai in Mariopol on the phone. My wife told him what had happened and asked him to pray for me. While he prayed, God told him that the situation would not lead to death, but to the glory of God. He calmed my wife down and told her that a Christian Festival was underway in the town of Mariopol and that all the believers would pray for me. They prayed. During this time, events in the hospital were mounting. The
doctors informed my wife of my death and after two hours she was permitted to accompany my body, on the stretcher, to the door of the morgue.

3. Medical information on the possibility of a dead person returning to life

INTERVIEWER: - For an understanding from a clinical point of view, we make reference to a directory of medical publications. In the Concise Medical encyclopedia (published by “Soviet Encyclopedia”, 1974) the following is written: Brain haemorrhage is defined as the disruption of normal blood circulation in the brain, which results in the death of the brain material (Part 1, page 506). Resuscitation of an organism (reanimation) is defined as the restoration of a sudden disruption or total loss of life supporting functions of an organism. Clinical death is the last reversible stage of the death of an organism from the moment breathing and blood circulation cease to the beginning of irreversible changes in the central nervous system, after which death is referred to as being biological. The duration of clinical death depends on the reason that gave rise to the development of a terminal condition, the duration of dying, age etc. In normal temperatures, clinical death extends over a period of 4-6 minutes, after which the restoration of normal activities of the central nervous system becomes impossible. Reanimation procedures should be started immediately sudden death has been established. It is also recommended not to allow the complete ceasing of breathing or heartbeat. If the heartbeat is not re-established, reanimation procedures are advised to be continued until they prove effective. Signs of effectiveness: Disappearance of cyanosis, noticing of spontaneous gasps (the sooner they begin, the better the prognosis), pulsation of the large blood vessels in accordance with the rhythm of the massage, narrowing of the pupils. If these signs do not appear in 20-25 minute, resuscitation procedures should be discontinued (part 2, page 270-271). I know that doctors have some rules, which can never be violated by any one in any medical establishment. In their rules, a person who is lying in reanimation, in a condition of biological death, should not be there more than 2 hours and only after this the person may be transported to the morgue. That means that after establishing the fact that Boris was in a state of clinical death, the doctors struggled for 30 minutes to save his life, and after establishing a state of biological death, not less than 2 more hours elapsed, for the period of time he was in the reanimation unit. Meaning that the irreversible processes and death of the brain matter had already begun, seen as the time necessary for resuscitation after clinical death takes about 4-6 minutes. In this case the person couldn’t be more dead. Boris’ death was confirmed by the doctors and by the medical equipment that were connected to his body.

4. “I saw heaven” - Boris

INTERVIEWER: - And now, Boris, tell us how you felt. What did you see?
BORIS: - It felt as if I was conscious, I began seeing with my own eyes, what happened after an internal push in the body. I began seeing everything as if from above. My soul came out of me and looked at my body. Doctors in their white gowns had gathered around my body. Numerous equipment were connected to my body. The doctors tried to bring me to a normal condition, they ran about, and applied all possible measure. But all their effort were to no avail. Then I began to ascend from the earth. The earth became smaller and smaller. It became so small, and then it disappeared totally. My transportation was accompanied by a continuous whistling in my ears. Then I ended up in an extraordinary place, that was so illuminated, that I began to feel good. I saw a golden staircase, that shone with rays of glory. The staircase was rather wide. On either side of the staircase were golden railings, along which from the end to the top were winged angels in white clothes, with golden belts. Their hair was white, their faces shone so much, like lightning, their eyes were like two lanterns. They had human faces. Their hands and legs were the color of shinning copper chips. On the outside the angels were like humans. Around the staircase and under it, stood a great number of angels, and their number, I simply cannot describe. These were without wings. All the angels were singing psalms. And
surprisingly, I did not know, what language they were singing in, but at that moment I completely understood the words of the psalm. They sang: “O worthy are you Lord of all glory and praise. You, Lord, created the heavens and the earth. You are worthy of our praise!”

Then I saw an extraordinary light at the end of the staircase. But the light wasn’t like that of the sun or of welding instrument, which has a harmful effect on the eyes. The light was extraordinarily bright, but did not hurt the eyes, warm, calming, full of joy and peace. I was full of delight, to such an extent that mere words cannot describe how I felt. My delight continued to increase and there was no limit to the joy I felt. I don’t know how to describe this vision, this feeling, in words, but I would like you to imagine the picture the Lord showed me. Later on, I heard a voice, coming from the place where the wonderful light was, which said: ‘My son, come to me and I will show you something. I will help you’.

From the great number of angels, two angels walked up behind me. One stood on my left and the other stood on my right, just a short distance from me. I didn’t turn my head around, I didn’t look behind me and I didn’t gaze around me, but it appeared as if I could see 360 degrees about me. I wasn’t nervous and didn’t feel any form of discomfort. I was absolutely calm and so joyful to extent, that I cannot describe how I felt, not then and not now. I didn’t ask anyone any question, such as ‘where am I?’ ‘What happened to me? What’s going to happen later on?’ I felt completely confident in myself, as if I was standing in a familiar place. I felt as if I lived there permanently.

Then the Holy Spirit, transferred me to a vast open plain, in which very beautiful white horses pranced. In the center of the field, stood a great big city, in the form of a cube. When I noticed it, I began to draw close to it. But I approached it in a different way, not as a man normally walks on the ground. I moved without my feet touching the ground, it was as if I was sliding. The angels escorted me. The closer I approached the city, the more intense was the delight I experienced, from what I saw.

There were very high walls, which were multiple in number and of various colors. There were 12 colors in all, which radiated and shone like a bright light. (Later on, after my resurrection, when I studied the 21-22 chapter of the book of Revelations in the Bible, I found a confirmation of what I had seen). I saw the foundation of the city, which was made up of 12 precious stones of this world. I saw a pearl gate, three on each wall. The pearl gate was very big, higher than two meters. I didn’t measure them, but one pearl was larger than two meters, in my opinion. I saw only six gates, because the Lord led me into the city through one of its corners. I saw the two sides of the cube. Then the Lord led me through one of the gates into the city, as we passed through them, I saw two inscriptions. One of them was above the gate and the second was under the gate. One of the names of the tribes of Israel was written above the gate, and under it the name of an Apostle was written. Unfortunately I do not know which gate the Lord led me through, into the New Jerusalem, but now I would like to know that.

When I entered into the city through the gates, I stood still in admiration: The city was made completely of gold. The gold was so pure and I had never seen such brilliance before. I had seen how brightly gold articles in a jeweller’s store shone, but this was not comparable, to what I saw at that moment. Gold streets, houses of gold, gold doors – everything was made of gold, transparent like glass. I could never have imagined that gold could appear transparent and so pure. I read about this in God’s word, but I could not really imagine it, to me this issue was concealed. I just couldn’t imagine how a hard metal could be transparent. Now that I saw it, I just wanted to touch it. I touched the walls, I entered some houses and scrutinized everything. I did not ask the angels, where I was to go from here. I seemed to know the way. I was overcome with such a feeling as if I was in a place of my own.

As I continued my way further into the city, close to the center, I saw a large tree in one spot. The tree had pear-shaped fruit on it. The size of the fruit was about the size of two average sized fists put together. The leaves on it reminded me of the leaves of a lime tree, only they were larger and like leaves of burdock. When I got near the tree, I wanted to take a fruit from it and began to reach for one. Suddenly with enthusiasm, I was surprised that the hand that I stretched out, was not like an ordinary hand, it was transparent. When I was about to pluck a fruit, the
angel who stood a little distance behind me, on my right side, stretched out his hand and stopped me. Gesticulating with his finger, he told me that for now, I shouldn’t pluck the fruit. Then something I didn’t expect took place: Without any form of regret, disappointment from the angel’s action, I left the tree. Generally speaking, within the city, I never experienced any kind of discomfort, or disorder. When I left the tree, I saw an extraordinary bright light at the center of the city. It was very interesting that I didn’t see any shadow not from the trees and not from the houses. There were no shadows there and neither were there any lamps. I didn’t see the sun nor any object that gave light, but the light was extraordinary bright and so pleasant to the eyes, to the extent that I was so delighted beyond measure. I cannot adequately describe in words, the extra unusual condition of my soul...

When I saw the center of the illumination, I bowed my head and felt an overwhelming urge to bow my knees. But the angel supported me and I heard a voice, “My son, I have shown you all that is necessary for you at this time, and you should return now, to declare My Glory, power and dominion, to declare all that you have seen and heard”. Then I began to pray and implore the Lord, asking Him to let me remain there, where I was. I cried, “Lord I don’t want to return”. But the Lord said, “You have a wife, and three children. You have to return to them, for it is not time for you to be here yet”. Then again I began to implore the Lord, “Lord, I don’t want to return. Allow me to remain with beside You”. But the Lord said to me,” My Son, be meek and self-controlled, do not murmur, go back. You have to declare My Glory”.

5. Panic among the hospital staff.

BORIS: In the blink of an eye, I moved in space over such a distance, that I saw the earth to which I was now approaching. As I approached I saw the next scene: My body was being taken by the hospital staff on a stretcher to a room where bodies of people were kept. Some of the bodies had incisions made on them. I understood they were taking me to the morgue. In other words, looking from above, I only saw how they were taking me, I didn’t see precisely that they were taking me, because the body was covered with a cloth, only the feet could be seen. When I saw my weeping wife accompanying the stretcher, I understood I was the one being taken. One of the hospital staff was comforting her, trying to tell her not to grieve over the incident and tried to prevent her from entering the room where they were taking the body on the stretcher. I saw this as if from above. I understood that I was brought to the morgue. When the doors ahead of my wife were closed and the stretcher with my body on it was already in the room, people began to move away. These were the orderlies and nursing sisters who brought me to the morgue, who were comforting my wife.

When I saw all this, I felt a clap or more precisely a jolt and immediately, I entered into my body. At that instance, I felt the blowing of wind, an enormous force, which flung the doors, through which my body was brought in, open. This force tore the doors off their hinges and they dropped to the floor and the force pushed the trolley with the body out of the morgue. After this I got up. The upper part of my body sat up on the trolley and the cloth fell off my body. The orderly slipping along the sides of the wall, fell and so did the nursing sister as well. Both of them lay there in a state of terror. Another nursing sister came and when she saw me sitting up, went into state of shock. The same supernatural power made the trolley on which I sat, to stand up right, vertically, and I stood vertically on the ground with my feet. Then the trolley fell to its normal position and rolled back in to the morgue.

I wanted to go but could not. My body did not respond. I experienced such a feeling, as if I was not in my own body. Then I began to pray, because my senses were returning to normal. I saw everything, I recognized everything, I heard everything, but I did not recognize the voice I heard, it drawled. The feeling was as if an audio tape was playing at a slower speed than normal. At that instant, I began to call upon the Lord, for the Lord gave me strength to walk. When I finished praying, I felt a great outpouring of energy. I felt as if the hairs on my head were falling off and a thousand needles pricked my forehead. I received such an outpouring of energy, that I felt as if
my feet were in asphalt. I felt warmth and a great power, from my head to my feet. I began to walk as the Holy Spirit led me, in the direction of the doctor’s room, where all the doctors were seated. Unconsciously I had perfect orientation of the hospital’s layout, seen as I had been here on several occasions as a serviceman.

My wife fell down on her knees, thanking the Lord, because he had resurrected me to life. When she came to herself, she took a cloth and ran after me, to cover my nakedness, because I was completely naked. As I continued walking on, the hospital staff all ran in various directions screaming out. Some of them fell down, while others shut themselves in the wards. My wife caught up with me just as I was approaching the doctors room and wrapped the cloth about me.

I reached the doctors room and with a gentle push, opened the door of the room. Later on, I learned that the room was locked with a key by the doctors, and cupboards were placed behind the door from the inside to prevent entry into the room. The door opened before me with such ease. The power of the Lord opened that door.

When I entered the room, some of the hospital staff were in a state of terror, while in the corner, other staff were frantically shouting out, “who are you, what do you want from us? Let us alone!” I calmed them down and said, “Don’t be afraid, give me some clothes.” Looking in their faces, I saw they were stone cold with fear and indescribable horror, I understood there was no sense in explaining my resurrection to these poor doctors frightened to death. Whatever I would have told them, all the same they wouldn’t listen to me. The only thing they could hear was the pounding of their hearts. I repeated, “Give me my clothes and I’ll go home”. The doctors allowed me to leave quickly, because they were in such a state of terror because of my presence. When I came out of the doctors room, I stood a while in the corridor and surprisingly, my first four steps left something like a print of water behind, although I was completely dry and the cloth about me was also dry! I dressed up. My wife called a car on the phone, and we went home.

INTERVIEWER: - Boris, I can imagine the panic and shock of the doctors, when they saw you. What they saw, definitely did not conform with the training they underwent in medical school or with what they came across in their medical practice. It’s clear that it wasn’t death that scared them, because they encounter that everyday. Your resurrection back to life is simply not comprehensible to the human mind. It’s a fact and everyone knows that blood clots in a closed space of the brain, couldn’t possibly go anywhere and what more considering the degree of the haemorrhage – 95%. There couldn’t possibly have been any mistake. After a futile struggle to save your life, your death was confirmed. All the medical equipment connected to your body, confirmed this fact. You were dead in their presence long enough, about 2 hrs and 30 minutes. After that you were taken to the morgue. The irreversible process in the central nervous system had long taken place. And it turned out that the dead man, didn’t just breath, but walked in on his feet and even spoke normally. In actual fact, doctors understand how difficult and how much time is needed in reanimation, for a patient to recover, who has suffered from brain haemorrhage. The doctors did not expect such a miracle.

And what more, the resurrection was accompanied with such power of the Holy Ghost, to the extent that the doors were torn from their hinges and they fell to the ground with such a noise. The trolley rolled out of the morgue, over turned and then rolled back into the morgue. All this happened in the presence of the medical staff. The news of your resurrection had already preceded you. The doctors had already locked themselves in the doctors room and barricaded the door. The door being opened by the power of the Holy Ghost was something they just could not comprehend. They were in such a state of fear. The events that took place were just too incredible for the normal human mind to comprehend...


INTERVIEWER: And so, we stopped at the point where you were going home in a car. What happened next?
BORIS: I was on my way, in complete health in the front seat of the car. Along the road, within our district, we happened to drive up to a road warden, a vehicle inspection officer, with whom I incidentally happened to work with. When he saw me, he slumped to the ground. He sat on the ground for a long time stunned. My wife asked me to get out and tell him, “everything is OK, and that I am alive”. I said, “I won’t do that, because, he may end up dying out of fear”.

The driver that drove us had to drive into town for some personal matters, he quickly attended to them. We continued our journey into the village, and a police officer, whom we happened to drive past in his car, increased his speed and caught up with us, in order to get a better look at me, to make sure I was really the one. Seeing me he took off his cap, wiped away the sweat from his face, shrugged his shoulders and drove on ahead.

After I arrived home, literally speaking, within thirty minutes my superior officer came to my house to find out if I was really alive or the police officer who met us along the way was out of his mind. They just couldn’t believe that after all that had taken place, I was not only in reanimation, but also in complete health at home. They couldn’t understand this. When I went out to greet them, they were afraid and began to step back, as if they had seen a ghost. I asked them to have a seat and began to speak to them about my resurrection. They began to nod their heads, but their faces revealed so much fright, that everything I told them, they didn’t believe a word, they didn’t even listen to all that I said. They tried as fast as possible to leave, so that they wouldn’t be around me for long.

The next day when I arrived to work, my superior officer didn’t allow me to commence my duties. He said:

“I cannot allow you to work, because after brain haemorrhage and other similar sicknesses, that the doctor’s discovered in you, you ought to have been categorized as an invalid. Considering your death and mysterious resurrection…”

“But do you believe your eyes?” – I asked him.

“I believe”, he said.

“Can you hear me?”

“I can hear you”, he replied.

“Can you see me?” – I continued to ask.

“I can see you” - he said.

“Then pinch me, perhaps you don’t see me well. I am as healthy as you” – I said to him.

“That’s impossible”, he said.

7. Deductions by the Medical Committee – Completely healthy. May carry on service.

INTERVIEWER: - Boris, you talked about the reaction of your colleagues. But what about the doctors?

BORIS: - Yes, for two weeks, 15 different medical committees carried out medical checks on me, to determine if I could remain in service. The doctor’s wanted to prove, that at least some side effects should exist. And that it was impossible that everything should just vanish away without a trace. But in all their x-rays and their investigations, testified of complete health only.

A team of doctors, mainly psychiatrists and neuro-pathologists, came to a common opinion, that I am absolutely well, that I could be admitted on a team of Astronauts. I was allowed to continue my duties as a duty officer in the district police office.

The doctors came to a conclusion, that I am well, however up to this moment in time, all of them are in a state of confusion. As the medical committee was carrying out their duties and the doctors affirmed that I was completely well, they didn’t believe their eyes. Some of them said that if they hadn’t personally fixed the diagnosis, based on the x-rays, cardiographs and many other investigations, they wouldn’t have believed it. How could blood clots, within the brain disappear by themselves without any surgical procedures?

The doctors asked me to keep silent about all this, or else people would think I was crazy. But I know that every lie is a sin, as it is written in God’s word, that all liars will have their part in the lake that burns with fire…”, and that they will not inherit the Kingdom of God. I told the doctors:
“For the very reason I stand on the earth, after all that has happened to me, doesn’t give me the right to remain silent. For as it is written in God’s Word, that if you remain silent, than “stones will sing out”. They replied: “Well, that’s your own business. We will not record your resurrection”. But the doctors that treated me, passed the diagnosis and later certified death all repented. They all accepted the Lord Jesus as Savior.

I would like to say something in addition, that God doesn’t only resurrect a person, in order to leave him crippled. He resurrected me to life and gave me complete healing.

I affirm this statement that God – is not an abstract being. He is a personality, who spoke with me. He is real and heaven is real.

From: http://www.word-of-faith-ch.org/

Conclusion

Brothers in the Lord, rejoice and be exceedingly glad because when you die, if you will be found faithful, you will leave this world and go to a far better place, where you will be in the presence of God and of His Son, and you will praise them continually. In heaven there is fullness of joy and of peace, there is no crying, no affliction, and no pain. The glory of God gives light to everybody and to everything, and everything is glorious and majestic.

However, besides rejoicing, you must also speak to one another about this marvellous place, that is, the heavenly paradise, in order to comfort one another. And do not forget to show sinners the way to heaven so that they may come to their senses and begin to walk in it.

One last thing, brothers; as I said before, you will go to heaven if you are found faithful: that is something you should keep always in mind lest you deceive yourselves or be deceived by the devil. For Jesus said to His disciples: “But he who stands firm to the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:13 – NIV), and also: “By standing firm you will save yourselves” (Luke 21:19 – NIV).

Therefore, you must believe in the name of the Son of God to the end in order to enter the heavenly kingdom.

Anyone who draws back will go to perdition, that is to say, he will go down into the fire of hell where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth; his soul will not be taken into glory, but it will be brought down to hell. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, it is better to fall into the hands of men than to fall into the hands of our great God (that is to say, it is better for us to be seized by men, beaten, put in prison, tortured and put to death by them for Christ’s sake, than to be punished by God with everlasting perdition for apostasy), who is called the Fear of Isaac and the One to be feared.

Therefore, let the fear of God be with you all the days of your life, brothers; let it be before your eyes day and night. Love God to the end and He will save you from the fire of hell and He will bring you safely to His Kingdom. So there you will meet all the saints who fought the good fight and kept the faith to the end. Stand firm in the faith; be zealous for the cause of the Gospel, and be rich in good works. Pray without ceasing.

Footnotes

1] Giovanni Diodati (1576–1649) was an Italian Bible Scholar, who translated the Bible into Italian. The Italian Bible Diodati is very similar to the King James Version for it is based on the Text Receptus. This Bible Version is still used by many believers.

2] In the King James Version as well as in the New International Version, the Hebrew word Sheol is translated ‘grave’ in 1 Kings 2:6, Job 7:9, and Isaiah 38:18. While in the New King James Version the word Sheol of Isaiah 38:18 was not translated, for we read: “For Sheol cannot thank You".
3) In the Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible (New York 1995), the Hebrew and Chaldee Dictionary defines Sheol in this way: ‘Hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat), includ. its accessories and inmates: - grave, hell, pit’ (page 135), while the Greek Dictionary of the New Testament defines hades in this way: ‘Hades’ or the place (state) of departed souls: - grave, hell’ (page 2).


In the Old Testament of the New King James Version the word Sheol is translated ‘hell’ 18 times. In Psalm 9:17 and in Proverbs 7:27 Sheol is translated ‘hell’ (while in Job 26:6 and in many other verses it is left in its untranslated Hebrew form). In the New Testament the equivalent Greek word Hades is left in its untranslated Greek form: see Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; 1 Corinthians 15:55; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14.

As for the Old Testament of the New International Version, it must be said that unfortunately the word Sheol is never translated ‘hell’. Most of the times it is translated ‘grave’. And this is a bad thing which was done by the Bible translators of this Bible for there are various verses – for instance Psalm 9:17, Job 26:6, Isaiah 14:9 - in which the word sheol must be translated ‘hell’ or ‘abode of the dead’ and cannot be translated ‘grave’ or ‘death’. As for the New Testament of the NIV, the word Hades is translated ‘the depths’ in Matthew 11:23 and Luke 10:15; ‘grave’ in Acts 2:37 and 2:31; ‘hell’ in Luke 16:23; ‘death’ in 1 Corinthians 15:55; while it is left in its untranslated Greek form in the following verses: Matthew 16:18; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13, 14. The word Hades in Matthew 11:23 and Luke 10:15, and Acts 2:37 and 2:31 should not have been translated in that way.

5) Giovanni Luzzi (1856-1948) was a Bible Scholar. In 1906 the British Bible Society appointed him Chief Reviser of a Committee whose task was to revise the Italian Bible Diodati Version. The Luzzi Version therefore is a Revised version of the Bible translated by Giovanni Diodati. We call this Bible ‘La Versione Luzzi’ that is, ‘the Luzzi Version’ or simply ‘la Versione Riveduta’, that is, ‘the Revised Version’. It must be said, however, that many passages of the New Testament of the ‘Revised Version’ are very similar to the New Testament of the New International Version for the Committee based the revision also on the ‘Critical Text’.

6) I want you to know that I don’t accept every thing that Kenneth Hagin writes in his book / Believe in Visions (for example, I don’t accept the fact that he says that angels are waiting for our commands).

Furthermore, I don’t accept several things he teaches on prosperity and health, for I reject the so called ‘prosperity message’, and I don’t accept his ‘holy laughter’ for I consider it a carnal and diabolical manifestation. There are other teachings taught by Hagin that I reject (such as the one which says that Jesus tasted spiritual death and the one which says that He was born again in hell).

Of course, the fact that at a certain point of his life Kenneth Hagin accepted strange and diabolical teachings did not bring him honor nor did it bring praise to God, for I firmly believe that his false teachings have discredited seriously his ministry. However, I firmly believe that what he says about his death-experience is true and cannot be refuted at all, because it is confirmed by the Scripture.
The souls of the departed saints, in conjunction with the holy angels, minister to the heirs of salvation; whereas the souls of the departed wicked, in conjunction with evil angels, inflict death or evils of various kinds on the men who do not know God

John Wesley (1703-1791) taught that the souls of the departed saints, in conjunction with the holy angels, may sometimes minister to the heirs of salvation; whereas the souls of the departed wicked inflict death or evils of various kinds on the men who do not know God. As for the souls of the departed saints, in his sermon On Faith Wesley said: ‘In the meantime, may we not probably suppose that the spirits of the just, though generally lodged in paradise, yet may sometimes, in conjunction with the holy angels, minister to the heirs of salvation? ….. And in how many ways may they minister to the heirs of salvation! Sometimes by counteracting wicked spirits whom we cannot resist because we cannot see them; sometimes by preventing our being hurt by men, or beasts, or inanimate creatures’ (The Works of John Wesley, Volume 4, Nashville 1987, page 191, 197). Instead, as for the souls of the departed wicked he said: ‘Let us consider, first, what may be the employment of unholy spirits from death to resurrection. We cannot doubt but the moment they leave the body they find themselves surrounded by spirits of their own kind, probably human as well as diabolical. What power God may permit these to exercise over them we do not distinctly know. But it is not improbable he may suffer Satan to employ them, as he does his own angels, in inflicting death or evils of various kinds on the men that know not God. For this end they may raise storms by sea or by land, they may shoot meteors through the air. They may occasion earthquakes …. Where they are not permitted to take away life, they may inflict various diseases ….. May not some of these evil spirits be likewise employed in conjunction with evil angels in tempting wicked men to sin, and in procuring occasion for them? Yea, and in tempting good men to sin, even after they had escaped the corruption that is in the world? Herein doubtless they put forth all their strength …’ (Ibid., pages 193-194).

Confutation

According to the Holy Scriptures, when the righteous dies he enters into peace, that is to say, he enters into the heavenly Kingdom of God where God makes peace. In this Kingdom he is in the presence of God, who sits on the throne, as well as in the presence of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God; and he is together with myriads of angels and all the departed saints. For Paul said that to him to be absent from the body was to be present with the Lord, and thus he had a great desire to depart from his body and be with the Lord (cf. Philippians 1:23; 2 Corinthians 5:8); and John saw under the altar which is in heaven the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God, crying with a loud voice asking God when He would avenge their blood on those who dwelt on the earth (cf. Revelation 6:9-10). That is the state of the souls of the righteous after death. Can the souls of the righteous appear to those who are on the earth? According to the teaching of the Scripture, by God’s will on certain occasions they can. For instance, when Jesus was transfigured Moses (who had died more than one thousand years before) and Elijah appeared in glory and talked with Jesus (cf. Luke 9:30-31), and the apostles, who were with Jesus on the holy mountain, saw and heard Moses and Elijah. In addition, as we saw before, John saw in a vision the souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God and he heard them speak (cf. Revelation 6:9-11). Therefore, we can’t exclude the possibility that they might appear to some people by God’s will. However, usually God, in order to deliver a specific message to some unbelievers or some saints, causes Jesus Christ to appear, as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, who, while he was going to Damascus to persecute the saints, saw in a vision Jesus who spoke to him (cf. Acts 9:3-6; 22:14); and many years after that vision, while he was in Jerusalem, he saw Jesus Christ in a vision who comforted him (cf. Acts 23:11). Another way God delivers special messages to some people is by causing an angel to appear to them, as in the case of Cornelius, when he was still unsaved, to whom God sent an angel to tell him to call
for the apostle Peter (cf. Acts 10:1-8), or in the case of Philip the evangelist to whom God sent an angel to tell him to go toward the south along the road that went down from Jerusalem to Gaza (cf. Acts 8:26).

As for the being who appeared to John on the isle of Patmos, he was not the soul of a righteous who had lived on the earth, for the Scripture clearly says that he was an angel, as it is written: “Then the angel said to me, ‘Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!' And he added, ‘These are the true words of God’. At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, ‘Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus! Worship God!’” (Revelation 19:9-10 – NIV), and again: “I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches” (Revelation 22:16 – NIV).

As for the possibility that the souls of the saints might fight against the evil spirits and keep the living, the Scripture excludes it for it is the angels who do these things in obedience to the command of God. It is written: “The angels of the Lord encamp around those who fear Him, and they deliver them” (Psalm 34:7 – Italian Bible, Diodati Version. Translated by myself), and again: “He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways” (Psalm 91:11 – NIV). In the book of Revelation we read that John saw Michael and his angels fighting with the devil and his angels; there were no souls of the righteous who fought with the devil and his angels (cf. Revelation 12:7-9).

As for the souls of the wicked, the Scripture does not teach at all what Wesley taught, for they are all in Hades, where they are tormented, and where they are waiting for the judgement day, and from where they can’t come out to bring their messages to the living nor to avenge themselves on those who are on the earth or to strike people with diseases. It is sufficient to read the story of the rich man and Lazarus told by Jesus to understand all this, for that rich man, who was tormented in Hades, could not come out of that place for any reason (cf. Luke 16:19-31). On the earth the devil and his demons work evil things; the devil tempts, incites people to do evil things, strikes people with diseases and he even kills some people (cf. Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 2:7; John 8:44). Demons attacks men, pursuing what is evil for them and seeking to possess them in order to manifest through their bodies (cf. 1 Samuel 16:14-23, Matthew 8:28-34; Mark 9:14-27). That’s what we learn from the Bible. Nowhere does the Bible state that some souls of the departed wicked are employed in conjunction with demons in tempting both wicked men and good men to sin or in inflicting death or evils of various kinds on the men that know not God.

So, brothers, I warn you against this doctrine which holds that the souls of the departed saints, in conjunction with the holy angels, minister to the heirs of salvation, whereas the souls of the departed wicked, in conjunction with evil angels, inflict death or evils of various kinds on the men who do not know God, for it is inconsistent with the teaching of the Scripture, thus it must be rejected.

All those who die in God's grace will go to a place called Purgatory to undergo purification

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that all those who die in Christ do not enter heaven immediately because they need to undergo a process of purification in a place called Purgatory. Here is what the Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms: ‘All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification, so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven. The Church gives the name Purgatory to this final purification of the elect, which is entirely different from the punishment of the damned. The Church formulated her doctrine of faith on Purgatory especially at the Councils of Florence and Trent. The tradition of the Church, by reference to certain texts of Scripture, speaks of a cleansing fire: As for certain lesser faults,
we must believe that, before the Final Judgment, there is a purifying fire. He who is truth says that whoever utters blasphemy against the Holy Spirit will be pardoned neither in this age nor in the age to come. From this sentence we understand that certain offenses can be forgiven in this age, but certain others in the age to come. This teaching is also based on the practice of prayer for the dead, already mentioned in Sacred Scripture: “Therefore Judas Maccabeus] made atonement for the dead, that they might be delivered from their sin.” From the beginning the Church has honored the memory of the dead and offered prayers in sufrage for them, above all the Eucharistic sacrifice, so that, thus purified, they may attain the beatific vision of God. The Church also commends almsgiving, indulgences, and works of pence taken on behalf of the dead’ (CCC 1030-1032)

Confutation

Jesus Christ said: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matthew 7:13-14). Therefore there are only two ways, that is, the way which leads to perdition and the way which leads to salvation.

Those who walk in the former way, being full of sins, when they die, will go to Hades (that is, hell), as it is written: “The wicked shall be turned into hell” (Psalm 9:17: cf. Luke 16:22-31; Isaiah 5:14), where they will be tormented by an unfanned fire, as it is written: “An unfanned fire will consume him [the wicked]” (Job 20:26 – NKJV), and where they will wait for the day of judgement on which they will rise again to be judged according to their works and cast into the lake of fire (cf. John 5:29; Daniel 12:2; Revelation 20:12-15). So they have no hope, as it is written: “What hope has the godless when he is cut off, when God takes away his life?” (Job 27:8 – NIV).

Instead, those who walk in the latter way, that is, the way which leads to salvation, when they die, will go immediately to be with the Lord in heaven. And we are among them by the grace of God. The Roman Catholics will say then: ‘How can you be sure that when you die you will go immediately to heaven?’ Well, we have this assurance because we have been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus, as it is written: “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:2 – NKJV), which blood has cleansed us from all our sins, as it is written that Jesus “washed us from our sins in His own blood” (Revelation 1:5 – NKJV). And also because John says that “if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7 – NKJV). This is why we are sure we are saved and we have eternal life, and when we die we will immediately go to heaven, because all our old sins were blotted out by the blood of Christ, and the sins we now confess to the Lord are blotted out by the same blood. At this point, it is most likely that the Roman Catholics will say to me: ‘You are presumptuous!’ Not at all, for there are several verses of the Scriptures which clearly state that those who die in Christ immediately to be with the Lord Jesus.

The souls of those who had been slain for the Word of God, which were seen by John in a vision, were under the altar which is in heaven before the throne of God. Here is what John wrote: “I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” (Revelation 6:9 – NKJV).

Paul said that to him to die was gain, and in fact he had a desire to depart and be with Christ for it was far better. Here are his words: “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain …I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” (Philippians 1:21, 23 – NKJV). For sure if Paul had to go first to a place called purgatory to suffer awful pains he would not have considered his death gain but rather a loss.

Paul said to the Corinthians that he and his fellow workers were always confident and well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord: “We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8 –
NIV). I ask you this question: ‘How could those men desire so much to be absent from the body if they had believed in the existence of a place called purgatory where they had to expiate some debts through terrible sufferings? So, on the basis of the above mentioned words of Paul we affirm that the apostles did not believe in the existence of purgatory.

In the book of Revelation it is written: “Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on’. ‘Yes’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them” (Revelation 14:13 – NIV). Therefore the Spirit of truth bears witness that those who die in the grace of God are blessed for they are in heaven, where they rest from their labour. This excludes that they may go to a place called purgatory to expiate some of their debts through awful pains, which are less severe than the pains of hell, for if it were as Roman Catholics say the dead would not be blessed, for instead of resting from their labor they would suffer awful pains as a punishment for their debts. However, in this world there is also the spirit of error, which says that the dead in Christ are in purgatory!

Let me go on refuting purgatory. Jesus said: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life” (John 5:24), and Paul said to the Romans: “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus …..” (Romans 8:1). Therefore, if there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ and they will not come into condemnation, the belief that after death they must go to a place called purgatory to expiate certain debts is inconsistent with the teaching of Jesus as well as with the teaching of Paul. Why? Because according to the Roman Catholic Catechism purgatory is a place of torment where Christians are condemned – even though for a certain period of time and not for ever – to suffer awful pains in order to expiate their debts. By the way, let me say something about these so called debts which according to the Catholic priests must be expiated in purgatory: ‘If God, according to the Scripture, forgives those who confess their sins to Him both their sins and the everlasting punishment due to their sins, is it not diabolical to declare that after death they must go to a place of torment to expiate their sins?’ Of course, it is. But not in the eyes of the roman catholic theologians who, having been blinded by the devil, take pleasure in teaching things which are contrary to the sound doctrine. To affirm that a person who has been justified by God, when he dies, must go to a place of torment to expiate his debts is tantamount to saying that if a life convict receives the President’s or King’s pardon, and thus his punishment is blotted out, he must continue to stay in prison for several years to suffer in order to expiate his faults, and after these years he will be allowed to come out of prison!!

On the basis of what the Scripture teaches, we proclaim that when a person is forgiven his eternal punishment is blotted out and he doesn’t have to discharge any debt of temporal punishment either in this world or in the world to come, for Christ paid all the ransom. Those who have been justified by the blood of Christ have no debt of temporal punishment which they must discharge for Christ on the cross expiated all their debts. We know very well that the Council of Trent has cursed those who affirm this, saying: “If any one saith, that, after the grace of Justification has been received, to every penitent sinner the guilt is remitted, and the debt of eternal punishment is blotted out in such wise, that there remains not any debt of temporal punishment to be discharged either in this world, or in the next in Purgatory, before the entrance to the kingdom of heaven can be opened (to him); let him be anathema” (Council of Trent, Session VI, canon XXX), but we do not care about what that Council stated. We know in whom we have believed and we are convinced that he who cleansed us from all our sins and has promised us eternal life cannot lie. So we will keep boasting in the Lord, for the blood of Christ has purified us from all our sins, and He has given us eternal life by His grace. Let the Roman Catholic Councils continue to launch their curses upon those who know the truth; we believe in the Word of God which states that when the righteous (that is, those who have been justified freely by the grace of God) die they go immediately to heaven to be with the Lord, for their robes have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. To Christ Jesus be the glory now and forevermore. Amen.
Paradise is not Heaven

John Wesley taught that paradise is not heaven. In his sermon *The Rich Man And Lazarus* he said: ‘Paradise is not heaven. It is indeed (if we may be allowed the expression) the antechamber of heaven, where the souls of the righteous remain till, after the general judgment, they are received into glory’. And in his sermon *The Important Question* he said that when a good man dies he is conducted safe ‘into Abraham's bosom, into the delights of Paradise; the garden of God, where the light of his countenance perpetually shines. It is but one of a thousand commendations of this antechamber of heaven that “there the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest.” For there they have numberless sources of happiness which they could not have upon earth. There they meet with “the glorious dead of ancient days.” They converse with Adam, first of men; with Noah, first of the new world; with Abraham, the friend of God; with Moses and the Prophets; with the Apostles of the Lamb; with the saints of all ages; and, above all, they are with Christ.’ And in his sermon *Of Hell* he said: ‘But as happy as the souls in paradise are, they are preparing for far greater happiness. For paradise is only the porch of heaven; and it is there the spirits of just men are made perfect. It is in heaven only that there is the fullness of joy, the pleasures that are at God’s right hand for evermore’

In the light of this teaching, therefore, the souls of the righteous at death do not go immediately to heaven, but to another place called paradise (or Abraham's bosom).

Confutation

Now, the above mentioned doctrine, which was taught by John Wesley and is still taught by some Christians, is based on the story of the rich man and Lazarus, told by Jesus Christ, according to which when Lazarus died he was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom (or paradise), which was not located in heaven but in the heart of the earth somewhere above the place where the souls of the wicked were tormented (which was separated from the bosom of Abraham by a great gulf). However, this doctrine – from the resurrection of Jesus Christ on - cannot be upheld any longer, for after Jesus' resurrection the bosom of Abraham, which was located above hell and into which the righteous descended after death, is no longer the intermediate place for the righteous dead. Let me explain to you why.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)” (Ephesians 4:8-10). The captives whom Jesus carried from the lower parts of the earth to heaven were the righteous who had died in the faith prior to the resurrection of Christ. For prior to the resurrection of Christ all the righteous who died descended into a place of comfort which was located in the lower parts of the earth (or in the heart of the earth), that is to say, into the abode of the dead which had been prepared for the righteous, which was called Abraham’s bosom, which – as I said before - was separated from the abode of the wicked by a great gulf. This is what we learn from the apparition of Samuel to Saul and from the story of the rich man and Lazarus told by Jesus.

As for the apparition of Samuel, it must be said that when Saul went to consult the medium of En-Dor so that she might bring up Samuel for him, that medium – through her evil powers - caused Samuel to ascend out of the earth, for she said to Saul: “I saw a spirit ascending out of the earth” (1 Samuel 28:13 – NKJV), and Samuel himself said to Saul that he had been brought up, as it is written: “Now Samuel said to Saul: ‘Why have you disturbed me by bringing me up?’” (1 Samuel 28:15 – NKJV). Therefore, since the kingdom of heaven is not under the earth and Samuel had been an upright man in his days who pleased God, we conclude that Samuel was brought up out of Abraham’s bosom, which was under the earth, in the lower parts of the earth.
As for the story of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham said to that man who was in torments in Hades and who pleaded with him to send Lazarus that he might dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue: “And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that those who want to pass from here to you cannot, nor can those from there pass to us” (Luke 16:26 – NKJV). Therefore the two places – that is, the one who contained the souls of the wicked and the other who contained the souls of the righteous - were separated from each other by a great gulf.

Furthermore, those who were in hell (or hades) could see those who were in Abraham’s bosom and vice versa, for it is written: “And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:23 – NKJV).

So prior to the resurrection of Jesus, both the righteous and the wicked descended into the abode of the dead (which was called ‘Sheol’ in Hebrew and ‘Hades’ in Greek) which was located in the lower parts of the earth. However, while the righteous descended into a place of rest called Abraham’s bosom, the wicked descended into a place of torment. We may affirm that the abode of the dead was divided in two different compartments; one for the righteous and the other for the wicked, which were separated from each other by a great gulf which prevented those who were in them from passing from one place to another.

In the light of what I have said, therefore, the captives whom Jesus after His resurrection led to heaven were the souls of those who had died in faith, which at the time of His death were in the bosom of Abraham.

You will ask me then: ‘Which is the intermediate place for the righteous dead from that time on? Well, according to the Scripture, it is heaven. That’s the place where the righteous go when they die. That heaven is the intermediate place for the righteous dead is evident from the following words written by John and Paul.

- John said: “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” (Revelation 6:9 – NKJV). Where is the altar? It is before the throne of God (cf. Revelation 8:3), therefore in heaven.
- Paul said: “For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better” (Philippians 1:23), and again: “We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8). Therefore if to be absent from the body means to be present with the Lord, this is tantamount to saying that when the righteous departs from the body he goes to heaven for Jesus is in heaven at the right hand of God, as it is written that Jesus “was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God” (Mark 16:19).

This heaven, which is the highest heaven, is called also paradise, for Paul says to the Corinthians: “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). Notice that Paul did not make any difference between paradise and the third heaven, for he called the place where he was caught both ‘paradise’ and ‘the third heaven’. Therefore when we say that when the saints die they go immediately to heaven we mean that they go immediately to paradise, and when we say that they go immediately to paradise we mean that they go to heaven.

That’s why we can say confidently that “if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1 – NKJV), and that we are well pleased rather to be absent from the body, for we know that to depart means to go to be with the Lord in the heavenly glory. To God be the glory forever. Amen.
Sex in heaven

On Christmas Day, 1998, during an interview on CNN’s “Larry King Live” television broadcast, King interviewed Billy Graham for a full hour. During the course of the interview, King questioned Graham about the afterlife soon after Graham had mentioned he was not afraid to die since he knew he would be with God:

GRAHAM: I’ll know Him. He’ll know me. He will receive me. I believe the moment that I die, an angel comes and takes my hand and leads me into His presence.

KING: In your body or through a soul?

GRAHAM: Both — maybe both, because we have been resurrected. Remember, this body’s coming back together again. Nothing ever disappears ...

KING: All right. You’ll meet Jesus and then what will it be like? What will paradise be like?

GRAHAM: It’s going to be like paradise. It’ll be the -- everything that you ever wanted for happiness will be there. People say that the Bible teaches there’s no sex in Heaven. If sex is necessary for our happiness and fulfilment, it’ll be there. And then, if certain other things that we think are pleasurable will -- it’ll be there.

Confutation

What Billy Graham stated is untrue because the heaven of which the Bible speaks is not a place where men can have sex with women and vice versa because in order to have sex men and women must have a body made of flesh and bones, while those who are in heaven have not a physical body for they are there only with their soul. For John says that he saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained (cf. Rev. 6:9). This applies to our state between death and the resurrection (which is still to take place). However, even after the resurrection of our body things will not change, I mean that neither the resurrected saints will be able to have sex because there will be no more married people, as Jesus said: “The sons of this age marry and are given in marriage. But those who are counted worthy to attain that age, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry and nor are given in marriage, nor can they die anymore, for they are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection” (Luke 20:34-36 – NKJV). It is evident, therefore, that since to have sex is lawful only for married people, according to the plan of God when the resurrection takes place the resurrected people who were married on earth will no longer be able to have sex. As for those men and women whose wife or husband died in her/his sins, and thus whose wife or husband will not be raised at the resurrection of the just, it must be said the same thing, that is, they will no longer be able to have sex because Jesus said that those who attain the resurrection from the dead neither marry nor are given in marriage. Furthermore, sexual intercourse entails a desire to have children, and between death and the resurrection as well as after the resurrection this desire will no longer exist because the command “be fruitful and multiply” was given only to the human beings who are on earth.

Let me say something else: the teaching according to which there is sex in heaven is the result of a wrong idea, that is to say, it derives from the idea that without sex a person can’t be really happy or fulfilled on earth, which is wrong because Paul, who was not married, said: “I wish that all men were even as I myself” (1 Corinthians 7:7 – NKJV) and he exhorted believers to get married “to avoid fornication” (1 Corinthians 7:2) and not because if they had not married they would not have been really happy. And this is confirmed by the fact that he stated that a widow is happier if she remains as she is (cf. 1 Corinthians 7:40). I believe that the words of Paul shows that he did not attach to sex an exaggerated importance as some do nowadays in the midst of the Church. What I mean is that according to the Scripture a believing man or woman can be really happy even without getting married, if this is the will of God for him or her. Consider Paul, who was happy in the Lord even though he was not married. Therefore, I say that if one can be really happy on earth even without getting married, how much more one can
be happy in heaven where we will see God, Jesus, the angels and all the saints. However, I am fully convinced that no one of those who are in heaven wants to have sex, they are so happy and they behold such a glory that they don’t think about sex. On the other hand those who are in heaven are in another dimension, I have read several testimonies of people who died and went to heaven for a while and no one of them has declared that while he or she was in heaven he or she wanted to have sex to be fully happy. A perfect happiness reigns in heaven. Heaven is the Kingdom of God, it is a holy kingdom, a glorious king where the saints don’t need to have sex to be happy, their happiness is so great and glorious in heaven that they don’t think about sex at all.

Reincarnation

Reincarnation is the belief that the soul (one’s incorporeal true self) passes from one body to another in a series of incarnated existences. The classic form of the reincarnation doctrine was formulated in India, not earlier than the 9th century before Christ, when the Brahman writings were composed. Afterwards it was adopted by Buddhism and Jainism, which are two important Eastern religions which originated in India. Later it was adapted in Chinese Taoism (around the third century before Christ).

Today reincarnation is accepted also by millions of people in the West. It began to be spread in the Western World around the end of the nineteenth century by the Theosophical Society, and later by Anthroposophy. After the second World War, their intense ministry, combined with that of many Eastern gurus (a guru is a teacher, in the sense of being a manifestation of Brahman, which is the ultimate reality), and especially the efforts of the New Age Movement, determined a wide acceptance of reincarnation in our society today. Testimonies from prominent people such as Shirley MacLaine and actor Glenn Ford, who tell of their ‘former lives’, have helped spread the belief in reincarnation.

Let us look now closely at what the reincarnation doctrine says. I will expound reincarnation according to the Hindu point of view.

First of all, this doctrine affirms that the human soul (atman) is eternal and divine, that is, a part of Brahman (like a limb in a body or a branch of a tree), which is another name for God. According to Hinduism, Brahman is the ultimate reality: formless, inexpressible, unknowable, and unknowing; neither personal nor impersonal; both Creator and all that is created.

Secondly, it affirms that we have lived other lives before, therefore this is not the first life we are living on the earth, because when the soul leaves a body it goes into another body. This concept is expressed in the Bhagavad-Gita (the most popular of the Hindu scriptures) in this way: ‘Just as the self advances through childhood, youth and old age in its physical body, so it advances to another body after death. The wise person is not confused by this change called death (2,13). Just as the body casts off worn out clothes and puts on new ones, so the infinite, immortal self casts off worn out bodies and enters into new ones (2,22).’

Thirdly, the doctrine of reincarnation holds that we who are on the earth are or experience what we deserve to be or to experience according to our behaviour in the previous lives. In other words, the good we receive on the earth is the reward for the former good deeds, while the harm we receive is the punishment for the evil deeds committed in the previous lives. Therefore, if one is born in a rich family or is healthy, that means that he has a good karma, while if one is born in a poor family or sick and during his life experiences all kinds of misfortunes, that means that he has a bad karma. ‘It’s his karma!’, that’s what reincarnationists affirm in order to explain why men are rich or poor, learned or unlearned, healthy or sick, or why certain incidents happen in their lives. Karma literally means ‘action’ and is the law of cause and effect which determines destiny or fate, that is to say, the law which says that we will reap (in the next earthly life) what we sow (in this life). This ‘law’ is expressed in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad (4,4,5): ‘According as one acts, according as one behaves, so does he become. The doer of good becomes good.
The doer of evil becomes evil. One becomes virtuous by virtuous action, bad by bad action.’ Therefore reincarnation (samsara) is the practical way in which one reaps the fruits of his deeds. Therefore, the soul is forced to enter a new material existence until all karmic debt is paid: “By means of thought, touch, sight and passions and by the abundance of food and drink there are birth and development of the (embodied) self. According to his deeds, the embodied self assumes successively various forms in various conditions” (Shvetashvatara Upanishad 5,11). In the Puranas specific destinies are figured for each kind of ‘sin’ one performs: ‘The murderer of a Brahmin becomes consumptive, the killer of a cow becomes hump-backed and imbecile, the murderer of a virgin becomes leprous - all three born as outcastes. The slayer of a woman and the destroyer of embryos becomes a savage full of diseases; who commits illicit intercourse, a eunuch; who goes with his teacher’s wife, disease-skinned. The eater of flesh becomes very red; the drincker of intoxicants, one with discolored teeth.... Who steals food becomes a rat; who steals grain becomes a locust... perfumes, a muskrat; honey, a gadfly; flesh, a vulture; and salt, an ant.... Who commits unnatural vice becomes a village pig; who consorts with a Sudra woman becomes a bull; who is passionate becomes a lustful horse.... These and other signs and births are seen to be the karma of the embodied, made by themselves in this world. Thus the makers of bad karma, having experienced the tortures of hell, are reborn with the residues of their sins, in these stated forms (Garuda Purana 5). It must be said, however, that in the West, animals have been excluded from the cycle of reincarnation.

Those who accept reincarnation assert that the law of karma is taught also by the Bible, for it is written in the epistle to the Galatians: “Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7 – NKJV). According to the law of cause and effect, one cannot experience the consequences of all his deeds in one life, because while on the one hand he reaps in this life the fruits of his previous deeds, on the other hand he does some other deeds which need to be rewarded or punished in the next life. In other words, a man cannot pay off his karmic debt through one life, that is, he cannot purify himself (or expiate his karma) in one life; so he needs to be reincarnated again and again. That’s why Hinduism speaks of a cycle of reincarnation called samsara. However, it is possible for a man to be delivered from this cycle of reincarnation. This deliverance is called moksha, and it can be achieved through yoga (literally ‘yoking’), which is an Eastern practice – consisting of peculiar bodily postures and breath control - designed to induce a state of trance which supposedly allows the mind to be drawn upward into a yoking with Brahman. It is a means of withdrawal from the world of illusion (maya) to seek the only true Reality, that is, Brahman. Let me tell you something more about this so called liberation or salvation. It is achieved by man when the individual soul (atman) returns to union with the universal soul (Brahman) again, that is to say, when man ‘realizes’ that he himself is Brahman, that he and all the universe are one and the same being. In other words, this liberation is achieved when man is delivered from the ‘illusion’ (maya) that the individual soul is different from the universal soul (Brahman). Then pain and suffering end. Here is what the Bhagavad-Gita says about this liberation: ‘The great souls having achieved ultimate perfection take refuge of Me, never again assume this transitory birth full of misery’ (8,15). However, according to orthodox Hinduism, there is no ultimate escape from maya, and one must eventually return to the cycle of deaths and rebirths again. Moksha is merely a temporary rest, another stage on the wheel of existence that goes round and round endlessly, repeating itself every 4.32 billion years.

To sum up, the doctrine of reincarnation is based on the following principles:
the soul is eternal and divine, that is, a part of God (that is called Brahman), which is impersonal (a sort of cosmic energy);
the human soul has been born into the human body after it has lived in another living being or in other living beings;
the circumstances of man’s life, that is, both the good and the bad events, both the pleasant and the unpleasant ones, which take place in man’s life, are nothing but the result of his deeds done in his previous lives;
after death man’s soul will continue to be incarnated on the earth into another human being (or even into some animals) to be rewarded for the good things he is doing and to be punished for the evil deeds he has done (that is, to expiate his karma); there is hope of putting an end to the cycle of reincarnation (according to some, however, there is no hope of escaping from this cycle of deaths and rebirths); in order to be delivered from this cycle of reincarnation, a man must practice yoga; when man becomes Brahman or rather when he returns to union with Brahman again (through yoga) he will realize his divine nature for he will be delivered from the illusion that he is not God, then the cycle of reincarnation will end for he will be perfect; evil deeds cannot be forgiven for a man must expiate all of them in the following lives; man must not give account of his deeds to God but to himself.

Confutation

Now I am going to refute reincarnation through the Holy Scripture

1) The Holy Scripture teaches that God is not a cosmic energy, that is, an impersonal God, but a living being who speaks, as it is written: “God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish [fill] the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.” (Genesis 1:28); who sees, as it is written: “And the Lord said: ‘I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt ….”’ (Exodus 3:7 – NKJV); who hears, as it is written: “So God heard their groaning ….” (Exodus 2:24 – NKJV); who remembers, as it is written: “And God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob” (Exodus 2:24 – NKJV); who feels (that is, He loves, He hates, and so on) and He expresses His feelings, for instance God said to the prophet Jeremiah concerning Ephraim: “Is Ephraim My dear son? Is he a pleasant child? For though I spoke against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him, says the Lord” (Jeremiah 31:20 – NKJV); who does good to people or does harm to them depending on whether He rewards or punishes them: “I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you…” (Genesis 12:3 – NKJV).

2) The Holy Scripture teaches that man is not part of God, that is to say, he is not an emanation of God (therefore man is not a divine being), but he is a creature of God (cf. Genesis 2:7 and Psalm 139:13-15) who needs to be reconciled to His Creator for he is an enemy of God in his mind and deeds, and this he can do only in this life, for it is written: “Be reconciled to God … Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 5:20; 6:2 – NKJV). Therefore man is a being (separated from His Maker) who, because of sin of which he is a slave, must be reconciled to God in this life. He will never be able to realize that he is one with God and thus God, for he has never been God and he does not need to realize an alleged divinity which is unknown to him. In other words, man is not a divine spark (Atman) which needs to be reunited with the fire (Brahman) from which he has come. Man needs to be reconciled with the only true God (which does not mean to be reunited with God), and this he can do only while he is on the earth, only during his earthly life; and when this reconciliation takes place he is purified from all his sins and on account of this purification he has the assurance that he will go to be with the Lord when he dies. Unless he is reconciled to His Creator he, when he dies, will descend into the fire of Hades for he will die in his sins. The cycle of rebirths (reincarnations) from which a man (a drop) needs to be liberated to plunge into Brahman (the ocean) is inexistent, is a lie conceived by the devil to lead many souls to perdition; and therefore we are convinced that all the reincarnationists who have died so far thinking that they had to go through this sort of cycle of purification in order to be reunited with Brahman, are in the fire of Hades and they are cursing the doctrine of reincarnation and the person who invented it.
3) The Holy Scripture teaches that our soul did not exist before our birth, for it was created together with our body by God (we can’t say, however, exactly when our soul came into being in the womb of our mother). Therefore the soul which is inside our body was not in the body of someone else who lived before us on earth or in the body of an animal. So, brothers, don’t worry, for you are not someone else; your soul is yours, you have never lived inside the body of someone else before you were born in this world and thus you do not need to know who you were in your previous lives.

4) The Holy Scripture teaches that when a man dies his soul goes either to paradise or to hell, depending on whether he is saved or lost. Here is the scriptural evidence.

The soul of the thief who repented on the cross went to paradise for Jesus said to him: “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise” (Luke 23:43 – NKJV), on account of the fact that the Lord had forgiven him all his sins. It did not reincarnate in anybody, either immediately or after a certain period of time.

The souls of those men who had been slain for the Word of God, which John saw in a vision, were in heaven under the altar that is before God. Here is what John says: “When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held” (Revelation 6:9 – NKJV). They did not reincarnate in anybody, either immediately or after a certain period of time.

The apostle Paul knew and taught that when a righteous dies his soul goes to be with the Lord, for he said to the Corinthians: “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1 – NKJV). That’s why he said to the Corinthians: “We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (2 Corinthians 5:8 – NKJV), and to the Philippians: “For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” (Philippians 1:23 – NKJV). Therefore the apostle did not believe in an immediate or future reincarnation of the righteous’ soul; but he believed that after death the soul of the righteous moves from the human body into the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus said that he who believes in Him, though he may die, will live (obviously in heaven), as it is written: “He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25 – NKJV). He did not say ‘though he may die, he will live again’ as if there were another earthly life to be lived immediately after his death or a certain period of time after it.

The soul of the rich man, after he died, did not reincarnate in a poor man (or in a pig or in a bitch – I have nothing against these animals) to expiate the injustice he did to that beggar named Lazarus who was laid at his gate covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man’s table. According to the law of karma, the soul of the rich man should have reincarnated in the body of someone who would be poor and covered with sores, or in someone who would have to suffer as much as Lazarus had suffered at his gate, but no reincarnation took place, for the soul of that man descended into Hades where it was tormented by the fire, as it is written: “The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades ....” (Luke 16:22-23 – NKJV). He had lived in luxury and when he died he began to be tormented; Abraham said to him: “Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented” (Luke 16:25).

So, since after death the souls of the righteous go to heaven (paradise) while the souls of the wicked descend into the heart of the earth (Hades or Hell), they can’t enter the body of those who are to be born or have just been born. Brothers, when you finish the race that is set before you you will go to be with the Lord, if indeed you are in the faith, and there you will wait for the day of the resurrection of the righteous on which you will begin to live again in a body (that is, in the body you have left on the earth), which will be immortal, incorruptible and glorious, and you will appear before the judgement seat of Christ to receive your reward. Instead, when the wicked die they will descend into the fire of hell, as the Scripture says (cf. Job 21:13 and Psalm 9:17) and there they will wait for the judgement day on which they will rise again, and will be judged according to their works and condemned to an eternal shame.
It is written: “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement” (Hebrews 9:27 – NIV), therefore it is excluded that after death the soul of a man might reincarnate in the body of another man. Let these words be always on your lips, beloved, for through them you can stop the mouth of the reincarnationists.

5) The Holy Scripture teaches that God directs the steps of both the righteous and the wicked, who cannot understand fully how God directs them, as it is written: “A man’s steps are directed by the Lord. How then can anyone understand his own way?” (Proverbs 20:24 – NIV), and somewhere else: “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jeremiah 10:23 – NKJV). In addition to this, it teaches that everybody depends on times and circumstances, as it is written: “But time and chance happen to them all” (Ecclesiastes 9:11 – NKJV), which God creates according to His purpose.

Therefore, to us believers, the fact that we were born in a rich family or in a poor family, healthy or sick, did depend on God and not on previous merits or demerits which we accumulated before our birth. Even the fact that we live in a certain place, we have married a certain person, we have a certain job, and we pass through certain circumstances, depends on God, who in a way we do not understand directs our steps to do us good in the end. As He directed our steps while we were lost in order that we might be saved, and thus to do us good, so we know that He still directs our steps to do us good in the end. “All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28 – NKJV), says Paul. Therefore no evil can come upon us unless it was appointed by God for our good. On the other hand we can’t think differently for Jesus said that not one sparrow falls to the ground apart from our Father’s will, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered (cf. Matthew 10:29-30). So we are willing to accept both good and adversity from God, and in the midst of our afflictions we say as Job: “Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” (Job 2:10 – NKJV).

As for the wicked, it must be said that they also were born in a rich family or in a poor one, healthy or sick, have married certain people, live in a certain place rather than another, and have certain jobs, not because of some merits or demerits they accumulated in their previous life, but because that’s the will of God for them. However, while some of them will be saved by the Lord at the appointed time for they are numbered among those whom God foreknew and predestined to be adopted as His sons (cf. Romans 8:29-30), and therefore God directs their steps so that in His own time they might come to the knowledge of the truth, which will set them free; the others, being numbered among the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, will be guided by God in such a way as to keep them from coming to the knowledge of the truth and thus to let them go to perdition (cf. Romans 9:21-24). God has mercy on whom He wills, and He hardens whom He wills; man’s salvation depends on the purpose of God according to election and not on the will of those who preach the Gospel or of those who hear it (cf. Romans 9:10-18).

6) The Holy Scripture teaches that man is recompensed while still on the earth according to his deeds, as it is written: “If the righteous will be recompensed on the earth, how much more the ungodly and the sinner” (Proverbs 11:31 – NKJV), and again: “Say to the righteous that it shall be well with them, for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe to the wicked! It shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him” (Isaiah 3:10-11 – NKJV).

However, the deeds for which both the righteous and the wicked are recompensed on the earth are the deeds which they do on this earth now, in this life, and not the deeds which they did in previous lives they have lived. Therefore, everyone reaps what he has sown in this life only (then when the resurrection of the righteous takes place the righteous will appear before the judgement seat of Christ to be rewarded for their deeds, while after the millennium the wicked will rise again to be judged according to their deeds and condemned to eternal punishment). This spiritual law was created by God and no one can escape it or change it. As he who sows a seed of wheat will reap wheat in due time, and he who sows thorns and thistles will reap thorns and thistles in due time, on account of a natural law ordained by God, so the righteous who
sows peace and righteousness will be rewarded by God, while the wicked who sows iniquity will reap all kinds of troubles and woes for he has broken the commandments of God.

7) The Scripture says: “The Lord is the God of recompense, He will surely repay” (Jeremiah 51:56 – NKJV). In other words, God repays those who do evil things punishing them as they deserve. In the Scriptures there are several examples which confirm this. Pharaoh and his household were struck by God with serious diseases for Pharaoh had taken the wife of Abraham into his palace (cf. Genesis 12:14-17); the house of Abimelech was struck by God with barreness for Abimelech had taken the wife of Abraham (cf. Genesis 20:1-18); Nebuchadnezzar was punished by God for his arrogance (cf. Daniel 4:1-37); king Jehoram was struck by God with an incurable disease of the bowels for his wickedness (cf. 2 Chronicles 21:18-19), etc. Of course, believers also will be punished by God if they give themselves over to what is evil in the eyes of the Lord. For Paul says to the Colossians: “He who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality” (Colossians 3:25 - NKJV), and Peter says that “the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God” (1 Peter 4:17 – NKJV). The following biblical examples confirm clearly that God judges even those who are inside; Ananias and Sapphira were put to death by God for they lied to the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 5:1-10), many believers of the Church in Corinth were struck with diseases and put to death for they partook of the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:28-32). In this case, therefore, the evil which comes upon the head of both the wicked and the righteous is a judgement of God.

8) The Holy Scripture teaches that the fact that one suffers many afflictions on the earth does not mean that he was unjust or wicked in previous lives. The example of Jesus shows this very clearly; even though He was righteous, sinless and blameless He suffered many afflictions. Why? Perhaps because his karma was a bad karma, that is to say, because in His previous lives He had accumulated many evil deeds which He had to expiate? Certainly not. He, as the Son of God coeternal with God the Father, was with God before the foundation of the world (therefore before His incarnation, but keep in mind that Jesus was not the reincarnation of someone who had lived before Him, as some wicked people insinuate) in a state of uncontaminated purity, for Peter calls Jesus a lamb without blemish and without spot that “was foreordained before the foundation of the world ….” (1 Peter 1:20 – NKJV). Jesus suffered all those afflictions, of which the Scripture speaks, for all of us, for our sins in order to cleanse us from our iniquities through His precious blood. And now we who are His disciples are called to suffer as He suffered; for Jesus said that if they persecuted Him they will also persecute us, because men do not know His Father (cf. John 15:20-21); our tribulations therefore are not the inevitable outcome of an alleged karma but the fulfillment of the words of Jesus Christ. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psalm 34:19 – NKJV), says the Scripture, because the righteous is no longer of this world, and the world hates what does not belong to it, as Jesus said: “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you” (John 15:19 – NKJV). Therefore Christians suffer many afflictions not because of their karma, but because they do not belong to this world, and since the prince of this world is the enemy, the wicked, who has dominion over most people, he incites those who are under his power to persecute Christians.

9) The Holy Scripture teaches that there is a wicked being called devil and Satan, who, through the rulers of the darkness of this age and other wicked invisible beings who obey him, incites people to sin, as it is written: “He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning” (1 John 3:8 – NKJV), and in fact Cain killed his brother for he was of the wicked one. And sin repays with death he who serves it, and makes him an enemy of God. Therefore the evil deeds which are done by men cannot be justified through reincarnation, for men sin because they are ruled by a wicked invisible being that is stronger than them. It is quite wrong, therefore, to affirm or to think that one is homosexual because in his previous life he laughed at homosexuals, or that one commits adultery with a married woman for in one of her previous lives
she was her wife, or many other similar things. The wicked are of the devil, and they must repent of their wicked deeds, or else they will go to hell when they die. Furthermore, the devil does another thing, that is, he strikes people with all kinds of diseases; Satan struck Job, who was a just man, with painful boils (cf. Job 2:7); he bound for eighteen years that woman who was bent over whom Jesus healed (cf. Luke 13:10-17); and Satan, through a deaf and dumb spirit, had struck that boy whom Jesus set free (cf. Mark 9:20-22). Therefore, in certain cases, the misfortunes which both the righteous and the wicked suffer are works of the devil, which God permits in their lives for certain specific reasons. One of these reasons is to gain honor for His holy name.

10) The Holy Scripture teaches that one day all believers will appear “before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10 – NKJV); that will take place when they rise again. Therefore believers will be rewarded for their works on that day and not during alleged next lives on the earth. God will reward all believers through Jesus Christ. That’s why we are called to be zealous for good works, and as we have opportunity to do good, while we are still alive, for after death we will not be able to do any good works any longer, but we will have to wait for the day on which we will be rewarded for what we have done. What we will have done will be done forever; and what we won’t have done we will not be able to do any longer. And that’s why we are called to abhor evil and flee it, for if we do evil things we not only will displease God and dishonor His doctrine but we will also suffer loss on that day, when we are to give account to God, the righteous Judge, for the evil things done while in the body.

11) The Holy Scripture teaches that the wicked will rise again on the last day in order to be judged according to their works and to be condemned to everlasting torment. For John, who saw the souls of the dead come to life and appear before the throne of God, says: “… And books were opened … The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Revelation 20:12 – NIV). Therefore, on that day God will have no mercy on those who do not repent of their sins, but He will render to them indignation and wrath. So the wicked after death can’t live again on the earth in order to expiate their debts, for their debts will remain with them forever and they will be punished for them with everlasting torment. Obviously the wicked will receive different degrees of punishment, for they will be judged according to their works (cf. Matthew 11:20-24).

12) The Holy Scripture teaches that God is willing to forgive the sins of those who repent and believe in His Son Jesus Christ, for the prophet Isaiah says: “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:7 – NKJV), and the apostle Peter affirms: “All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name” (Acts 10:43 – NIV). Therefore all the debts which a man has incurred against our God can be forgiven freely while he is still alive. The ‘law’ of karma excludes that a man may be forgiven, but the Word of God affirms clearly that this can happen. The ‘law’ of karma, therefore, must be rejected for it is a lie conceived by the devil, who is the father of lies, who wants to deceive people into believing that their sins can’t be forgiven for there is no forgiving God. It is true that reincarnationists sometimes speak about absolution and expiation, but they are self-absolution and self-expiation for man is called to pay the ransom, that is, the so called karmic debt. Reincarnationists do not mention at all the ransom which was paid by Jesus Christ once for all when He offered Himself to atone for our sins. Men – according to reincarnationists – must pay off their debts (right down to the last penny); when they pay off their debts then they will be saved (not from sin but from the cycle of rebirths).

13) The Holy Scripture states that “by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:14), which means that he who has believed in Jesus Christ, has been
made perfect forever in regard to the conscience, through his faith in the blood which Jesus shed for our sins. For the blood of Jesus is able to cleanse man's conscience from all sins. We who have experienced this cleansing certify that what the Scripture says is true. Therefore, since the disciples of Christ have attained perfection — in regard to conscience — through the precious blood of Jesus Christ, they do not need to live other lives on the earth in order to cleanse themselves from their sins for they have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. As for those sins which are committed after one's conversion, they also are blotted out by the blood of Jesus, for it is written: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7 – NKJV). That's why believers know that reincarnation and the 'law' of karma cannot be true, for the faith in the perfect atoning sacrifice of Christ and in His precious blood nullifies any doctrine which affirms that a man can expiate his own sins through good deeds in this life or in alleged next lives. Reincarnationists often say that it is impossible for most people to attain perfection during one life, that's why they need to live other lives. Instead, the Good News of the Kingdom of God affirms that even though men cannot attain perfection during their life, for nobody can cleanse himself from his sins or remove the sense of guilt produced by his sins, Jesus Christ, through His atoning sacrifice on the cross bought with His blood the perfection of our conscience. Therefore what one must do is not to do his best to attain perfection, but to repent and believe in the Son of God in order to be made perfect through His precious blood in regard to the conscience. Thanks be to God for the blood of Jesus Christ which has made us perfect!

The two witnesses spoken of in the book of Revelation chapter 11 are the Old and New Testaments

The Seventh-day Adventist Church teaches the following things about the two witnesses spoken of in the eleventh chapter of the book of Revelation: 1) they represent the Old and New Testaments; 2) the 1,260 days during which they are commissioned to prophesy were the 1,260 years from 538 to 1798; 3) the beast from the Abyss that killed them at the end of their ministry was atheistic France; 4) the killing of the two witnesses took place in 1793 which was the year when the French Assembly passed the decrees which abolished the Christian religion and set aside the Bible; 4) the resurrection of the two witnesses took place three years and a half later through a resolution which granted toleration to the Scriptures. Here are some words written by Ellen Gould White, the prophetess of the Adventists, in her book The Great Controversy: 'The two witnesses represent the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. Both are important testimonies to the origin and perpetuity of the law of God. Both are witnesses also to the plan of salvation. The types, sacrifices, and prophecies of the Old Testament point forward to a Saviour to come. The Gospels and Epistles of the New Testament tell of a Saviour who has come in the exact manner foretold by type and prophecy. "They shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and three-score days, clothed in sackcloth." During the greater part of this period, God's witnesses remained in a state of obscurity. The papal power sought to hide from the people the word of truth, and set before them false witnesses to contradict its testimony. ...Revelation 11:2-11. The periods here mentioned—"forty and two months," and "a thousand two hundred and three-score days"—are the same, alike representing the time in which the church of Christ was to suffer oppression from Rome. The 1260 years of papal supremacy began in A.D. 538, and would therefore terminate in 1798. At that time a French army entered Rome and made the pope a prisoner, and he died in exile. Though a new pope was soon afterward elected, the papal hierarchy has never since been able to wield the power which it before possessed. ....... The period when the two witnesses were to prophesy clothed in sackcloth, ended in 1798. ....... According to the words of the prophet, then, a little before the year 1798 some power of satanic origin and character would rise to make war upon the Bible. And in the land where the
testimony of God's two witnesses should thus be silenced, there would be manifest the atheism of the Pharaoh and the licentiousness of Sodom. This prophecy has received a most exact and striking fulfilment in the history of France. During the Revolution, in 1793, "the world for the first time heard an assembly of men, born and educated in civilization, and assuming the right to govern one of the finest of the European nations, uplift their united voice to deny the most solemn truth which man's soul receives, and renounce unanimously the belief and worship of a Deity."--Sir Walter Scott, Life of Napoleon, vol. 1, ch. 17. "The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them." The atheistical power that ruled in France during the Revolution and the Reign of Terror, did wage such a war against God and His holy word as the world had never witnessed. The worship of the Deity was abolished by the National Assembly. Bibles were collected and publicly burned with every possible manifestation of scorn. The law of God was trampled underfoot. The institutions of the Bible were abolished. The weekly rest day was set aside, and in its stead every tenth day was devoted to reveling and blasphemy. Baptism and the Communion were prohibited. God's faithful witnesses, slain by the blasphemous power that "ascendeth out of the bottomless pit," were not long to remain silent. "After three days and a half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them." Revelation 11:11. It was in 1793 that the decrees which abolished the Christian religion and set aside the Bible passed the French Assembly. Three years and a half later a resolution rescinding these decrees, thus granting toleration to the Scriptures, was adopted by the same body. (Ellen G. White, The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation, [Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950. Revised edition first published, 1911], pages 266, 267, 268, 269-270, 273-274, 287).

Confutation

The apostle John wrote: "And there was given me a reed like unto a rod: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the temple of God, and the altar, and them that worship therein. But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months. And I will give power unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy a thousand two hundred and threescore days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth. And if any man will hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man will hurt them, he must in this manner be killed. These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will. And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit shall make war against them, and shall overcome them, and kill them. And their dead bodies shall lie in the street of the great city, which spiritually is called Sodom and Egypt, where also our Lord was crucified. And they of the people and kindreds and tongues and nations shall see their dead bodies three days and an half, and shall not suffer their dead bodies to be put in graves. And they that dwell upon the earth shall rejoice over them, and make merry, and shall send gifts one to another; because these two prophets tormented them that dwelt on the earth. And after three days and an half the Spirit of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; and great fear fell upon them which saw them. And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they ascended up to heaven in a cloud; and their enemies beheld them. And the same hour was there a great earthquake, and the tenth part of the city fell, and in the earthquake were slain of men seven thousand: and the remnant were affrighted, and gave glory to the God of heaven" (Revelation 11:1-13).

As you can see, the two witnesses are two prophets (v. 10) who will prophesy only one thousand two hundred and sixty days (v. 3), who have power to shut heaven and to turn the waters to blood, and to strike the earth with all plagues in the days of their prophecy (v. 6), who
The above mentioned interpretation given by the Adventists, therefore, is absolutely wrong. Let no Adventist deceive you with vain words.

**The Second Coming of Christ has already taken place**

The New Church, which is a sect which bases its teachings and practices on the writings of spiritist Emmanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772), teaches that the second coming of Jesus has already taken place. They say that Jesus never said that He would come again in person, but He said that He would come as the Spirit of truth (cf. John 16:13). And His second coming was fulfilled when God ‘revealed’ the spiritual sense of the Word to Emmanuel Swedenborg (so it took place in the eighteenth century). For the Writings of Swedenborg are the Spirit of truth the Lord Jesus spoke of. Willard D. Pendleton in his book *God, Christ and the Second Coming* affirms: “For the Writings are not, as is generally supposed, an enlightened commentary upon the Scriptures; neither are they the works of Emanuel Swedenborg, a man. They are, on their own testimony, that Spirit of truth of whom the Lord spoke to His disciples, saying, “When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth.” (John 16:13) …. Hence it is said in the Writings that the Lord would come “with power and great glory” (Matthew 24:30); that is, in the full power of His Word. (TCR 776) Yet at this day who is prepared to believe that the Writings are what they claim to be? Who, men ask, was Emanuel Swedenborg, that he should speak for God? But the Writings solemnly affirm that “this second coming of the Lord is effected by means of a man to whom the Lord has manifested Himself in person, and whom He has filled with His Spirit, that He may teach the doctrines of the New Church from the Lord by means of the Word.” (TCR 779) …. When we speak of the integrity of doctrine, therefore, we have reference to the acknowledgment that the Lord is the Word, and that it is He who has come again as the Divine doctrine. For it is by means of the Divine doctrine, and in no other way, that the Lord's Divine Human is made visible to the sight of the understanding. Hence it is said in the Writings that "this New Church is the crown of all the churches that have hitherto existed on the earth, because it is to worship one visible God." (TCR 787) Let us have no illusions, therefore, in regard to the New Church. It is a doctrinal church, and it cannot be otherwise. Because the Lord has come as the Divine doctrine, it is essential to the establishment and growth of the New Church that these doctrines be understood. …. But what men fail to perceive is that without the idea of a God who is good, and whose Word is the truth, they have no standard of authority, no point of reference, no basis of judgment whereby they may distinguish between right and wrong, and good and evil. That is why the Lord has come again into the world, not as to His person, but in, and as, the Human which He made Divine, that is, as the Divine doctrine. When seen for what they are, and when rightly understood, it cannot be said that the Writings lack relevance. For what is truth but a form of good; that is, the form in which good appears to the sight of the understanding. ..... One thing, however, is certain: a small beginning has been made, and feeble as it may be, it is nevertheless founded upon the firm acknowledgment that the Writings are what they purport to be, namely, the Word of the Lord in His second coming. For, as clearly stated in the work, The True Christian Religion: “The Second Coming of the Lord is not a coming in person, but in the Word which is from Him, and is Himself.” (TCR 776) Nothing could be more explicit than this. As promised in the Scriptures, therefore, the Son of Man has come "with power and great glory," (Matthew 24:30) that is, in the glory of the spiritual sense and in the full power of His Word. (TCR 776: 1).

I would like to point out that even some people who claim to be Evangelical affirm that Jesus has already come back. For instance, Waldensian theologian Giovanni Luzzi (1856-1948) in his
La religione cristiana secondo la sua fonte originaria [The christian religion according to its original source], wrote that Jesus predicted that He would come again during the life of the generation among which He was, and in fact – according to him - His second coming took place at Pentecost; therefore His second coming was invisible and spiritual (cf. La religione cristiana secondo la sua fonte originaria, Roma 1939, pages 338, 339, 340, 342, 343, 344), and the late Pentecostal preacher Francesco Aiuppa, who lived in the U.S.A, wrote that Jesus Christ came back in the first century after Christ (cf. Francesco Aiuppa, Il Regno di Dio: presente o futuro? [The Kingdom of God: present or future?, 2001, pages 20-21).

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ will come personally and visibly on the clouds of heaven with glory and power. In the book of the Acts of the apostles it is written: “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11).

As you can see, those angels who appeared to the disciples of the Lord, as Jesus was going into heaven, affirmed that the same Jesus who was taken up into heaven before their eyes will come in like manner as they saw Him go into heaven. However, keep in mind that while at His ascension only a few people saw Him go into heaven, at His return everybody will see Him come back from heaven, as it is written: “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen” (Revelation 1:7 – NKJV).

That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will come back in person and visibly is evident also from the following biblical passages: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mt. 24:30 – NKJV); “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).

Furthermore, the Holy Scripture teaches that when Jesus comes the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive and remain will be transformed and caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). After the resurrection of the just, the Millennium – which is a thousand-year reign - will be established on the earth by the Lord Jesus Christ. During this earthly reign Satan will not be able to deceive the nations for at the coming of Christ he will be bound and thrown into the Abyss, where he will be kept until the end of the millennium.

In the light of what the Scripture teaches on the second coming of Christ, therefore, I affirm that Jesus Christ has not yet returned, and I urge you, beloved, to beware of all those who deny that the coming of Jesus will be personal and visible, for they lie against the truth. Let none of them deceive you with empty words. Rebuke them and stop their mouth.
There are two ‘returns’ of Christ; the first one occurred in 1914, while the second one will occur when he comes to earth to conduct the battle of Armageddon

Jehovah’s Witnesses teach that Christ did not establish the Kingdom of God at the time of His first coming. Neither did He establish this kingdom immediately after He had ascended into heaven, for His ascension was only the beginning of a long period of waiting for the establishment of the kingdom of God. When, then, was the kingdom of God actually established? Their answer is, ‘On October 1, 1914 (I leave out the fantastic calculations whereby the Witnesses have arrived at this date). For in that year Jesus Christ’s ‘return’ took place. I have put quotation marks around the word return because this was not really a return at all, since Christ did not go back to earth but simply began to rule over his kingdom from heaven. However, Jehovah’s Witnesses calls it Christ’s return (cf. Let God Be True, page 198; Make Sure Of All things, page 319). It must be said, however, that Watchtower publications prefer the designation ‘second presence’ (in their own Bible they have translated the Greek word parousia – when it refers to the second coming of Christ - as ‘presence’ in the following verses: Matthew 24:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2; James 5:8; 1 John 2:28; 2 Peter 3:3-4). To understand better what Jehovah’s Witnesses mean by Christ’s ‘return’, I will compare two statements from their writings. The former is from This Means Everlasting Life which reads: ‘When he ascended to heaven he sat down at God’s right hand to wait for that time of entering into his authority and ruling like Melchizedek over his enemies as his footstool’ (page 220), while the latter is from You May Survive Armageddon: ‘Jehovah the heavenly Father brought forth his kingdom by bringing forth his anointed King-Priest Jesus Christ and elevating him to the active kingship in the throne at God’s right hand’ (page 100). So we learn that from the time of His ascension to October 1, 1914 (when the kingdom was brought forth), Christ was sitting at the right hand of God the Father, and that on October 1, 1914, the Father placed the Son on the throne at His right hand. Thus the ‘return’ or ‘second presence’ of Christ simply means that Christ, who had been sitting at the Father’s right hand in heaven since his ascension, in 1914 ascended the throne of his kingdom at the Father’s right hand in heaven. According to Jehovah-Witness teaching, therefore, we need no longer wait for Christ’s personal and visible ‘return,’ because His ‘return’ has already taken place. Jesus Christ ‘became King of the earth at the time of his second presence, A.D. 1914’ (Make Sure Of All Things, page 234). The reason why they affirm that this ‘return’ of Christ was invisible is that according to their theology Christ was raised not with a body of flesh, but “in a spirit body” (The Truth Shall Make You Free, page 264), and this spirit body was not a visible body (so Christ, after His resurrection, revealed Himself to His disciples by materializing fleshly bodies on the occasions of His appearances, each such body being different from the others – cf. The Truth Shall Make You Free, pages 265-267), and in addition to this Jesus said: “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more …..” (John 14:19 – NKJV).

However, Jehovah’s Witnesses teach also that there is another ‘return’ of Christ which is still to come. When will it take place? At the battle of Armageddon (which will be fought at the close of the ‘time of the end’, which will be very soon). Then God will give Christ the command to destroy the devil’s wicked world. However, even this future ‘return’ will be an invisible one (cf. Let God Be True, page 205), for neither Christ nor his heavenly armies will be seen by men. This invisible ‘appearance’ of Christ on earth is called ‘the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven’ and ‘the final revelation of the King’, and is distinguished from the second presence of Christ which took place in 1914.

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that there will be but one return of Christ from heaven, and His return will be visible.
In the book of the Acts of the apostles it is written: “And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven” (Acts 1:9-11). As you can see, those angels who appeared to the disciples of the Lord, as Jesus was going into heaven, affirmed that the same Jesus who was taken up into heaven before their eyes will come in like manner as they saw Him go into heaven. So the return of Christ from heaven will be visible as His ascension to heaven; in other words, just as Jesus was seen going into heaven, so He will be seen coming back from heaven. However, keep in mind that while at His ascension only a few people saw Him go into heaven, at His return everybody will see Him come back from heaven, as it is written: “Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen” (Revelation 1:7 – NKJV). That Jesus Christ, the Son of God, will come back in person and visibly is evident also from the following biblical passages: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Mt. 24:30 – NKJV); “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).

The Holy Scripture teaches also that when Jesus returns or is revealed from heaven the dead in Christ will rise first, then we who are alive and remain will be changed and caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Besides this, Jesus will punish those who do not know God and those who do not obey the Gospel (cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10), and the Millennium – which is a thousand-year reign - will be established on the earth by the Lord Jesus Christ. During this earthly reign Satan will not be able to deceive the nations for at the coming of Christ he will be bound and thrown into the Abyss, where he will be kept until the end of the millennium. Therefore, in the light of the teaching of the Scriptures, Jehovah’s Witnesses are greatly mistaken.

Now, I have already shown you from the Scriptures that Jesus was raised with a physical body, and not as a spirit, so let me explain to you what Jesus meant when He said: “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more …..” (John 14:19 – NKJV). Jesus was about to be arrested and led away to the high priest first and then to Pontius Pilate in order to be crucified. He knew that after His death the world would see Him no more for after His resurrection He would present Himself alive to His disciples and not to the world, and in fact if we read the apparitions of Jesus which took place between His resurrection and His ascension to heaven we realize that He did not appear to unbelieving people (that is, people who had not believed that He was the Christ whom God had sent into the world) but only to people who had believed in Him. That’s why He said that before long the world would not see Him anymore. I would like you to notice that Jesus said that before long His disciples would not see Him either, as He said to them: “In a little while you will see me no more ......” (John 16:16 – NIV), for He knew that He was going to be crucified. However, while on the one hand He said that the world would not see Him anymore, on the other hand He said that His disciples would see Him again, for He said to them: “But you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19 – NKJV), and again: “And again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father” (John 16:16 – NKJV). The disciples of Jesus did not understand what Jesus meant by saying “and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father,” so Jesus explained them those words. Here is what John wrote: “Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we
cannot tell what he saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said. A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you” (John 16:17-22). And that’s exactly what happened, for when Jesus died the disciples wept and lamented, but when He appeared to them on the first day of the week they “were glad” (John 20:20 – NKJV).

Brothers and sisters in the Lord, keep waiting for the glorious coming of the Lord, and beware of the lies taught by Jehovah’s Witnesses on the second coming of Christ and refute them.

The second coming of Christ will consist of two phases, one for the saints (the Rapture) and the other with the saints (the Revelation of Christ), and the intervening period between the two is the time when the world will experience the Great Tribulation, involving the reign of Antichrist and the outpouring of God’s wrath on the wicked

Here is what the Assemblies of God teaches about the second coming of Christ: ‘A comparison of passages of Scripture relating to the Second Coming shows that some speak of a visible event seen by all mankind and involving the judgement of sinners. Others describe a coming known only to believers and resulting in their deliverance from earth. The latter is referred to among evangelicals as the Rapture. …. Passages which pertain to the Rapture describe the coming of the Lord for His people. Passages which refer to the revelation of Christ describe the coming of the Lord with His saints. …. Since Scripture does not contradict itself, it seems reasonable to conclude that the passages describing Christ’s coming for the saints and with the saints indicate two phases of His coming. We believe it is scripturally correct to assume that the intervening period between the two is the time when the world will experience the Great Tribulation, involving the reign of Antichrist and the outpouring of God’s wrath on the wicked …. Although God’s people may endure severe trials before the Lord comes, the Church will be raptured before the period called the Great Tribulation’ (The Rapture of the Church, General Council of the Assemblies of God, August 14, 1979. From. www.ag.org).

The above mentioned teaching, according to which the Church will be caught up to heaven before the reign of the antichrist (called also ‘the man of sin’ or ‘lawless one’), is held by most of the Trinitarian Pentecostals and many other Evangelicals. It is held also by the United Pentecostal Church (one of the Oneness Pentecostal sects) which affirms: ‘God will take the church out of the world before the Tribulation’ (J. L. Hall and David K. Bernard, editors, Doctrines of the Bible, Word Aflame Press, Hazelwood, MO, USA, 1998, page 272).

The Rapture doctrine appeared in the early part of the 1800’s in England. In march, 1830, a woman in Richard Baxter’s church in London, prophesied that the Lord Jesus might come any time and that true believers in Him might any day be caught up by translation to heaven. This woman and this church were connected with the Irvingite movement. That prophecy was accepted also by John Nelson Darby, one of the most influential preachers in England at that time, who, even though he was not part of the Irvingite Movement, accepted it as coming from the Lord and incorporated in his teaching. John Darby was the founder of the Plymouth Brethren group which still exists in England and other countries. From that time on millions of believers all over the world have accepted the Rapture doctrine.
Confutation

The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His saints (our gathering together to Him, which is known also as ‘rapture’) and the coming of the Lord with His saints (the revelation of Christ) are two events which will take place on the same day (made of 24 hours), which is called the day of Christ or the day of the Lord, and that day will come after the antichrist is revealed. Therefore the saints will be persecuted to death by the antichrist, that is to say, the saints will go through the great tribulation. When I say that the coming of Christ for His saints and the coming of Christ with His saints are two events which will take place on the same day, I mean this: when Jesus is revealed from heaven, He will raise up the dead in Christ first, then He will change the saints who are alive at His coming, and they will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. Immediately after He will come with His saints to earth to punish the lawless one and those who do not know God, and to establish the millennium reign, which is a thousand-year reign during which He will reign on the earth with His saints. So, the coming of our Jesus Christ comprises the following events: the appearing of Christ from heaven, the resurrection of the dead in Christ, the change of the saints who are alive at His coming, and our gathering together to Him, and the destruction of the antichrist and of those who do not know God, and His coming with His saints to earth. All these events – I say it again – will take place on the same day, which is called the day of Christ or the day of the Lord. Our gathering together to Christ and the coming of Christ will not occur at different times – as pre-tribulationists affirm – but on the same day. Now I will show you from the Holy Scripture what I have just said.

Let us see what John wrote in the book of Revelation about the glorious coming of Christ from heaven: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh” (Revelation 19:11-21).

Now, I want you to pay much attention to the fact that John said that the beast and the false prophet will be captured and cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone, because what John wrote confirms what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning the destiny of the lawless one, that is, the man of sin who will be revealed prior to the day of the Lord. Here is what Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning this: “And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming” (2 Thessalonians 2:8 – NKJV). As you can see, therefore, John and Paul affirm the same thing using different words, that is to say, they affirm that the man of sin (the beast) will be punished at the return of Christ, that is, when Christ is revealed from heaven. Having established this, we need to establish when the man of sin – of whom Paul speaks to the Thessalonians – will be revealed, that is, whether he will be revealed before the Church is caught up to heaven or after. Let us see then what Paul says to the Thessalonians about the
time the lawless one will be revealed: “Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way” (2 Thessalonians 2:1-7). No doubt Paul states that the man of sin will be revealed while the saints are still on the earth. We deduce this from the fact that he says “that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition ….” Therefore, the falling away and the man of sin must come first, then the day of Christ will come—on which the resurrection of the dead in Christ and the change of the saints who are alive will take place, and their gathering together to Christ. Someone will ask me then: ‘Could Paul not refer, when he spoke of the day of Christ, to the coming of Christ from heaven with His saints who by that time will have already been with Him for some years (seven or three and a half)? No, because if we read carefully the above mentioned words of Paul, we can see that when he speaks of the day of Christ - which will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed – he refers to “the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him” (2 Thessalonians 2:1 – NKJV). Notice that Paul – concerning the coming of the Lord and our gathering together to Him - first urged the saints not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by any false epistle, as though the day of Christ was imminent or at hand, then he explained them why they must not think that the day of Christ was imminent or at hand: “For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed.” Therefore, the day of which Paul speaks is the day on which Christ will come and we will be gathered together to Him. Thus Paul implicitly affirms that when the lawless one is revealed the saints are still on earth, for the lawless one will be destroyed by the brightness of Christ’s coming. Consequently, since we know that the antichrist will persecute to death the saints, we affirm that the saints will go through the great tribulation. That the saints must go through the tribulation which will precede the appearing of Christ is evident also from the following words spoken by Jesus Christ: “Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains: Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take anything out of his house: Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you
before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together. Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:4-31). As you can see, Jesus foretold His disciples that His coming will occur after the tribulation of those days – during which many believers will be deceived by false prophets, while many others will be killed for their faith -, and also that at His coming He will gather His elect to Him from the four winds. So our gathering together to Him will take place at the end of the great tribulation.

In the light of what the Scripture teaches, therefore, the pre-tribulationist view, according to which there will be a secret, invisible return of Jesus in the sky where the saints will be translated secretly before the beginning of the reign of the antichrist (thus, before the beginning of the tribulation), must be rejected for it is inconsistent with the Scripture, which clearly teaches that Christ will appear to gather His saints to Him after the reign of the antichrist is established on earth, that is, at the end of the tribulation.

Brothers, I conclude by saying to you what Paul said to the Thessalonians many centuries ago: “Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed ….” (2 Thessalonians 2:3 – NKJV).

The resurrection has already taken place

Some people who claim to be Christians affirm that the resurrection of the dead has already taken place. For instance, within the Churches of Christ, those who have converted to the dogma of Max King affirm that the resurrection is already past having been spiritually effected in A.D. 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem.

Even within the Pentecostal Churches some affirm that the resurrection of the dead has already taken place. The late Pentecostal preacher Francesco Aiuppa, in his book Il Regno di Dio: presente o futuro? [The Kingdom of God: present or future?], affirms that the words of Jesus: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29 - NKJV) were fulfilled on the day Jesus died on the cross, for Matthew says: “And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many” (Matthew 27:50-53 – NKJV) - (cf. Francesco Aiuppa, Il Regno di Dio: presente o futuro?, 2001, pages 24-25).

Confitutation

The teaching according to which the resurrection of the dead is already past is a teaching that has nothing to do with the truth, for it is one of the lies conceived by the devil to lead Christians astray. This lie is very old, for we know that in the days of Paul some people said that the resurrection of the dead had already taken place. Here is what Paul wrote to Timothy: “But shun
profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their message will spread like cancer. Hymenaeus and Philetus are of this sort, who have strayed concerning the truth, saying that the resurrection is already past; and they overthrow the faith of some" (2 Timothy 2:16-18 – NKJV).

According to the Holy Scripture, all men will rise again. For Jesus said: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth — those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29 – NKJV), and Paul said “that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15 – NKJV).

As for the resurrection of the just, it will take place at Christ’s coming, as it is written: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming …” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 – NKJV), and again: “But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 – NKJV). As you can see, in the light of the above mentioned verses of the Scripture, when the dead in Christ hear the mighty shout of the Lord Jesus, they will come out of the graves with an immortal body and they will meet the Lord in the air. Therefore, the resurrection of the just will take place at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As for the resurrection of the unjust, it will take place at the end of the thousand-year reign (which Christ will establish at His coming and during which Christ will reign on the earth with the saints), as it is written in the book of Revelation: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:12-15).

So, brothers, beware of all those who affirm that the resurrection is already past, for they lie against the truth. Let no one of them deceive you with empty words, for both the resurrection of the just and the resurrection of the unjust are still future events.

**There will be no physical resurrection of the dead**

All the sects which base their teachings and practices on the writings of spiritist Emmanuel Swedenborg deny the resurrection of the dead, for Swedenborg affirmed: ‘The spirit of man, after the death of the body, appears in the spiritual world in a human form, altogether as in the world; he enjoys also the faculty of seeing, of hearing, of speaking, of feeling, as in the world; and he is endowed with every faculty of thinking, of willing, and of acting as in the world. In a word, he is a man as to all things and every particular, except that he is not encompassed with that gross body which he had in the world; he leaves that when he dies, nor does he ever re-assume it. This continuation of life is what is understood by the resurrection’ (quoted in Melton J. Gordon, *Religious Creeds*, Detroit 1988, page 714).

Even some Protestants deny the resurrection of the dead. Italian Waldensian theologian Giovanni Luzzi (1856-1948) wrote in one of his books: ‘The resurrection, therefore, is an
universal event because all will rise again; but at the same time it is an event which takes place for each individual at his death. Death is nothing but a crisis, man dies and rises again at the same time’ (Giovanni Luzzi, La religione cristiana secondo la sua fonte originaria, [The christian religion according to its original source], Roma 1939, page 359)

Confutation

The Holy Scripture clearly teaches that those who die will take back their body. This will take place at the resurrection, when the soul of every dead man will be reunited with his body. So the Scripture teaches that there will be a physical resurrection of the dead.

Jesus said: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29 – NKJV); and Paul said “that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15 – NKJV).

As for the resurrection of the just, it will take place at the coming of Christ, as it is written: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming ….” (1 Corinthians 15:20-23 – NKJV), and again: “… we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17 – NKJV).

As for the resurrection of the unjust, it will take place at the end of the thousand-year reign (which Christ will establish at His coming and during which Christ will reign on the earth with the saints), as it is written in the book of Revelation: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Rev. 20:12-15).

Beloved, let no one deceive you with empty words, for the resurrection is not an event which takes place at the death of every human being which consists in the continuation of life, but a future event which will consist in the reunion of the body and the soul of every human being.

The unjust will not rise again

There are some people who claim to be Christians who believe and teach that the unjust will not rise again. For instance, in the Dizionario Biblico [Bible Dictionary] it is written: ‘On the contrary those who belong only to the first Adam – that’s the inevitable conclusion – will not rise again’ (Dizionario Biblico, by G. Miegge. Second edition, revised and updated by B. Corsani, J. Alberto Soggin, and Giorgio Tourn, Milano 1968, page 505).

They support their doctrine through some biblical passages which are these: 1) Psalm 1:5, “Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in judgement”, which words are rendered in the Septuagint and Vulgate Latin versions, ‘The wicked shall not rise again in judgment,’ 2) Isaiah 26:14: “They are deceased, they will not rise,” 3) Daniel 12:2: ‘And many of them that sleep in
the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt”.

Confutation

According to the Holy Scripture, all men, that is, both the just and the unjust, will rise again. For Jesus said: “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth – those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29 – NKJV), and Paul said “that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust” (Acts 24:15 – NKJV).

To confirm that the unjust also will rise again, I remind you of the following words of Jesus: “The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here” (Luke 11:31-32). Now, since the generation of which Jesus spoke was an evil generation (cf. Luke 11:29) and a sinful and adulterous generation (cf. Mark 8:38), it is evident that the unjust also will be raised from the dead.

Let me explain to you now the biblical verses which are quoted to deny the resurrection of the wicked.

- Psalm 1:5 – First of all, it must be said that these versions are not agreeable to the Hebrew text. However, even if we grant for the sake of argument that they are, that passage does not mean that the wicked will not rise again from the dead, but it means that they will not rise again so as to appear in the congregation of the righteous, that is to say, they will not rise at the resurrection of the just which is the first resurrection. In addition to this, the word used does not refer to the resurrection of the wicked, but their standing before God in a judicial sense, when raised. In other words, the meaning of that passage is this: the wicked will not stand before Him with confidence, nor be able to justify themselves and vindicate their cause, and thus they must fall and not stand in judgement.

- Isaiah 26:14 – Here is how these words must be understood. Those masters who had formerly dominion over the Israelites, but now are dead, will not rise again and live on this earth to tyrannize over them.

- Daniel 12:2 – The “many” should be understood universally, as in Romans 5:19: “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous” (NKJV). It is evident that when Paul says that by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, he does not mean that only some men were made sinners, but he means that all men were made sinners, for he says also that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23 – NKJV). That the ‘many’ of Daniel 12:2 cannot be quoted to deny the resurrection of the unjust, is evident from the fact that the prophet Daniel says that some will awake “to shame and everlasting contempt” (Daniel 12:2 – NKJV), for according to the Scripture those who will awake to be condemned to everlasting contempt are the wicked, so that the words of Daniel are a proof of the resurrection of the unjust.

A special resurrection will take place just before the second coming of Christ

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church teaches that a special resurrection will take place just before the second coming of Christ, and will involve some believers and some unbelievers. The first of the two groups to be raised at this time consists of those who have accepted the third’s angel
message which began to be preached about 1846 (this message requires the observance of the sabbath day), while the second group consists of those who were responsible for the trial and crucifixion of Christ. Ellen Gould White says: "Graves are opened, and "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth. ... awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Daniel 12:2. All who have died in the faith of the third angel's message come forth from the tomb glorified, to hear God's covenant of peace with those who have kept His law. "They also which pierced Him" (Revelation 1:7), those that mocked and derided Christ's dying agonies, and the most violent opposers of His truth and His people, are raised to behold Him in His glory and to see the honor placed upon the loyal and obedient' (Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy Between Christ and Satan. The Conflict of the Ages in the Christian Dispensation*, [Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950. Revised edition first published, 1911.], pages 637). According to this teaching, therefore, the faithful members of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, who have died since 1846 (and any others who have been heeding this message since that time) will be granted a singular blessing in the form of being raised in the special resurrection before the glorious return of Christ and will thus have the privilege of seeing Him come.

**Confutation**

The Holy Scripture teaches that the saints who have fallen asleep will all be raised from the dead at the coming of Christ, as it is written: “For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first ...” (1 Thessalonians 4:16 – NKJV). No one of the saints who have fallen asleep will be granted the privilege of being raised just before the appearing of the Lord Jesus from heaven, for all of them will be raised when the Lord descends from heaven. Therefore the above mentioned privilege, which according to the Adventist Church will be granted to those who have heeded the third’s angel message is without biblical support, and consequently is to be rejected. As for the special resurrection in which – according to the Adventist Church - those who condemned and killed Jesus will have part, it must be said the same thing, that is, it is without biblical support and consequently it must be rejected. According to the Scripture the wicked will all rise again at the end of the millennium (cf. Revelation 20:5, 11-15) in order to be judged and cast into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone.

**At Christ’s coming the saints whom the Lord will find alive upon the earth will suffer death and receive immortality**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that at Christ's coming, the saints whom the Lord will find alive upon the earth will suffer death before receiving immortality. This doctrine was taught by Augustine of Hippo (354-430), one of the so called Church Fathers. For he wrote in his book *The City of God* the following words: 'But the apostle has said nothing here regarding, the resurrection of the dead; but in his first Epistle to the Thessalonians he says, "We would not have you to be ignorant brethren, concerning them which are asleep," etc. These words of the apostle most distinctly proclaim the future resurrection of the dead, when the Lord shall come to judge the quick and the dead. But it is commonly asked whether those whom our Lord shall find alive upon earth, personated in this passage by the apostle and those who were alive with him, shall never die at all, or shall pass with incomprehensible swiftness through death to immortality in the very moment during which they shall be caught up along with those who rise again to meet the Lord in the air? For we cannot say that it is impossible that they should both die and revive again while they are carried aloft through the air. For the words, "And so shall we ever be with the Lord," are not to be understood as if he meant that we shall always remain in
the air with the Lord; for He Himself shall not remain there, but shall only pass through it as He comes. For we shall go to meet Him as He comes, not where He remains; but "so shall we be with the Lord," that is, we shall be with Him possessed of immortal bodies wherever we shall be with Him. We seem compelled to take the words in this sense, and to suppose that those whom the Lord shall find alive upon earth shall in that brief space both suffer death and receive immortality: for this same apostle says, "In Christ shall all be made alive;" while, speaking of the same resurrection of the body, he elsewhere says, "That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die." How, then, shall those whom Christ shall find alive upon earth be made alive to immortality in Him if they die not, since on this very account it is said, "That which thou sowerst is not quickened, except it die?" Or if we cannot properly speak of human bodies as sown, unless in so far as by dying they do in some sort return to the earth, as also the sentence pronounced by God against the sinning father of the human race runs, "Earth thou art, and unto earth shalt thou return," we must acknowledge that those whom Christ at His coming shall find still in the body are not included in these words of the apostle nor in those of Genesis; for, being caught up into the clouds, they are certainly not sown, neither going nor returning to the earth, whether they experience no death at all or die for a moment in the air. But, on the other hand, there meets us the saying of the same apostle when he was speaking to the Corinthians about the resurrection of the body, "We shall all rise," or, as other manuscripts read, "We shall all sleep." Since, then, there can be no resurrection unless death has preceded, and since we can in this passage understand by sleep nothing else than death, how shall all either sleep or rise again if so many persons whom Christ shall find in the body shall neither sleep nor rise again? If, then, we believe that the saints who shall be found alive at Christ's coming, and shall be caught up to meet Him, shall in that same ascent pass from mortal to immortal bodies, we shall find no difficulty in the words of the apostle, either when he says, "That which thou sowerst is not quickened, except it die," or when he says, "We Shall all rise," or "all sleep," for not even the saints shall be quickened to immortality unless they first die, however briefly; and consequently they shall not be exempt from resurrection which is preceded by sleep, however brief (The City of God, Book XX, chapter 20)

Confutation

The Holy Scripture teaches that when Jesus returns from heaven, the dead in Christ will be raised (that is, their souls will be reunited with their bodies) while those who are alive will be changed without seeing death. For Paul wrote to the Corinthians: "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed – in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Corinthians 15:51-52 – NKJV), and to the Thessalonians: "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17 – NKJV). As you can see, according to the apostle Paul, all the saints will be changed at the coming of Christ. However, not all of them will be raised from the dead because not all of them will see death. Those saints who will not see death are all those whom the Lord will find alive at His coming; they will be changed, of course, just as those who are dead, and their bodies will be made incorruptible, immortal and glorious, just as the bodies of those who are dead, but they will not taste death before being changed. This is what the Word of God teaches, so hold fast what it teaches.
The saved will have wings in the resurrection

Ellen Gould White, the prophetess of the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, taught that the resurrected bodies of the saints will have wings: "We gathered about Jesus, and just as He closed the gates of the city, the curse was pronounced upon the wicked. The gates were shut. Then the saints used their wings and mounted to the top of the wall of the city" (Early Writings, p. 53).

Confutation

The resurrected bodies of the saints will have no wings, for their bodies will be like Christ's resurrected body, as it is written that Jesus "will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21 – NIV), and we know that Jesus' resurrected body did not have wings.

This does not mean, however, that our resurrected body will not be able to change location instantly without using our feet, but it simply means that we won’t need wings to do it. Jesus, after His resurrection, even though His resurrected body did not have wings, was able to change his bodily location at will; likewise our bodies will be able to do the same.

Amillennialism

Amillennialism (which literally means ‘no millennium’) is a doctrine according to which the thousand years of Revelation 20 extend from the first coming of Christ to just before His second coming, when Satan will be loosed for a short time. Amillennialists hold that Christians who are now living are enjoying the benefits of this millennium since Satan has been bound for the duration of this period. When was Satan ‘bound’ according to Amillennialists? He was bound at the time of the first coming of Christ. Jesus bound the devil when He triumphed over him in the wilderness, and Jesus’ casting out of demons was evidence of this triumph. However, the fact that Satan was bound does not mean that Satan can do no harm whatever while he is bound. It means only that while Satan is bound he cannot deceive the nations in such a way as to keep them from learning the truth of God. In other words, it means that throughout the gospel age in which we now live the influence of Satan, though certainly not annihilated, is so curtailed that he cannot prevent the spread of the gospel to the nations of the world. Because of the binding of Satan during this present age, the nations cannot conquer the church, but the church is conquering the nations.

According to Amillennialism, the first resurrection is not the physical or bodily resurrection which is yet to come, but rather the transition from physical death to life in heaven with Christ. For the words “they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4 – NIV) mean that the souls of people who have died – martyrs for the faith and other Christians who have remained true to Christ to the very end of their lives – are enjoying life in heaven in fellowship with Christ; it follows that the thousand-year reign is a reign with Christ in heaven of the souls of believers who have died. This reign is not something to be looked for in the future; it is going on now, and will be until Christ returns. However, it must be said also that to some Amillennialists the first resurrection is the spiritual resurrection experienced by Christians at the time of their water baptism or conversion.

As for the rest of the dead who “did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” (Revelation 20:5 – NIV), they are the unbelieving dead who did not live or reign with Christ during this thousand-year period. Whereas believers after death enjoy a new kind of life in heaven with Christ in which they share in Christ’s reign, unbelievers after death share nothing of either this life or this reign.
As for the resurrection which will take place at the end of the thousand-year period, it refers to the general resurrection, both of believers and unbelievers, which will occur at Christ’s second coming when Satan is finally defeated. The general resurrection will be followed immediately by the one general Judgment and then the eternal state (the “new heavens and new earth”).

The Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the Reformed Church, the Church of Christ, the Church of God (Anderson, Indiana), and other Churches hold amillennialism. Among Amillennialists we find the following men: Dr. Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (Revised Edition, 1941); Dr. Geerhardus Vos, The Pauline Eschatology (1930); Dr. Albertus Pieters, Studies In the Revelation of St. John (1937), and The Seed of Abraham (1950); Professor Floyd E. Hamilton, The Basis of Millennial Faith (1942); Dr. George L. Murray, Millennial Studies (1948); Dr. William H. Rutgers, Premillennialism in America (1930); Dr. Abraham Kuyper, Chiliasm or the Doctrine of Premillennialism (pamphlet); Dr. Martin J. Wynaarden, The Future of the kingdom (1934); Dr. William Hendriksen, More Than Conquerors (1939); Dr. William Masselink, Why Thousand Years?; Rev. William J. Grier, The Momentous Event (1945); and Prof. Everett I. Carver, When Jesus Comes Again (1979). Prof. Anthony Hoekema, ‘Amillennialism’, in The Meaning of the Millennium (1977).

Confutation

The apostle John wrote: “And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years. When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – God and Magog – to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God’s people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:1-10 – NIV).

Therefore, in the light of what John saw and wrote we are bound to reject Amillennialism for the following reasons.

1) John says that Satan was bound with a great chain for a thousand years and thrown into the Abyss, which was locked and sealed over him to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. This means that when Satan is bound and thrown into the Abyss, he will not be able to seduce those who live on the earth for a thousand years. John did not say that the devil will not be able to continue deceiving the nations the way he did in the past, but he said that he will not be able to deceive them. The meaning of the words of John is very clear. Now let me put you this question, ‘Is Satan deceiving the nations now in the Gospel era?’ Of course he is. For there are billions of unbelieving people all over the world whose minds have been blinded by Satan, the god of this age, as it is written: “But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4 – NKJV). Why is Satan called “that serpent of old who deceives the whole world” (Revelation 12:9 – NKJV)? Is it not because he is very active in this present
world and by his craftiness he deceives all those who are not in Christ? Why is Satan called “the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2:2 – NKJV)? Is it not because he is the one who prompts all those who do not obey the Gospel to commit all kinds of sins? Therefore, we can’t say that Satan was bound at the time of the first coming of Christ. If Satan had been bound by Jesus Christ and thrown into the abyss, he could by no means deceive the whole world as he is doing now. Why is there so much wickedness in this world? Why are there so many false prophets and false teachers who teach damnable heresies? Why are there millions of idolaters, fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, slanderers, blasphemers, liars, people who are involved in astrology and occultism and spiritism, etc. all over the world? Is it not because Satan is the prince of the power of the air and he is deceiving all the nations? In the light of what the Scripture says about the work of the devil, which can be clearly seen with our own eyes, therefore, we conclude that Satan is not bound at all, but rather he is ‘free’ to accomplish his evil purposes. The fact that the Gospel is preached all over the world and that there are people who turn to Christ, does not prove that Satan was bound at the time of the first coming of Christ, but rather proves that God is stronger than Satan and thus He is able to snatch people out of Satan’s hands. God does whatever He wants in this world, and Satan can’t prevent Him from saving people. Nor can he prevent the Gospel from being preached all over the world, for God will do all His pleasure. I said before that Satan deceives all those who do not obey the Gospel, however the Scripture says that in these last days he deceives even some believers, for the apostle Paul says: “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:1-3 – NKJV). Therefore Satan, by these deceiving spirits, who are under his power and direction, deceive even some believers. We are sure then that he tries to deceive all of us who have believed in the Lord. That’s why we are commanded to be sober and vigilant; because he walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (cf. 1 Peter 5:8). Therefore, once again I say that we can’t affirm that Satan has been bound, for the binding of Satan will occur when Jesus Christ returns from heaven. When he is bound, he will not be able to deceive the nations for a thousand-years. 2) John says that he saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God; they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. These words of his mean that John saw that those souls were reunited with their resurrected bodies. In other words, John saw the resurrection of those people who had been beheaded because of their testimony and because of the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark. That John saw their bodily resurrection and not their transition from physical death to life in heaven with Christ is evident from the following words of John concerning those who did not take part in that resurrection: “The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended” (Revelation 20:5 - NIV), and also from the following ones: “This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (Revelation 20:5-6 – NIV). I would like you to note the following thing. Amillennialists affirm that the words “they came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years” (Revelation 20:4 – NIV) mean that the souls of people who have died – martyrs for the faith and other Christians who have remained true to Christ to the very end of their lives – are enjoying life in heaven in fellowship with Christ. However, it can’t be so, for John wrote: “They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years,” which means that before they came to life those people were dead, their bodies were lifeless on this earth while their souls were in heaven, but at a certain point they were raised from the dead, that is, their souls were reunited with their resurrected bodies, and they reigned with Christ on earth for a thousand years. And this is confirmed by the fact that John immediately after says that the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended and that this is the first resurrection. Now let me say something about the interpretation given by Amillennialists to these
verse “the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended”. They say that these words mean that the unbelieving dead did not live or reign with Christ during this thousand-year period. However, if it were so as they say, that would mean that the unbelieving dead will live and reign with Christ after this period has ended. Whereas the Scripture says that the unbelieving dead will never live and reign with Christ, for when they die they go to hell and when they are raised from the dead they will be cast into the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 21:8).

In the light of what I have said, the millennium spoken of in the twentieth chapter of the book of Revelation is a literal thousand-year period which will begin when Jesus comes back. The millennium will be preceded by the resurrection of the just (the first resurrection) and followed immediately after by the resurrection of the unjust. All arguments according to which the thousand years are symbolic of the period which extends from the first coming of Christ to the second coming of Christ are vain. Reject them and expose them.

Postmillennialism

In the book Postmillennialism, Loraine Boettner, a noted postmillennial apologist, has stated: ‘We have defined Postmillennialism as that view of the last things which holds that the Kingdom of God is now being extended in the world through the preaching of the Gospel and the saving work of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of individuals, that the world eventually is to be Christianized, and that the return of Christ is to occur at the close of a long period of righteousness and peace commonly called the “Millennium.” It should be added that on postmillennial principles the second coming of Christ will be followed immediately by the general resurrection, the general judgment, and the introduction of heaven and hell in their fullness. The Millennium to which the Postmillennialist looks forward is thus a golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation, that is, during the Church age, and is to be brought about through forces now active in the world. It is an indefinitely long period of time, perhaps much longer than a literal one thousand years. The changed character of individuals will be reflected in an uplifted social, economic, political and cultural life of mankind. The world at large will then enjoy a state of righteousness such as at the present time has been seen only in relatively small and isolated groups, as for example in some family circles, some local church groups and kindred organizations. This does not mean that there ever will be a time on this earth when every person will be a Christian, or that all sin will be abolished. But it does mean that evil in all its many forms eventually will be reduced to negligible proportions, that Christian principles will be the rule, not the exception, and that Christ will return to a truly Christianized world. Postmillennialism further holds that the universal proclamation of the Gospel and the ultimate conversion of the large majority of men in all nations during the present dispensation was the express command and meaning and promise of the Great Commission given by Christ Himself. when He said: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:18-20). We believe that the Great Commission includes not merely the formal and external announcement of the Gospel preached as a “witness” to the nations, as the Premillennialists and Amillennialists hold, but the true and effectual evangelization of all the nations so that the hearts and lives of the people are transformed by it. That seems quite clear from the fact that all authority in heaven and on earth and an endless sweep of conquest has been given to Christ and through Him to His disciples specifically for that purpose. The disciples were commanded not merely to preach, but to make disciples of all the nations. It was no doubtful experiment to which they were called, but to a sure triumph. The preaching of the Gospel under the direction of the Holy Spirit and during this dispensation is, therefore, the all-sufficient means for the accomplishment of that purpose. We must acknowledge that the Church during the past nineteen centuries has been extremely
negligent in her duty, and that the crying need of our time is for her to take seriously the task assigned to her. Instead of discussions of social and economic and political problems, book reviews and entertaining platitudes from the pulpit the need is for sermons with real Gospel content, designed to change lives and to save souls. The charge of negligence applies, of course, not only to ministers, but equally to the laity. Every individual Christian is called to give his witness and to show his faith by personal testimony, or through the distribution of the printed word, or through the generous and effective use of his time and money for Christian purposes. Christ commanded the evangelization of the world. That is our task. Surely He will not, and in fact cannot, come back and say to His Church, "Well done, good and faithful servant," until that task has been accomplished" (from http://www.mbrem.com)

Amillennialism differs from Postmillennialism, for Lorraine Boettner says: 'Amillennialism differs from Postmillennialism in that it holds that the world is not to be Christianized before the end comes, that the world will in fact continue much as it now is, with a parallel and continuous development of both good and evil, of the Kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan. It agrees with Postmillennialism, however, in asserting that Christ does not establish an earthly, political kingdom, and that His return will be followed by a general resurrection and general judgment. Post- and Amillennialists thus agree that the Kingdom of Christ in this world is not political and economic, but spiritual and now present in the hearts of His people and outwardly manifested in the Church. Amillennialism, as the term implies, does not set forth a Millennium at all. Some Amillennialists apply the term to the entire Christian era between the first and second advent of Christ. Some apply it to a relatively Christian and peaceful era, such as the Church enjoyed after the bitter persecution of the first three centuries, at which time Emperor Constantine made Christianity the preferred religion of the Roman Empire. Others apply it to the intermediate state. The position of the Amillennialist does not necessarily preclude him from believing that the world may be Christianized before the end comes, but most Amillennialists have not so held. Rather they have preferred to say that there probably will not be much relative change.'

To sum up, postmillennialists affirm that the millennium is a period of one thousand years of universal peace and righteousness in this world, which precedes the return of Jesus Christ to earth in judgement. However, postmillennialists are divided as to whether or not the period of time is a literal one thousand years, and whether or not the millennial age begins abruptly or gradually. Some see the millennial age as entirely future, others argue that it may have already begun to gradually emerge. Postmillennialists also disagree as to the events that mark the beginning of the millennial age. Therefore, the difference between amillennial and postmillennial Christians centers upon the character and length of the millennial age. Postmillennialists see the millennial age as commencing at some point during the present age, and as a period in which the kingdom of God triumphs over the kingdoms of this world. Amillennialists see the millennial age as occupying the entire period of time between the first and second coming Christ. Generally speaking, amillennialists see the millennial age as one of both the triumph of the spiritual kingdom of God and the corresponding rise of evil in opposition. According to postmillennialists, there will be universal preaching and acceptance of the Gospel, and a complete and total victory of the kingdom of God, over the forces of Satan and unbelief. Postmillennialism is an optimistic eschatology of the victory grace of God in subduing evil in the world. During this period Satan will be effectually bound by the triumph of grace. At the end of the millennial period, Christ will return in judgement (the "great throne judgement"), the resurrection will take place, and there will be the creation of a new heaven and earth.

The following men hold to Postmillennialism. Rev. David Brown, a Scotch Presbyterian minister, and a considerable number of systematic theologians, the Hodges at Princeton (Drs. Charles, Archibald A., and Caspar Waster Hodge, Jr., the latter having been the writer's revered teacher), Dr. W. G. T. Shedd, Dr. Robert L. Dabney, Dr. Henry B. Smith, Dr. Augustus H. Strong, and Dr. Benjamin B. Warfield. Probably the most influential books from the postmillennial viewpoint have been The Second Advent, by David Brown (1848, revised 1849), which for many years was recognized as the standard work on the subject, and Dr. Charles Hodge's Systematic Theology (1871). In more recent times Dr. Warfield (died, 1921) has been recognized as the outstanding
postmillennial theologian. His influence was exerted through a period of more than thirty-three years as Professor of Systematic Theology in Princeton Theological Seminary and as Editor of the Presbyterian and Reformed Review and later as one of the chief contributors to the Princeton Theological Review. The following recent books have been written from the postmillennial viewpoint: Israel and the New Covenant (1954), by Roderick Campbell; Thy kingdom Come (1974), by R. J. Rushdoony; The Puritan Hope (1971), by lain Murray (England); An Eschatology of Victory (1974), by Marcellus J. Kik; and Christ’s Second Coming: Will It Be Premillennial? (1990), by David Brown.

Confutation

The Holy Scriptures teach that the large majority of those who hear the Gospel will not be saved, for it is written that “many are called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:16 – NKJV), and that there are few who find the way which leads to life (cf. Matthew 7:14). The flock of the Lord was a little flock in the days of Jesus and in the days of the apostles as well, and it will always be a little flock (cf. Luke 12:32) till the coming of the Lord. In every nation there will be a few sons of the Kingdom; in some nations the sons of the Kingdom will be more than in some others, but the fact still remains that the Church will always consist of a few sheep on the earth. This means that most of the people who live on the earth will not be saved. Thus the world will continue to be an evil world till the coming of the Lord. According to the Scripture things will not improve but will get worse, for Jesus said that “because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12 – NKJV), and Paul said that in the last days “perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:1-5 – NKJV). That the state of the world when Jesus returns will be an extremely sinful state is evident from the following words of Jesus: “And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (Luke 17:26-30) How did people conduct themselves in the days of Noah? How did the inhabitants of Sodom conduct themselves in the days of Lot? According to the Scripture they led a sinful life, for it is written that in the days of Noah “the wickedness of man was great in the earth” and “every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5 - NKJV), and in the days of Lot the inhabitants of Sodom were haughty and committed abomination before God (cf. Ezekiel 16:50). That’s what life on earth will be like when the Lord returns. As you can see, no golden age will precede the return of Jesus, for the world will be corrupt and filled with violence when Jesus returns.

Therefore, inasmuch as the world will continue to be an evil world till the coming of Christ, the Church will be hated and persecuted by the people of this world till the return of Jesus. Did Jesus not say: “You will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake” (Matthew 24:9 - NKJV)? Did He not say to His disciples: “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20 – NKJV)? Did Paul not say that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12 – NKJV)?

In addition, many false prophets will rise up and deceive many (cf. Matthew 24:11), nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places (cf. Matthew 24:7)

Furthermore, according to the Scripture, a short time before Jesus returns from heaven the antichrist will be revealed. The antichrist is the man of sin, who will exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), whom will be given authority over
every tribe, tongue, and nation, and it will be granted to him to make war with the saints and to
overcome them (cf. Revelation 13:7). Therefore, before Jesus returns from heaven the world will
be under the rule of the antichrist, who will persecute the Church to the death. However, when
Jesus returns from heaven He will destroy the man of sin with the brightness of His coming (cf. 2
Thessalonians 2:8), and “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under
the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High” (Daniel 7:27 –
NKJV).

As you can see, according to the Bible, this world will not be Christianized, there will be no
golden age of spiritual prosperity during this present dispensation for things will go from bad to
worse. Know this, that all those who teach Postmillennialism deceive people. Therefore beware
of them.

The Millennium is not a golden age which is to occur before the return of Christ, but it is a
thousand-year reign which will be established on the earth by the Lord Jesus Christ when He
returns. Here is what the apostle John says in the book of Revelation concerning the millennium:
“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his
hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and
bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over
him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended.
After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who
had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded
because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped
the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They
came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life
until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those
who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will
be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (Revelations 20:1-6
– NIV).

Therefore, when Christ returns from heaven the dead in Christ will be raised from the dead (this
is the first resurrection) and those who are living will be changed, and all of them will reign with
Christ for a thousand years. During this earthly reign Satan will not be able to deceive the
nations for at the coming of Christ he will be bound and thrown into the Abyss, where he will be
kept until the end of the millennium. You will ask me now, ‘What will happen after the
Millennium?’ When the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison and he
will deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth to gather them for battle. These nations
will surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire will come down from heaven
and devour them (cf. Revelation 20:7-9).

Then Satan will be cast into the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 20:10), the rest of the dead will be
raised from the dead (this is the second resurrection) and they will be judged according to their
works (cf. Revelation 20:11-15), and after the judgement God will create new heavens and a
new earth, and the New Jerusalem – the heavenly city – will descend upon the new earth, and
there the saints will reign forever and ever (cf. Revelation cap. 21-22). All these things are still to
come, and we look forward to seeing them. We are sure that they will take place at God’s
appointed time.

**Dominion theology**

Two movements within the American Christian Church affirm that Christians should take
dominion in the world before Christ returns. These movements fall under the classification of
‘dominion theology,’ which affirm that Christians have a biblical mandate to occupy or control all
secular institutions until Christ returns.
Christian Reconstructionism

Christian Reconstructionism is a movement which has its roots in postmillennialism. The father of this movement is Rousas John Rushdoony. The following authors are Reconstructionists: Greg L. Bahnsen, Gary North, David Chilton, Gary DeMar, and Kenneth L. Gentry. Christian Reconstructionism arose out of conservative Presbyterianism in the early 1970’s. According to Reconstructionism Christians must establish a theocratic kingdom in their own countries based on the judicial laws of Moses. Rushdoony has stated: ‘As the new chosen people of God, the Christians are commanded to do what Adam in Eden, and Israel in Canaan failed to do. One and the same covenant under differing administrations still prevails. Man is summoned to create the society that God requires’. In other words, Christians are called to transform the present society wherever they are and thus they should be actively working to bring about in their own countries observance of the law (that is, the law of Moses) which God intended for all nations. The Old Testament Law is our rule of life for today (not a condition of salvation but a condition for sanctification) and it should rule (or dominate) all aspects of society. This view is known as theonomy, and is described by Greg Bahnsen as, ‘The Christian is obligated to keep the whole law of God as a pattern for sanctification and that this law is to be enforced by the civil magistrate’. Reconstructionists teach that the moral law of God, when codified as a basis for civil law, restrains the passion of the sinner (capital punishment is a deterrent to violent crime), and the knowledge of the moral law brings individuals knowledge of sin. Therefore more people may be converted through faith in Christ. However, it must be said that when the Reconstructionists speak of the law, they do not refer to the whole law, but only to the moral laws (or the judicial laws). Reconstructionists teach that the moral law of God, when codified as a basis for civil law, restrains the passion of the sinner (capital punishment is a deterrent to violent crime), and the knowledge of the moral law brings individuals knowledge of sin. Therefore more people may be converted through faith in Christ. However, it must be said that when the Reconstructionists speak of the law, they do not refer to the whole law, but only to the moral laws (or the judicial laws). For according to them the sacrificial laws and the laws which have to do with cleanness and uncleanness, dietary laws, feast days, and religious ceremonies, are no longer binding for they have been fulfilled once for all through Christ’s death on the cross; while the moral laws remains perpetually binding, including the case laws and attendant penal sanctions. Therefore, in the new society Reconstructionists want do create on this earth homosexuals, witches, incorrigible children, blasphemers, murderers, adulterers, and others who break certain moral laws of the Old Testament must be put to death. However, according to the major Reconstructionist thinkers, there has been a ‘covenantal shift’ in regard to sanctions dispensed by the church and sanctions dispensed by the state. Only the state may execute criminals under the New Covenant. For crimes that come under the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical government, the church may excommunicate its members and pronounce imprecations (curses) on sinners. But the church may never execute its members. Here, the way the law is enforced has changed.

As I said before, according to Reconstructionism, Christians ought to transform the present society or take dominion over the earth. How? Through prayer and evangelism, and through the political process and social reformation as well. This means that Christians must become political and social activists. They must change the laws of the land where they live, gear up to elect Christians to office (for the Kingdom of God must be ruled only by professing Christians who uphold the moral laws), and seek to take dominion over the world and bring it under the law of Moses. After the Church has taken control of this society, the Lord Jesus Christ will return to earth.

Kingdom now

The Kingdom Now movement, unlike the Christian Reconstruction movement, is composed of Pentecostals/Charismatics. Earl Paulk and Thomas Reid are among the Kingdom Now teachers. Here is what Kingdom Now adherents affirm. Man lost dominion over the earth when Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. God ‘lost control’ of the earth to Satan at that time, and has since then been looking for a ‘cohenent people’ who will take dominion back from Satan. This is to be accomplished through the Church which, under the direction of God’s apostles and
prophets for the Kingdom Age, will take control of the kingdoms of this world, that is, all social institutions (educational institutions, scientific institutions, political institutions etc.). The Church (some believe only a small group within the Church, called ‘overcomers’), under the direction of the latter day apostles and prophets, has the responsibility to put down all rebellion and establish righteousness on the earth. In other words it must subdue the earth, for God commanded man to subdue the earth (cf. Genesis 1:28). Those who teach Kingdom Theology believe that since Jesus has all authority in heaven and on the earth, believers too have all authority in heaven and on the earth, for they are indwelt by the same Spirit that indwelt Jesus: believers have the power to believe for and speak into existence things that are not, and thus they can bring about the Kingdom Age. Christians are ‘little gods’ who can have what they desire by claiming their ‘divine right’ and they must exercise their godhood through dominion.

To accomplish the task of taking dominion over a rebellious world, the Church must have supernatural help not only from God, but from angels and from the ‘great cloud of witnesses’ (the dead in Christ) who have preceded us. A unity between their spirits and our spirits will create a communications link by which revelations will be conveyed that will guide the Church in its mission. The apostles and prophets especially will have contact into the spirit realm through appearances of Jesus, angels, and departed saints. These apostles and prophets will receive ‘new revelations’ from God, and will give them to the Church through the evangelists, pastors, and teachers who accept the authority of God’s apostles and prophets. These ‘new revelations’ will be authenticated through demonstrations of power in the working of miracles, signs and wonders. So the Church will rise up as the spiritual army of God and, through the process of spiritual warfare, will defeat all the forces of darkness, bringing the entire world under the dominion of God and His kingdom.

During the Kingdom Age (that is, after the Kingdom has been established by the Church under the direction of the apostles and prophets) Satan and all enemies of God will be put under the feet of the Church, and this will be the fulfilment of 1 Corinthians 15:25-26: “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Why under the feet of the Church? Because the Church is the body of Christ, and the feet are in the body and not outside the body. Many Kingdom Theology adherents affirm that this passage of the Scripture which refers to Christ is really referring to the Church who is the body of Christ, therefore all Christians need to know and realize that they are Christ. During the Kingdom Age those who refuse to submit to God’s apostles and prophets will be punished and destroyed from off the face of the earth. As for the way the dissenters will be destroyed, some kingdom theology adherents say that the Church will, out of necessity, use physical force by which it will judge, sentence, and execute penalties (including death) upon the opposers. Instead, those who submit themselves to the authority of these apostles and prophets will be sealed with the ‘mark of God’ in their forehead, and will escape the coming judgement.

After the earth has been purged of evil, the earth will be ready to be turned over to Jesus when He returns. In the light of this teaching, therefore, the Church has failed. The reason why the Church has failed is that it has not understood what Jesus meant when He told His disciples that they would be witnesses of him throughout the earth. To be a witness means to demonstrate the Kingdom on earth, to take dominion, bringing all things into obedience to Christ. In order to demonstrate the Kingdom, the Church must be prosperous.

Confutation

Now I am going to refute the main doctrines of these two movements, which, as you have seen, have some doctrines in common.

The Kingdom of God will be established by Christ when He returns from heaven

The Church of the Living God is not commanded to take control of the kingdoms of this world. In other words, the Church is not called to establish the Kingdom of God on earth by taking
dominion over every aspect of life through the establishment of a theocratic government. For the Kingdom of God will be established on the earth by Jesus Christ when He returns from heaven. This is what the apostle John says in the book of Revelation: "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations any more until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years" (Revelations 20:1-6 – NIV). Therefore, only at the coming of Jesus Christ will we be able to say: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ” (Revelation 11:15 – NIV). During the millennial reign, the Lord will give all Christians power over the nations, and they will reign with Him over the kingdoms of the world. When the thousand-year reign is over, Satan will be released from his prison and he will deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth to gather them for battle. These nations will surround the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire will come down from heaven and devour them (cf. Revelation 20:7-9). Then Satan will be cast into the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 20:10), the day of judgement will take place (cf. Revelation 20:11-15), and after the judgement God will create new heavens and a new earth, and the New Jerusalem – the heavenly city – will descend upon the new earth, and there the saints will reign forever and ever (cf. Revelation cap. 21-22). All these things are still to come, and we look forward to seeing them. We are sure that they will take place at God’s appointed time.

At this point, however, to avoid any misunderstanding, I need to say that while on the one hand the Kingdom of God will be established by Christ at His return, on the other hand the Kingdom of God is already present on the earth. These two things are not contradictory, for according to the Word of God the Kingdom is not only a future order into which the children of God will enter when Jesus Christ returns, but also a present realm or sphere into which people are entering now. Paul, for instance, says to the Colossians: “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14 – NKJV). Therefore, when one repents of his sins and believes in the Gospel of the kingdom, he enters into the Kingdom for God brings him into it. That the Kingdom of God is already present upon the earth is evident also from the following words of Paul to the Romans: “The kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Romans 14:17 – NKJV), and from these other words he wrote to the Corinthians: “For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power” (1 Corinthians 4:20 - NIV). Therefore, it is correct to affirm that the Kingdom of God is upon the earth. Prior to the apostle Paul, Jesus affirmed in various ways that the Kingdom of God was already upon the earth. For He said to the Pharisees: “The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, ‘See here!’ or ‘See there!’ For indeed the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20-21 – NKJV), and: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matthew 12:28 – NKJV), and to the seventy: “Whatever city you enter, and they receive you, eat such things as are set before you. And heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you’” (Luke 10:8-9 – NKJV). As you can see, from the above mentioned passages of the Scriptures, the Kingdom of God is upon the earth, for Christians – who are called “the sons of the kingdom” (Matthew 13:38 – NKJV) - are into it. In addition, peace and joy and righteousness in the Holy Spirit and the proclamation of the Word of God with confirming signs and wonders are distinguishing marks of the Kingdom of God.
The Church is called to evangelize the world and to suffer persecution for Jesus’ sake

Before Jesus was taken up into heaven, He commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to every creature, as it is written: “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:18-20), and: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

His disciples obeyed Him, for it is written that “they went out and preached everywhere” (Mark 16:20 – NKJV). They did not seek to take control of the world, they did not try to bring all spheres of human activity under the lordship of Jesus Christ, nor did they seek to transform the society around them, but they preached the Gospel of God to sinners so that they might be saved from that evil world. Therefore what every minister of the Gospel must do now is to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to the children of this age so that they might be saved. He must follow the steps of the apostles of old.

The other disciples of the Lord, too, evangelized the world, for it is written: “Those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4 – NKJV) and: “Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only” (Acts 11:19 – NKJV). This shows that not only those who have received a ministry from the Lord, but also those who have not received a ministry gift, are called to evangelize the people of this world.

When the Gospel of the kingdom has been preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, then the end will come (cf. Matthew 24:14).

How many people will be saved and brought into the Kingdom through the witness of the Church? Just a little number of people. For the Scripture says that “many are called, but few chosen” (Matthew 20:16 – NKJV), and that there are few who find the way which leads to life (cf. Matthew 7:14). The flock of the Lord was a little flock in the days of Jesus and in the days of the apostles as well, and it will always be a little flock (cf. Luke 12:32) till the coming of the Lord. In every nation there will be a few sons of the Kingdom; in some nations the sons of the Kingdom will be more than in some others, but the fact still remains that the Church will always consist of a few sheep. This means that most of the people who live on the earth will not be saved. Thus the world will continue to be an evil world till the coming of the Lord. No social transformation of the whole world will be accomplished by the Church. Rather we must say that things will go from bad to worse for Jesus said that “because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12 – NKJV), and Paul said that in the last days “perilous times will come: for men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power” (2 Timothy 3:1-5 – NKJV).

That the state of the world when Jesus returns will be an extremely sinful state is evident from the following words of Jesus: “And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” (Luke 17:26-30) How did people conduct themselves in the days of Noah? How did the inhabitants of Sodom conduct themselves in the days of Lot? According to the Scripture they led a sinful life, for it is written that in the days of Noah “the wickedleness of man was great in the earth” and “every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5), and in the days of Lot the inhabitants of Sodom were haughty and committed abomination before God (cf. Ezekiel 16:50).
That's what life on earth will be like when the Lord returns. As you can see, no golden age will precede the return of Jesus, for the world will be corrupt and filled with violence when Jesus returns. Therefore, inasmuch as the world will continue to be an evil world till the coming of Christ, the Church will be hated and persecuted by the people of this world till the return of Jesus. Did Jesus not say: “You will be hated by all nations for My name’s sake” (Matthew 24:9 - NKJV)? Did He not say to His disciples: “If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” (John 15:20 – NKJV)? Did Paul not say that “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12 – NKJV)? In addition, according to the Scripture, a short time before Jesus returns from heaven the antichrist will be revealed. The antichrist is the man of sin, who will exalt himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), whom will be given authority over every tribe, tongue, and nation, and it will be granted to him to make war with the saints and to overcome them (cf. Revelation 13:7). Therefore, before Jesus returns from heaven the world will be under the rule of the antichrist, who will persecute the Church to the death, not under the rule of the Church. However, when Jesus returns from heaven He will destroy the man of sin with the brightness of His coming (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8), and “the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people, the saints of the Most High” (Daniel 7:27 – NKJV).

Christians are called to live a holy and godly life so that the name of the Lord might be glorified in them.

According to the Scripture, all the followers of Jesus Christ are called to live in a manner worthy of the Gospel in the midst of this present evil age. This means that Christians must be humble, meek, good, lovers of God, temperate, upright, and patient, ready to help those who are in need and to do all kinds of good works; and thus at the same time they must abstain from every form of evil. Paul wrote to Titus: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11-12 – NKJV). What will happen if we live in a manner worthy of the Gospel? It will happen that the name of our God will be glorified, for Jesus said to His disciples: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven” (Matthew 5:16 – NKJV), and: “By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit ….” (John 15:8 – NKJV).

However, it will happen also another thing: we will suffer persecution at the hands of the people of this world. Here is what Paul wrote to Timothy: “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12 – NKJV). Why will the people of this world persecute all those who desire to live godly in Christ? Because the people of this world walk in darkness and are darkness, and hate those who are in the light and are light in the Lord, that is, the children of light. As the world hated the light of the world, that is, Jesus Christ, as it is written: “The light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19 – NKJV), so the world hates us, who are children of the light. However, we should not be surprised by this, for Jesus said: “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18 – NKJV). The hatred of the people of this world toward us children of the Lord, is produced in their hearts by the devil, who is their father and ruler, who is a very wicked spiritual being who hates all the children of God and wants to harm them. That’s why all the nations will hate us for Jesus’ sake, because they are under the sway of the devil.

Sometimes Christians are persecuted also by the governing authorities. Consider what happens in some Muslim countries where if a Muslim turns to Christ is accused of apostasy and he deserves according to the law of those countries to be put to death. Consider also what happened to many Christians several centuries ago here in Europe: they were put to death by the governing authorities because of their faith in the Gospel. Therefore we should not be surprised to see the saints persecuted by the people of this world; the persecution of the saints on the earth is nothing but the fulfilment of the word of God.
God has not said that we will conquer the world, nor that we will take control of the kingdoms of this world during the present age, but He has said that we will be persecuted by this world. We will certainly appear to be losers from an earthly standpoint, for we will not be considered successful men. However, according to the Holy Scripture, in all the persecutions we suffer for Jesus’ sake “we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (Romans 8:37 – NKJV). No matter if we are persecuted, we know that we are more than conquerors for we know that “neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39 - NKJV). In the midst of all persecutions we are ‘overcomers’ for “whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5 – NKJV) We are on the winning side for we have believed in the One who has overcome the world (cf. John 16:33), that is, in the One who by His death and resurrection destroyed death (cf. 2 Timothy 1:10) and him who had the power of death (cf. Hebrews 2:14). And because of the victory Jesus won, we who are His followers have overcome the world and the devil, who is the prince of this world. And we know that when we die – no matter if we die a natural death or we are put to death by the enemies of the cross – we will go to heaven to be with our Saviour and Lord. And we know also that when Jesus comes back God will raise us from the dead and we will reign with Christ for a thousand years, and after the thousand-year reign we will live forever on the new earth. What a glory is awaiting us! That’s why Paul wrote to the Romans: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18 – NKJV). However, remember that we will reign with Him if we endure (cf. 2 Timothy 2:12); therefore, let us endure all persecutions patiently so that we might be glorified on that day. Let us not lose heart because the Lord is faithful and He will keep His word. The losers are all those who don’t belong to Christ, for when they die they will go to hell, that is, they will lose their soul. They are on the losing side for they are slaves of sin, they are children of the devil, who has been defeated by Christ. No matter if they are successful from a earthly point of view, they are losers in the sight of God. They have no hope, they are without God and Christ in this world, they do not know where they are going, their minds have been blinded by the devil, how can they be considered winners?

What the history of the Church teaches us

The history of the Church teaches us an important lesson which is this: every time the Church has attempted to establish an earthbound manifestation of the Kingdom of God – or has attempted to take dominion of political or state functions - it has trampled the Word of Christ for it has persecuted and suppressed those who were considered heretics (sometimes the so called heretics were not heretics at all) or those who had given themselves over to idolatry or sorcery and other serious sins. This because it has adopted an Old Covenant approach to church discipline, sanctification, and the unbelieving people. Papacy is an eloquent example, for the popes persecuted to the death for a long time those who left the Roman Catholic Church and in certain countries even those who did not want to join it. At the time of the Reformation, for instance, many people were put to death by the popes (very often through the secular arm) because they left the Catholic Church and become Protestants, and thus – according to the catholic doctrine - they were worthy to be wiped away from the face of the earth. Unfortunately the Reformers also suppressed their enemies. ‘Calvin’s Geneva’ in the sixteenth century, for example, put to death the heretic Servetus. And many Anabaptists were put to death by the Lutherans. We as Christians are called to oppose the heretics (those who forsake the sound doctrine and give heed to damnable heresies) and all those Christians who give themselves over to idolatry or fornication or sodomy or sorcery, but we must oppose them not with carnal weapons but with the weapons of God, which are spiritual. We must rebuke them, we must refute them, we must expel
them from among us, we must warn Christians of them, but we must never persecute these people nor beat them nor kill them, for this is contrary to the Gospel of the Kingdom. The same thing must be said about the unbelieving people who refuse to repent and believe in the Gospel we proclaim to them: we are not allowed to persecute them nor to beat them nor to put them to death, for the Lord has commanded us to love our enemies and to do good to those who hate us. You may say to me now, ‘I agree with you on this. However we can appoint Christian governing authorities in our nation who have authority to suppress all those who stray from the faith or refuse to believe in the Gospel!’ I say to you that the function of the governing authorities does not include the enforcement of the faith in Christ on society, or the supervision of discipline within the Church itself. For the Word of God teaches that there is a fundamental separation between the Church and the State; the Church must never interfere in the matters concerning the rule of a nation, so the Church is not allowed to appoint some of its members to rule the nation. The members of the Church of God are not of this world, so they must not enter or take part in politics.

To sum up, if the Church took control of a nation and established a theocracy based on the law of Moses, it would conduct just as the Papacy conducted itself in the past centuries, that is, it would persecute all its enemies and would put to death millions of people, there is no doubt about it. Therefore the Church would despise and trample the law of Christ. That’s why I reject Reconstructionism and I urge you to reject it; because if it is put into practice, it has harmful effects on the Church of the Living God. In other words, it leads believers to become merciless, whereas Christ has commanded us to be merciful just as our heavenly Father also is merciful (cf. Luke 6:36). Know this, that reconstructionism leads believers into a spiritual regression, encouraging them to become more like Moses than Christ. So I say it again, reject it.

We are under the law of Christ and not under the law of Moses

The Scripture says that “cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10 – NKJV). But Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (cf. Galatians 3:13). In other words, we, through the death of Christ, have died to what we were held by, and have been set free from the bondage of the law (the whole law and not just some parts of it). That’s why Paul says that we are not under the law (cf. Romans 6:14). We were once under the law, but after faith has come we are no longer under the law (cf. Galatians 3:25) for Christ is the end of the law (cf. Romans 10:4). He “canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross” (Colossians 2:14 – NIV). So we who are led by the Spirit of God are not under the law (cf. Galatians 5:18). The law was given for a limited period of time, that is, “till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made” (Galatians 3:19 – NKJV).

This does not mean, however, that we are without law toward God, for we are under the law of Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:21). The law of Christ consists of the teachings Christ delivered to His disciples and of the teachings that were delivered by the apostles to the saints of old, which are all written in the New Testament. This is the law we must fulfill (cf. Galatians 6:2). The reason why there has been a change of the law is this: “When there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law” (Hebrews 7:12 – NIV). In other words, since Jesus was made priest not according to the order of Aaron but according to the order of Melchizedek, there was a change of the law for the levitical priesthood was given to the children of Israel on the basis of the law of Moses.

That we are under another law, namely the law of Christ, is evident also from the sermon on the mountain; for during that sermon Jesus said six times: “But I say to you” (Matthew 5:22, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). Read carefully the fifth chapter of Matthew and you will realize that Jesus gave a different law, that is, His law. A better law, but also a stricter law than that of Moses. For instance Moses said: “Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce” while Jesus said: “Whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit
adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery” (Matthew 5:31-32 – NKJV). In other words, Moses allowed the Israelites to divorce and to remarry, while Jesus allows a man to send away his wife only because of sexual immorality and to remarry only after his wife’s death.

On the other hand, Christ came into the world to dedicate – through His atoning death - a New Covenant, which is the Covenant that God had promised to make with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah (cf. Jeremiah 31:31-34; Hebrews 8:8-12). Therefore it was necessary for God to give a new law. For the Old Covenant was based on the law of Moses, while the New Covenant had to be based on a new law. And this new law is the law of Christ, which is better than the law of Moses, just as the New Covenant is better than the Old Covenant (Hebrews 8:6). Therefore our rule of life is the law of Christ and not the law of Moses. We must walk in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter (cf. Romans 7:6).

Is then the law of Moses sin? Certainly not! For the Scripture says that the law is good if one uses it lawfully (cf. 1 Timothy 1:8). What does it mean to use the law lawfully? It means to use it to show that certain behaviours and practices are an abomination in the sight of God. For the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for man-slayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and for any other thing which is contrary to sound doctrine (cf. 1 Timothy 1:9-10).

Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them

Reconstructionists are greatly mistaken when they say that a Christian is obligated to keep only a part of the law of Moses, for according to the Scripture, “cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Galatians 3:10 – NKJV). This means that if you don’t keep the whole law of Moses you are under the curse of the law. In other words, if you want to keep only a part of the law of Moses you are still under the curse of the law for according to the law itself you must observe all the precepts of the law. Did not Paul admonish those believers who were tempted to become circumcised (and circumcision, according to reconstructionists, is one of the precepts which are no longer binding), saying: “I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law” (Galatians 5:3 – NKJV)? As you can see, if we think that the law is our rule of life and we observe one precept of the law we are bound to observe all the law. So if you don’t blaspheme the name of God, you don’t murder, you don’t commit adultery, etc., but at the same time you don’t keep the sacrificial system, you don’t keep sabbath-day, you don’t keep all the dietary laws and all the other laws (which according to the Reconstructionists have been fulfilled through the death of Christ), you are under the curse of the law for you do not do all the things commanded by the law. Did not James say: “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10 - NKJV)? As you can see, if we break only one precept of the law, we are guilty of breaking the whole law. In the light of the teaching of the Scripture, therefore, Reconstructionists and all those who teach their ideas on the law of Moses, seek to bring Christians under the curse of the law. That’s why their teaching on the law of Moses is to be rejected and refuted with all boldness. Beware of their leaven. Keep the commandments of Christ.

The ‘covenantal shift’ is an invention

As we saw before, according to the major Reconstructionist thinkers, there has been a ‘covenantal shift’ in regard to sanctions dispensed by the church and sanctions dispensed by the state. Only the state may execute criminals under the New Covenant. For crimes that come under the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical government, the church may excommunicate its members

540
and pronounce imprecations (curses) on sinners. But the church may never execute its members. Here, the way the law is enforced has changed. This means that not even Reconstructionists want to keep the law, or rather the judicial laws, for the law says that the apostate must be put to death by the children of Israel, as it is written: “If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you” (Deuteronomy 13:6-11). Therefore, since they say that the Church is Israel, if a member of the Church forsakes the Lord and serves other gods and entices us, saying: ‘Let us go and serve other gods!’ all the members of the Church should stone him. This is what the law commands. Why then do they affirm that the Church may never execute its members? Evidently they do not want to keep all the judicial laws!! They are like those who troubled the Galatians, who wanted the Galatians to be circumcised, of whom Paul said: “Not even those who are circumcised keep the law …” (Galatians 6:13 – NKJV). I have pointed out to you this evident contradiction so that you may realize how Reconstructionists are inconsistent.

Brothers, beware of the Reconstructionists, for they want you to be entangled again with a joke of bondage. Keep the law of Christ so that you may keep yourself free.

Christians are not called to become political and social activists

Christians are people who live in this world but do not belong to this world, that’s what the Scripture teaches. They are pilgrims and strangers on this earth, for they are on their way to an heavenly country, which is far better than the country where they live. They know that their Saviour and Lord said that His kingdom is not of this world (cf. John 18:36), therefore they are not seeking to establish an earthly kingdom of God on the earth. If Jesus, who is their Master, did not seek to establish an earthly Kingdom on the earth, why should they seek to do what their Master did not do?

Listen, brothers, Jesus did not seek to transform the Jewish society in His days, nor did He try to change the laws of the Roman Empire, nor was He involved in political and social activities, for He preached the Gospel of the grace of God, exhorting people to repent and to believe the Gospel. He healed the sick, He cast out demons, He did many signs and wonders, but He never tried to establish a theocracy on the earth. He came to deliver people from their sins, and from the bondage of the law; He did not come into the world to transform the world. We are disciples of Christ and are called to follow His steps, so we must not become political and social activists. We must bring the good news of the grace of God to the people of this world, so that they might repent and believe in the Gospel and their lives be changed. We must also do all kinds of good works so that the name of God may be glorified in us. But nowhere in the Bible we are told to change the society in which we live by changing the laws of our country or by electing Christians to office or by taking dominion over this evil world. Such a command is foreign to the Holy Scripture. Our task is not to change society through social reformation or political activism, but to preach the Gospel of salvation which is able to change the life of all those who accept it. Beware of all those who teach Reconstructionism or Dominion theology, for their teaching is inconsistent with the sound doctrine. The Scripture says: “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:3 – NKJV). However, Reconstructionists and all those who teach kingdom now theology do not set their minds on the things above, but on things on the earth. They have forgotten the Word of God.
Read carefully the book of the Acts of the apostles and all the epistles, and you will find out that neither the apostles nor the other Christians who lived at that time did attempt to change the society through social reformation or political activism. Do you know why? Because they knew that Christ did not call them to do such a thing. They did not entangle themselves with political and social activism, that they might please the Lord. Let us imitate them. Let us live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age, like the early disciples, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.

Our attitude toward the governing authorities

You may ask now, ‘Since we are not called to become political activists nor to change our society by changing the laws of our nations or the people who are ruling our nation, what kind of attitude should Christians have toward the governing authorities which rule their own nation, since we know that many moral laws are contrary to the Biblical morality? For instance, there are laws which allow people to worship idols, to prostitute themselves, to divorce and remarry, to have an abortion, to marry people of the same sex (homosexual ‘marriages’), to teach evolution in school, to publish immoral magazines, and there are even laws that punish those who preach the Gospel and those who turn to the Lord Jesus Christ, etc.

Well, their attitude should be a submissive and respectful attitude, for the apostle Paul says: “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgement on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience’ sake” (Romans 13:1-5 - NKJV), and Peter says: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good” (1 Peter 2:13-14 – NKJV). Of course, this does not mean that they must obey even the laws which oppose the Gospel and the sound doctrine, for when the governing authorities command them to do something which goes against the Word of God they must disobey them. When the Jewish council said to the apostles ‘Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine!’ the apostles answered: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29 - NKJV). When Shadrac, Meshac and Abed-nego were commanded to worship the image of gold which had been set up in the plain of Dura, they refused to fall down and worship it, lest they should violate the Word of God (cf. Daniel 3:1-30). When the king of Egypt commanded the Hebrew midwives to kill the children of the Hebrew women, they refused to obey Pharaoh (cf. Exodus 1:15-21). Another thing Christians must do when they see that a law of the nation where they live opposes the Word of God is this: they must expose it and refute it through the Scripture. For instance if the law of their nation allows homosexuals to get married, they are called to refute such a law. If the law allows a woman to have an abortion, they must refute that law, and so on.

Last but not least, Christians are called to pray for the governing authorities, that God might save them, give them wisdom to rule, protect them and bless them, so that Christians might lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence (cf. 1 Timothy 2:1-2).

The law was given that sin might abound

Reconstructionists teach that the moral law of God, when codified as a basis for civil law, restrains the passion of the sinner (capital punishment is a deterrent to violent crime), and the knowledge of the moral law brings individuals knowledge of sin. Therefore more people may be converted through faith in Christ.
Now it is true that through the law people know what sin is, however it is not true that it restrains
the passion of the sinner, for Paul says that “the law was added so that the trespass might
increase” (Romans 5:20 - NIV). This means that when the law was given to Israel sin increased.
The passions of the sinners were not restrained but were increased through the law of Moses.
We are sure, therefore, that if the law of Moses were codified as a basis for civil law in Italy or
another nation, sins would increase rather than decrease. However, wickedness will increase in
any case - that is, whether the law is codified as a basis for civil law or not – because Jesus
Christ said that wickedness will increase and the love of most will grow cold (cf. Matthew 24:12).
Let no one deceive you with vain words, therefore; for the present society will go from bad to
worse. And when Jesus comes He will not find a Christianized society, but an extremely wicked
society.

Let me tell you now a few words about conversions. Even if the law of Moses were codified as a
basis for civil law most people would refuse to repent of their sins and believe in the Jesus
Christ, for according to the words of Jesus wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to
destruction, and there are many who go in by it, and strait is the gate and narrow is the way
which leads to life, and there are few who find it (cf. Matthew 7:13-14), and many are called but
few are chosen (cf. Matthew 22:14). The Church on earth will always be a little flock in
comparison to the number of people who live on earth.

Therefore the belief that if the law of God were codified as a basis for civil law the majority of
society would be saved (or would at least outwardly conform to God’s law) is wrong. For the
Scripture cannot be broken.

Beware of the leaven of the Kingdom now teachers

Kingdom now theology is a false teaching that must be rejected without hesitation for the
following reasons.
1. As I said before, nowhere in the Scripture we are told that we must take control of the
kingdoms of this world. When God commanded the first male and female to subdue the earth,
He did not mean at all that man had to take dominion over all the kingdoms of the world or that
the law of God had to rule all aspects of society, for the kingdoms of the world did not exist at
that time and the law had not yet been given to man, but He meant that man had to work the
land so that it might bear useful herbs, to cut the trees when they were a hindrance to him or
when he needed the woods to build a house or a ship etc., to bum thorns and briers, to dig a
well to draw water from it, and to do many other useful things. Man had to subdue also the fish
of the sea, the birds of the air, and every other living creature that moved on the earth. This is
what man did and he is still doing all over the world.

Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature
(cf. Mark 16:15) and to make disciples of all the nations (cf. Matthew 28:19) and He said to His
disciples that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations”
(Luke 24:47 – NKJV). But He never said to His disciples that they had to take dominion over the
kingdoms of the world or that the kingdoms of this world had to be made obedient to the faith.

Kingdom now teachers affirm that the Church has failed for it has not understood what Jesus
meant when He told His disciples that they would be witnesses of Him throughout the earth; that
is a lie, for the Church has understood correctly the words of Jesus. It is the Kingdom now
adherents who have misunderstood the words of Jesus. For to be a witness of Jesus does not
mean at all to take dominion of the world, nor to bring all things into obedience to Christ, but it
means to speak to all people of His life, of His ministry, of His death and resurrection, of His
ascension into heaven and of His return, so that they might believe on Him. This is what
Christians have done throughout the centuries. To make disciples of all the nations does not
mean that every nation must be discipled, but it means that the Gospel must be preached to all
nations so that those who accept it might become disciples of Christ. How many people will
accept the Gospel? Only a few, for according to the words of Jesus only a few people find the
way that leads to life (cf. Matthew 7:14): they are those who have been appointed to eternal life
(cf. Acts 13:48) and whom the Father draws to Christ (cf. John 6:44). This because the salvation of men does not depend on men’s desire or effort, but on God’s mercy. For God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden (cf. Romans 9:16-18). That’s why we don’t affirm that the Church has failed, for we know that only a few people will believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, that is to say, God will grant to only a few people repentance and faith. Therefore we don’t expect every person to be converted. Nor do we expect our society to conform to Christian principles or to be transformed by Christians. For we know that wickedness will increase and the love of many will grow cold (cf. Matthew 24:12), many false prophets will rise up and deceive many (cf. Matthew 24:11), the disciples of Christ will be hated by all nations (cf. Matthew 24:9), and when Jesus returns the world will be under the rule of the antichrist (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 13:1-18), not under the rule of the Church. This is what the Scripture teaches us. Nevertheless, the Scripture teaches also that the kingdoms of this world will be given to the saints when Jesus returns and destroys the antichrist (cf. Daniel 7:24-27). In other words, when Jesus returns He will establish the Kingdom of God on the earth, and He will reign with His saints for a thousand years. It is at the coming of Christ that the saints will take control of the kingdoms of the world, for Christ will give them authority over the nations (cf. Revelation 2:26).

2. Christian can’t take dominion over this rebellious world, for this world lies under the sway of the wicked one (cf. 1 John 5:19), that is, the devil. He is the prince of this world and the prince of the power of the air and he will continue to deceive this world and to cause the people of the world to commit all kinds of evil things till the return of Christ. For when Jesus returns the devil will be bound for a thousand years, thrown into the abyss which will be locked and sealed over him. When the thousand years are ended he will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which will be devoured by fire and the devil will be cast into the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 20:1-10). Therefore, till the return of Christ the devil will work in the sons of disobedience and walk about the saints like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (cf. 1 Peter 5:8). And consequently Christians will have to resist the devil, lest they fall into the snare of the devil. Therefore, in the light of the teaching of the Scripture, the devil will not be put under the feet of Christ until he is cast into the lake of fire, that is, until the end of the Millennium reign. Only when the thousand-year reign is over, will the devil be put under the feet of Christ and crushed under our feet (cf. Romans 16:20). Of course, Christ has destroyed the devil and triumphed over him through His death and resurrection; and we who are disciples of Christ have overcome the devil by the blood of Christ and by the word of our testimony (cf. Revelation 12:11), but this does not mean that before the coming of Christ we will be able to put Satan under our feet, for as I said before the devil will be free to deceive the nations till the return of Christ, and for a short time after the millennium reign as well. We can resist the devil, and we know that when we resist him he flees from us (cf. James 4:7), but we can’t put him under our feet. We can cast out demons but we can’t cast them into the lake of fire so that they might not harm people any longer. That’s why we can’t establish the Kingdom of God on the earth: because God will allow the devil to deceive the people of the world and to work in them till the return of Christ, and for a short time after the millennium reign. It is not true, therefore, that the Church has all authority in heaven and on the earth. The Church has authority, but its authority is subject to the will of God. In other words, the Church can’t bind Satan nor can it put him under its feet, for at the moment God does not want to put Satan under the feet of the Church. I will give a practical example: the Church can’t say to the devil, ‘Devil I bind you and cast you into the lake of fire, so you will be no longer able to deceive this world!’ for this is a command the devil will not obey. For God has decided that the devil is to be bound at the return of Christ by an angel, and he is to be cast into the lake of fire at the end of the millennium. The Church is not allowed to go against the Word of God, but must be subject to the Word of God.

In the light of the above mentioned reasons, the ‘new revelations’ given to the Church by the so called latter day apostles and prophets are nothing but lies. And inasmuch as these ‘revelations’ are lies, they must be refuted privately and publicly. Even if these so called new revelations are confirmed by signs and wonders done in the name of Jesus Christ, they must be rejected and
refuted for they contradict the truth which is in Christ Jesus. The purpose of these ‘new revelations’ is to make Christians become carnally minded and we know that those who become carnally minded become enemies of God, as it is written that “the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be” (Romans 8:7 - NKJV). Thus their purpose is an evil purpose. Let us take for instance the ‘new revelation’ according to which Christians are gods or little gods who can speak into existence what they desire by claiming their ‘divine right’; is it not a revelation whose purpose is to make Christians become enemies of God, since those who accept it become haughty and they think that God is ‘compelled’ to fulfil all their desires? Of course it is. Let us now take for instance the new revelation called ‘prosperity message’ according to which Christians must be prosperous, that is, materially rich, on the earth, for the riches which are on the earth belong to them and thus they must take control of them by faith; is it not a revelation whose purpose is to cause Christians to stray from the faith, for those who accept it think that they must be rich in order to demonstrate the Kingdom of God on the earth and make all efforts to become rich, and thus they stray from the faith for Paul says that “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Timothy 6:9 – NKJV)? Of course it is. Let us now take for example the revelation according to which a Christian can’t be sick for sickness is never the will of God for any Christian; is it not a revelation whose purpose is to make Christians believe that God can’t strike a Christians with sickness and leave him sick till his death or that a Christian can’t die of sickness, while the Scripture teaches that sometimes God causes His children to die of sickness even though they believe that God can heal them (the Scripture says that the prophet Elisha – who was a man of God full of faith – became “sick with the illness of which he would die” 2 Kings 13:14 – NKJV)? Of course, it is. Let us take now for instance another well known ‘new revelation,’ which says that you can receive from God whatever you want, just name it and claim it in faith and you will surely get it; is it not a revelation whose purpose is to make Christians believe that God has not a will of His own, or rather that whatever we desire is according to His will, so He will surely give us anything we ask, while the Scripture teaches us that God hears us if what we ask of Him is according to His will (cf. 1 John 5:14)? Therefore I urge you, brethren, to reject these ‘new revelations’ taught by these well known ‘apostles’ and ‘prophets’, who are enemies of the cross of Jesus Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things.

**During the Millennium the saints will reign with Christ in heaven and will engage in the investigative judgement of unbelievers**

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church teaches that after Christ has returned and after Satan has been bound (the binding of Satan, however, is not to be understood literally, according to Adventists, for they say that the binding of Satan means that Satan is consigned by divine command to the desolate earth where he will be confined for a thousand years so that he may ponder on the results of his rebellion against God), the general resurrection of believers will occur (it must be said, however, that it will not be strictly a resurrection, for according to Adventist teaching there are no souls of these believers which are still in existence, since when they died they were completely annihilated, therefore their restoration to life should be called a new creation rather than a resurrection). After this resurrection, all believers who are still alive will be transformed and glorified. Then both the resurrected believers and the transformed believers will be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ in the air; after this they are taken up by Him to heaven (cf. Seventh-day Adventists Answer Questions On Doctrine, Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington, D.C. 1957, pages 494-496). At this point, the Millennium will begin, during which the saints will reign with Christ in heaven for a thousand years: ‘A
The thousand-year reign of the saints with Christ is foretold in Revelation 20:2-7, but there is no statement in that chapter that the saints will reign with Christ on earth during this period” (Questions On Doctrine, page 489). During the millennium the saints will engage, together with Christ, in a work of judgement, a work which involves “a careful investigation of the records of evil men and a decision regarding the amount of punishment due each sinner for his part in the rebellion against God” (Ibid., page 497). This investigative judgement of unbelievers will be followed by the executive judgement of unbelievers which will take place after the millennium.

Conisation

The Holy Scriptures teach that when Christ returns, the dead in Christ will be raised from the dead, and the saints who will be found alive will be transformed. Both the resurrected saints and the transformed saints will be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ in the air (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). After this, Satan will be bound and cast into the bottomless pit where he will be confined for a thousand years (cf. Revelation 20:1-3). During the Millennium, therefore, Satan will not be on the earth.

After the binding of Satan the millennium will begin, which is a literal thousand-year reign which will be established on earth by Christ, and during which the saints (both the resurrected saints and the transformed saints) will reign with Christ on the earth. That the saints will reign with Christ on the earth, and not in heaven, is evident from the words of the following song written in the book of Revelation, which was sung to the Lamb by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders: “You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood your purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Revelation 5:9-10 – NIV). But it is evident also from the following words written in the book of Revelation, which describe what will happen on the earth after Satan is released from his prison: “Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, God and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Revelation 20:7-10 – NKJV). As you can see, the Scripture says that the nations will surround the camp of the saints, therefore the saints will be on the earth during the millennium and not in heaven.

As for the investigative judgement of unbelievers which will be carried on during the millennium, it is something which is foreign to the teaching of the Scripture; nowhere does the Scripture state that the saints will engage in a investigative judgement of unbelievers. Therefore this so called investigative judgement is to be rejected. What the Scripture teaches about the judgement of unbelievers is this. At the end of the Millennium, the wicked will rise again, and they will appear before the throne of God, and they will be judged by God according to their works, and cast into the lake of fire (cf. Revelation 20:12-15). The saints will “execute on them the written judgement” (Psalm 149:9 – NKJV), for they have been called by God to judge the world (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2). In particular, the twelve apostles will judge the twelve tribes of Israel, for Jesus said to them: “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28 – NKJV).
The wicked will be annihilated, and they will be as if they had never existed

Many sects teach that the wicked will be annihilated, that is to say, they will be condemned to extinction (which is the second death). Therefore, according to their teaching, the ultimate end of the wicked is annihilation or extinction of being.

Seventh-Day Adventist Church: ‘The wicked will be raised at the end of the millennium; at this time Christ, accompanied by all the saints, will descend to earth again. He will command all the wicked dead to arise. After the unbelieving dead are brought back to life, they begin to spread over the earth. Then Satan will deceive the risen wicked into thinking that they can take the city of God by force. So he will gather his hosts into battle array for a final assault upon the ‘camp of the saints’, that is, the New Jerusalem which has just descended with Christ from heaven. This great battle will end in Satan’s final defeat. Fire will come down from God out of heaven and will annihilate Satan, his evil angels, and all the wicked. This annihilation is called the second death. However, before the annihilation there will be gradations of suffering, depending upon the guilt of the person or demon involved. ‘The universe will thus be freed of sin and sinners forever.’ (Fundamental Beliefs, Article 26)

Jehovah’s Witnesses. Total annihilation is the doom of the ‘goats’ (that is, the enemies of the Jehovah’s Witnesses) at the battle of Armageddon (cf. Let God Be True, page 97); of all those who will not be raised during the millennium, such as Adam, Eve, Cain, those who died in the flood, the people of Sodom, Judas Iscariot, and the religions hypocrites of Jesus’ day (cf. Paradise Lost, page 236; You May Survive Armageddon, page 354); of all those who, though living on the new earth during the millennium, refuse to obey God’s kingdom (cf. Paradise Lost, page 237; You May Survive Armageddon, page 356); and of all who follow Satan in his final battle (cf. Let God Be True, page 270). Gehenna, ‘second death,’ and the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, all stand for total annihilation (cf. The Truth Shall Make You Free, page 364).

As you can see, according to Jehovah’s Witnesses, not all the wicked will rise again, for some people have already ceased to exist (since they deny that man has an immortal soul which continues to exist consciously after death, those who will not be risen again have been plunged by death into the condition of non-existence).

The followers of Herbert Armstrong: ‘Now back to Revelation 20. Verses 13 to 15 indicate that there will then be a last, final resurrection of the incorrigible who have rejected the eternal salvation offered them. They, with any such living at the end of the Millennium, will then die the second death – utter extinction – in the lake of fire …’ (Herbert W. Armstrong, The Incredible Human Potential, Pasadena, California, 1978, page 164)

The Way International. Death for the believer is referred to as falling asleep because in sleep there is an awakening point. But for the unbeliever, the Christ rejector, the ungodly, their resurrection is temporary for they shall meet a second and final death (Wierwille, Are the Dead Alive Now?, p. 98).

The Christadelphian Church: ‘The hell fire of the Bible is the destruction of everything which is displeasing in God’s sight at a time of judgment. It is also called the “everlasth fire” and the “lake of fire” (http://www.christadelphian.org.uk).

Even some people who are regarded as Evangelicals – such as Clark Pinnock, John Wenham, Philip Hughes, and Stephen Travis [1] - teach ‘annihilationism.’

Confutation

The wicked will be tormented forever, that is, they will suffer unspeakable torments for all eternity. That’s what the Scripture teaches about the final destiny of the wicked.

Let us look at the passages of the Scripture which attest what I have just said.

• Jesus said about those who on that day will be put on His left: “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment” (Matthew 25:46).
Paul says to the Thessalonians: “Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you: And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:6-9).

John wrote these words in the book of Revelation: “And the third angel followed them, saying with a loud voice, If any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in his hand, The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the Lamb: And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night, who worship the beast and his image, and whosoever receiveth the mark of his name” (Revelation 14:9-11).

Please note this expression “and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever” which indicates that their torment will be without end; and note also this other expression “they have no rest day and night” which indicates that those people will have no rest for all eternity, unlike those who will live forever with the Lord about whom the Scripture says that they will rest from their labours.

John wrote in the book of Revelation that the false prophet and the beast and the devil will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where they “shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Revelation 20:10). Obviously, since the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, whoremongers, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars will be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, it follows that they also will be tormented forever and ever (Revelation 21:8).

Jesus said: “And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell [gehenna] fire: Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:47-48).

I want to point out that in Gehenna (or the lake of fire) the worm of the wicked does not die and the fire is not quenched, which indicates that their torment will be continuous, endless.

Jude said about Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns: “… giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7).

That means that when the inhabitants of those wicked towns rise again on that day, they will be sentenced to everlasting torment and will be cast into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. However, at the present time the inhabitants of those towns are being tormented by fire because they are in a place of torment called Hades (Greek word which means ‘unseen world’ and which is translated ‘hell’ ten times in the King James Version).

As you can see, the above mentioned passages in one way or another speak about an everlasting punishment which will be inflicted on the wicked, which will be an everlasting torment into an everlasting fire. I would like to point out that the everlasting fire is a fire that will last for an endless time, I say this because I know that some assert that one day this fire will end! But – I ask – if one day it will end how could it be defined everlasting?

Let no one deceive you with empty words, the fire prepared for the devil and his angels into which the wicked will be cast on the day of judgement is everlasting and all the wicked will be tormented forever into it.

Notes

Heaven and earth will be renewed not destroyed

J. Oswald Sanders, a well known Christian author, in his book *Heaven: Better By Far* says about the new heavens and the new earth: “In flaming metaphor, Peter foreshadows the method by which this tremendous metamorphosis and renovation will take place (quotes 2 Peter 3:10-13) . . . Those heavens have been the sphere where Satan has carried on his activities. Because he pollutes everything he touches, they must be cleansed by fire. Because this earth has also been the theater in which the drama of redemption has been enacted, it will, phoenix-like, rise from its ashes by the power of God to a new and unimaginable glory . . . The picture is of a universe transformed, perfected, purged of everything that is evil and exalts itself against God. It is ‘new,’ not in the sense of being a new creation, but of being new in character—a worthy milieu for the residence of God and his redeemed people. It is new because of the presence of a new community of people, utterly loyal to God and to the Lamb.” J. Oswald Sanders, *Heaven: Better By Far*, Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1993, pp. 133-134).

This teaching - according to which the new heavens and the new earth God will create are these heavens and this new earth renewed, that is, transformed, perfected, purged of everything that is evil. - is taught by many Protestant Churches. The Italian Assemblies of God teaches it.

Confutation

According to the Holy Scriptures the heavens and the earth will be annihilated by God and therefore they will pass away, and God will create ex-nihilo new heavens and a new earth.

- Jesus said: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away” (Matthew 24:35 – NIV). Jesus said these words to explain that while heaven and earth, which we see with our eyes, will not endure forever for one day they will cease to exist, His words will endure forever. If this heaven and this earth were not destined to be annihilated, these words spoken by Jesus “but my words will never pass away” would not make sense and Jesus would have contradicted Himself. I ask you this, ‘Let us suppose, for the sake of argument, that this heaven and this earth will be renewed and so they will endure forever, why then did Jesus say that they will pass away? Don’t you think that Jesus should have said that heaven and earth will never pass away just as His words will never pass away?

- Paul says to the Corinthians: “For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18 – NKJV). Among the things which are seen are heaven and earth, therefore heaven and earth also are temporary. Thus Paul confirmed the above mentioned words of Jesus Christ. As for the things which are not seen, among them are the new heavens and the new earth which we do not see yet, for God has not yet created them, but also the New Jerusalem which is in heaven and which, when the Millennium is ended, will descend from heaven to the new earth.

- Peter says in his second epistle: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:10-13). As you can see, Peter says first “the heavens shall pass away” (v. 10) and then “the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved” (v. 12). Therefore, the expression “the heavens shall pass away” means that they will vanish away for ‘to dissolve’ means among other things ‘to disappear.’ That this is the meaning of the expression “the heavens shall pass away” is evident from the following words of the prophet Isaiah: “For the
heavens will vanish away like smoke” (Isaiah 51:6 – NKJV). As for the earth and the works that are in it, Peter says that they will be burned up: does the expression “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” mean that they will be purified and renewed through the fire? Not at all, for Peter says also that “all these things shall be dissolved”. Therefore when the fire of God will strike the earth and the works that are in it they will vanish away. Do you remember what happened to Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them when God rained brimstone and fire on them? Is it not written that God turned them into ashes (cf. 2 Peter 2:6) and they disappeared? So, likewise, when the fire of God will hit the heavens and the earth they will vanish away. It will be as if they had never existed, and they will not be remembered or come to mind, as it is written: “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind” (Isaiah 65:17 – NIV).

- In the book of Revelation John says: “And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them” (Revelation 20:11), and again: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” (Revelation 21:1). Notice that John says first that the earth and the heaven fled away from the face of God and there was found no place for them, and then he says that they were passed away. Once again we find the verb ‘to pass away', and from the context in which this verb is used it is evident that the heaven and the earth had vanished away, that is to say, they were no more.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .................................................................................................................. 2

GOD .......................................................................................................................... 4
There is no God (Atheism) ......................................................................................... 4
God cannot be known (Agnosticism) ......................................................................... 5
God is all, and all is God (Pantheism) ....................................................................... 5
God does not intervene in the universe (Deism) ............................................................. 7
God is made of flesh and bones .................................................................................. 9
God was once a mortal man ......................................................................................... 9
God the Father had a Father, and God’s Father also had a Father and so on .............. 10
God is the greatest failure in the Universe .................................................................... 11
God lives on a mother planet ....................................................................................... 12
God can be maneuvered ............................................................................................. 12
God is a family ........................................................................................................... 13
God is not a vengeful God ......................................................................................... 14
God is always loving and merciful - the anger is just an appearance ......................... 16
God has never used sickness to discipline His children ............................................. 17
God makes mistakes .................................................................................................. 18
God delights in those who do evil ............................................................................... 18
God is not omnipresent .............................................................................................. 22

JESUS CHRIST ....................................................................................................... 23
Before the Incarnation, the Son of God did not exist ..................................................... 23
Jesus is the Son of God by adoption (adoptionism) ....................................................... 24
The body of Jesus Christ was the product of the physical union of God the Father and the virgin Mary ........................................................................................................ 25
Jesus Christ was not born of a virgin ......................................................................... 26
In Jesus Christ the Divinity took the place of the human mind or spirit (Apollinarism) 27
The two natures of Christ became by their union only one Nature (Monophysitism) 27
Jesus’ body was not a material or real one .................................................................. 28
The man Jesus is not the Christ, for the Christ is the spiritual idea of God or a ray from the cosmic Christ which entered the body of Jesus ........................................... 29
Jesus is not God ........................................................................................................ 30
Jesus is the absolute fullness of the Godhead; He is at once Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Jesus Christ married Mary, Martha and the other Mary at Cana of Galilee

Jesus was sexually abused by Roman soldiers

Jesus took on the nature of Satan

Jesus was born again in hell

Jesus Christ did not come to die

Jesus Christ was not killed nor crucified

Jesus Christ did not raise from the dead

Jesus Christ was raised not with the same body which He had prior to His death but as a spirit

The prints of nails in the hands and feet of the resurrected body of Jesus are only temporary

Jesus Christ is just one Messiah among many, and one of the Great Teachers of Morality, and Eminent Reformers

It was not till His work was finished that Jesus Christ was completely and fully God

Jesus Christ at His death did not go to preach to the spirits who were in prison

Jesus of Nazareth is not the Messiah of the Hebrew Bible for He did not do any of the things that the Jewish Scriptures said the Messiah would do

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is a force or an influence

The Holy Ghost is a Personage of Spirit, who is not the Spirit of truth and is not omnipresent

TRINITY

The doctrine of the Trinity is false

SALVATION

Salvation is obtained by faith plus good works

The way of salvation according to the Roman Catholic Church

The way of salvation according to Jehovah’s Witnesses

The way of salvation according to Mormons

The way of salvation according to Oneness Pentecostals

The way of salvation according to The New Life Mission (founded by Paul C. Jong)

The way of ‘salvation’ according to Judaism

The way of salvation according to the Muslim religion

Good people from all religions are saved

All people will finally be saved (Universalism)

Men can be saved apart from the name of Jesus Christ

Those who have not heard the Gospel in this life will have the opportunity to hear it and to turn to the Lord in the afterlife

God has not predetermined that some will be saved and others lost

A believer in Jesus Christ can’t fall away from the state of grace (‘once saved always saved’)
A Christian who commits suicide will go to heaven ________________________________ 152
The blood of Jesus alone can’t cleanse a Christian from certain sins __________________ 153
Regeneration is a gradual process taking many years, involving effort, love, good works ___ 154
Christians will be born again at the time of the resurrection of those who are Christ’s _____ 156
Forgiveness is not always immediate__________________________________________ 158
The cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary________________________________________ 159
There are two kinds of eternal life; one is eternal life and the other is everlasting life _____ 189
We should store up merits to offset times of demerits _____________________________ 191
Let us not cut out the tares which are in us _____________________________________ 192

BIBLE ______________________________________________ ___________________ 194
God wrote three Bibles _________________________________________________________ 194
The Bible contains some mistakes_______________________________________________ 196

CREATION ___________________________________________ __________________ 205
The world was not created out of nothing_________________________________________ 205
God created other worlds _______________________________________________________ 205
Christ was aided in the creation of this earth by many of the noble and great spirit children of the
Father_____________________________________________ _________________________ 206
Humans, plants and animals were created first as spirits in heaven and then physically on the
earth ______________________________________________ _________________________ 207
The six days of Genesis 1 are long periods of time __________________________________ 208
The Gap Theory____________________________________________________________________ 209

THE FLOOD __________________________________________ __________________ 214
We don’t know how much of the world was covered by the waters______________________ 214

ANGELOLOGY ___________________________________________ _________________ 215
Angels are people who have died and gone to heaven _________________________________ 215
The angels of God should be invoked and are worthy to be worshiped___________________ 216
The angels of God are waiting for our orders________________________________________ 216
Christians have not guardian angels_______________________________________________ 217
The sons of God spoken of in Genesis chapter 6 were the descendants of Seth___________ 219

DEMONOLOGY_________________________________________ _________________ 222
The devil does not exist _________________________________________________________ 222
While tempting Jesus, Satan claimed to be the angel who had saved Isaac from certain death 223
Satan repented after his fall ______________________________________________________ 224

MAN ________________________________________________ ___________________ 225
Man’s body evolved from a subhuman species created by God (the evolution theory taught by
Roman Catholics) _____________________________________________________________ 225
When man sinned he lost his spirit ______________________________________________ 228
Man is part of God 228
Man may become God 230
Man is born sinless 231
Man can attain immortality in this life 232
The traducian theory 232

SIN 234
Sin does not exist 234
Sin is any act or thought which robs man of his self-esteem 234
We should not attempt to make people aware of their lost and sinful condition 235
The sin Eve committed consisted in a sexual relationship with the serpent (or Satan) 236
Let’s thank Adam and Eve for disobeying God 237

WATER BAPTISM 239
Baptism is not a religious ordinance instituted by Christ to be universally observed 239
Baptism should be or may be administered to infants 240
Baptism may be administered also by pouring or sprinkling some water upon the head of the candidate 241
Baptism regenerates (baptismal regeneration) 242

THE LORD’S SUPPER 246
There is no ground in the New Testament for the belief that Christ at His last Passover instituted a religious ordinance to be permanently and universally observed 246
By the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of His blood 247
The Lord’s Supper is the repetition of the sacrifice of Christ: the same Christ who offered himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner, and this sacrifice is truly propitiatory 249

CHURCH’S OFFICES AND MINISTRIES 251
A man who experienced divorce and remarriage before his conversion to Christ can receive credentials as a pastor 251
Women are allowed to teach, therefore they can be ordained as elders or pastors 251

PRAYER 255
Praying to dead saints 255

BAPTISM WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT 257
The Baptism with the Holy Spirit is received when one believes in the Lord Jesus, that is, at the time of his regeneration 257
The baptism with the Holy Spirit is part of the salvation process 260

GIFTS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT 261
The gifts of the Spirit have ceased 261
Tongues plus interpretation is equal to prophecy 263
The tongues which the Holy Spirit enabled the early disciples to speak on the day of Pentecost were given to enable the disciples to preach the Gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring 267
The word of knowledge is a teaching gift in the Church 268
The word of wisdom is a deep spiritual insight and unusual understanding of the more mystical parts of God’s Word or the sublimities of the Gospel and it is also an administrative wisdom 271

PROSPERITY AND TITHING 274
The prosperity message 274
Tithing is still mandatory 318

REVIVALS 339
Toronto Blessing 339

MARRIAGE 347
The imposition of celibacy on the Catholic clergy 347
Celibacy must be rejected 352
Polygamy 353
The pope can dissolve the bond of marriage in certain cases 354
If a man marries a woman, and, after marriage he finds she is not a virgin -- that she committed fornication before marriage to him -- he is allowed to put her away 355
The marriage bond is dissolved not only when one of the spouses dies, but also when one of them commits fornication or adultery, and when an unbelieving partner departs 357

MORALITY 360
Homosexuality is not a sin 360
It is lawful for Christians to fornicate, to commit adultery, and to practice homosexuality and child adult sex 362
In certain cases theft is not a sin 364
It is lawful for a Christian in certain cases to kill a human being 365
In certain cases we are allowed to lie 366
A doctor should be allowed to practice euthanasia 366
Birth-control must be regarded as legitimate in certain cases 368
Abortion must be regarded as legitimate in certain circumstances 369
If a Christian smokes just a cigarette, he commits no sin 370
Tattooing is a valid spiritual expression 371

FOODS AND BEVERAGES 373
Christians must abstain from certain foods and beverages 373
We are free in the Lord to eat blood, things offered to idols and strangled things 379
Macrobiotics 382

DAYS AND FEASTS 385
The Sabbath-day must be kept ______________________________________________________ 385

Sunday-keeping __________________________________________________________________ 387

WOMEN ___________________________________________________________________________ 388

Women can dress how they like for God looks at the heart ____________________________ 388

It is lawful for women to wear jewelry _______________________________________________ 391

A Christian woman is not bound to cover her head with a veil when she prays or prophesies 392

CHRISTIAN MUSIC __________________________________________________________________ 396

Christian rock music __________________________________________________________________ 396

OATHS ____________________________________________________________________________ 405

It is lawful for a Christian to swear an oath ____________________________________________ 405

It is lawful for a Christian to swear an oath falsely (that is, with mental reservation) ______ 406

STATUES AND IMAGES __________________________________________________________________ 408

The venerable and holy images should be set forth in the places of worship, in houses and by the 408
wayside in order to be honored and revered

MARK OF THE BEAST ___________________________________________________________________ 410

Denominationalism is the mark of the beast ____________________________________________ 410

Sunday-keeping is the mark of the beast _______________________________________________ 411

MEN AND WOMEN OF THE BIBLE _____________________________________________________ 414

Adam was as much female as he was male _______________________________________________ 414

Adam was God manifested in the flesh _________________________________________________ 414

Adam was able to fly ___________________________________________________________________ 415

Adam was deceived by Satan in the garden of Eden ______________________________________ 416

Mary was born without sin _________________________________________________________ 416

Mary was a virgin only at the time of conception, not at Jesus’ birth ______________________ 417

Mary, after giving birth to Jesus, remained virgin till her death ____________________________ 418

Mary was the first person to whom Jesus appeared after His resurrection _________________ 419

Mary rose again and was taken up into heaven ____________________________________________ 419

Mary makes intercession for us _______________________________________________________ 419

Mary is the mother of God __________________________________________________________ 420

Mary is the Mother of the Church ____________________________________________________ 421

Dogs ate Judas’ remains _____________________________________________________________ 421

Moses did not die, but was translated and taken into heaven _____________________________ 422

The apostle John did not die _________________________________________________________ 423

Paul learned the Gospel from men ___________________________________________________ 424

Anglo-Israelism _____________________________________________________________________ 425

PLACES OF THE BIBLE __________________________________________________________________ 430
The Garden of Eden was located in the state of Missouri (U.S.A.)

**OCCULT PRACTICES**

Spiritism

Astrology

Visualization (that is, the fourth-dimensional thinking)

**EASTERN PRACTICES**

Yoga

Acupuncture

Martial arts

Transcendental Meditation (TM)

Zazen

**ESCHATOLOGY**

The New Jerusalem is not an actual heavenly city

The fire of hell is to be understood figuratively

When people die, they become completely nonexistent

The souls of the departed saints, in conjunction with the holy angels, minister to the heirs of salvation; whereas the souls of the departed wicked, in conjunction with evil angels, inflict death or evils of various kinds on the men who do not know God

All those who die in God’s grace will go to a place called Purgatory to undergo purification

Paradise is not Heaven

Sex in heaven

Reincarnation

The two witnesses spoken of in the book of Revelation chapter 11 are the Old and New Testaments

The Second Coming of Christ has already taken place

There are two ‘returns’ of Christ; the first one occurred in 1914, while the second one will occur when he comes to earth to conduct the battle of Armageddon

The second coming of Christ will consist of two phases, one for the saints (the Rapture) and the other with the saints (the Revelation of Christ), and the intervening period between the two is the time when the world will experience the Great Tribulation, involving the reign of Antichrist and the outpouring of God’s wrath on the wicked

The resurrection has already taken place

There will be no physical resurrection of the dead

The unjust will not rise again

A special resurrection will take place just before the second coming of Christ

At Christ’s coming the saints whom the Lord will find alive upon the earth will suffer death and receive immortality

The saved will have wings in the resurrection

Amillennialism
Postmillennialism

Dominion theology

During the Millennium the saints will reign with Christ in heaven and will engage in the investigative judgement of unbelievers

The wicked will be annihilated, and they will be as if they had never existed

Heaven and earth will be renewed not destroyed

TABLE OF CONTENTS