<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who Should Christians Worship? (Dale Tuggy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Philosophical Legacy of the 16th and 17&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; Century Socinians: Their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationality (Marian Hillar)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Inquiry Into The Identity And Meaning Of The Devil And Demons (Dustin Smith)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hell: A Final Word. The Surprising Truths I Found in the Bible [Edward William</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fudge] (Barbara Buzzard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embracing Obscurity: Becoming Nothing in Light Of God’s Everything. [Author:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anonymous] (Barbara Buzzard)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>page 83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The New JBU

It has taken some time for us to renew the workings of this new Journal of Biblical Unitarianism. This replaces our former Journal, the Journal from the Radical Reformation.

The reasons have varied from loss of funding to loss of support personnel. Now we have reorganized as more independent of such, and we are expecting to again represent our Biblical positions, which we espouse as truly orthodox theologically, a term denied us by many others.

We are no longer able to provide a printed copy, but by posting it to our site can make it more available to a vastly wider readership. For our international readership this will also provide more immediate access.

Why the Name Change?

While our theological position is unchanged from what it was, what it has always been, we felt the name change helped to clarify our foci.

Whereas the term "Radical Reformation" in our former name seemed to indicate an emphasis on historical matters of that segment of the Reformation, that was never our intention, but rather to focus on the theological positions found in the Radical Reformation. We have found these to be truer Biblical positions than those taken by Catholicism, and even by the other three segments of the Reformation - Lutheranism, Anglicanism or the Reformed positions. Our Biblical position is found within the "Radical Reformation" (as defined by George Hunston Williams), and even limited only to some within the Evangelical Rationalists.

This is revealed well in the three articles that are featured in this issue:
1) by Dale Tuggy, a philosopher from New York,
2) by Marian Hiller, a self-declared non-believer, but a brilliant historian from Texas, and
3) by Dustin Smith, a brilliant theologian, as well as our Associate Editor from Georgia

**Our Primary Focus**

Our theological underpinnings remain as they ever have been, and, as now indicated in the new name, the emphasis, Biblical Unitarianism, will remain the central core of our theological understanding -- the nature of God, who He is, and who He is not.

Our contention is that there is but One God, a position we have decided to title Biblical Unitarianism, to distinguish us from most others. We are monotheists, not trinitarians or tritheists or other similarly derived positions that we find to be incompatible with the Bible.

We receive little acknowledged agreement from "Christianity", but we do from Jewish writers and theologians and Islamic scholars. Strangely, the writing of those who yet call themselves "trinitarians" still deny the trinity is found in the Bible.

These brief notes are seemingly reflective of the confusion among trinitarian scholars.


"Primitive Christianity did not have an explicit doctrine of the Trinity such as was subsequently elaborated in the creeds."-*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology.*
"Yet the number three assumes peculiar importance indirectly in connection with the concept of the Trinity. There are threefold formulae listing the Persons in such passages as Matt. 28:19; Jn. 14:26; 15:26; 2 Cor. 13:13; 1 Pet. 1:2 (→ God, art. theos NT 8). There seems to be no precursor of this idea in any significant usage of the numerical concept in the OT, nor may it reasonably be connected with the occurrence of triads of deities in ancient Near Eastern paganism." (New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, 1932, God, vol 2, Three, p687, C. J. Hemer)

"As far as we can establish, the NT church did not reflect on the relationship of the exalted Christ to God the Father as did later church doctrinal teaching. One may perhaps say that there is indeed no developed doctrine of the Trinity in the NT, but that the writers, particularly in the later strata, thought in trinitarian forms." (New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Colin Brown, 1932, Lord, vol 2, p 516)

Abbot, Lyman

Trinity "is a corruption borrowed from the heathen religions, and ingrafted on the Christian faith." (A Dictionary of Religious Knowledge, Lyman Abbott, p944, as quoted in, Should you believe the Trinity?, Watchtower publication)

"Precisely what the doctrine is, or precisely how it is to be explained, Trinitarians are not agreed among themselves." (A Dictionary of Religious Knowledge", Lyman Abbott, 1875, p. 944, as quoted in, Should you believe the Trinity?, Watchtower publication)

"Trinity is a very marked feature in Hindooism, and is discernible in Persian, Egyptian, Roman, Japanese, Indian and the most ancient Grecian mythologies." (Religious Dictionary, Lyman Abbott, p944, as quoted in by anti-Trinitarians)

The decisions of Nicea were really the work of a minority, and they were misunderstood and disliked by many" (Documents of the Christian Church, Henry Bettenson)
Who Should Christians Worship?

1. A Tale of Three Arguments

Who should Christians worship? Interestingly, thoughtful Christians have been somewhat divided about this. I will argue that scripture and careful reasoning can actually sort these disagreements out. Let us consider three clashing arguments.

Some Christians reason as follows:

1. Only God should be worshiped.
2. Jesus should be worshiped.
3. Therefore, Jesus is God. (i.e. Jesus is God himself; they are numerically one.)

Others have argued like this:

1. Jesus isn’t God. (i.e. they are numerically two)
2. Only God should be worshiped.
3. Therefore, Jesus should not be worshiped.
Following this reasoning, some eighteenth century unitarians, such as Joseph Priestley and Theophilus Lindsey, denounced the worship of Jesus as “Christian idolatry.”¹ Other unitarian Christians have disagreed,² as have some trinitarians. Both reason like this:

1. Jesus isn’t God. (i.e. They are numerically two.)
2. Jesus should be worshiped.
3. Therefore, it is false that only God should be worshiped.

Who’s right? To decide this, we need to make a few logical distinctions, and then with these in hand, revisit the above arguments in light of the New Testament.

2. Validity and Soundness

A *valid* argument is one such that *if* each premise is true, *then* the conclusion must also be true. That “if” is important; we can tell whether or not an argument is valid simply by seeing whether or not the premises, if true, would really imply the conclusion. One

---


needn’t agree with the conclusion of an argument to admit that it is valid; validity concerns only the *structure* of an argument.

Consider this argument:

1. All things made of chocolate are delicious.
2. The moon is made of chocolate.
3. Therefore, the moon is delicious.

This argument is indisputably valid. If both 1 and 2 were true, then 3 would be true as well; that’s all it means to say that the argument is valid. It’s as valid as any argument ever was. But what this example shows is that we want more than validity from our arguments. We want valid ones, yes, but we also want arguments with true premises, which will (given validity) guarantee that the conclusion is true. The problem with this argument is that both premises are false. It is what logicians call valid but unsound.

A *sound* argument is one which is valid, and each premise is true (thus, the conclusion is true is well.) We are looking, then, for *sound* arguments. Here’s a classic example of one, from ancient times.

1. Socrates is a man.
2. All men are mortal.
3. Therefore, Socrates is mortal.
This argument is both valid and sound. The premises together imply the conclusion, and the premises are true. Thus, they establish that the conclusion is true too.

Back then to our three theological arguments. Which are sound? First, note that all are valid. But they can't all be sound, because their claims conflict. If you accept any one argument as sound, to be consistent, you must reject each of the other two arguments. Which, then, to accept? Reason can help.

3. Indiscernibility is Required by Numerical Identity

All sides should agree on a self-evident truth, one which any normal human adult knows to be true. Philosophers call this the Indiscernibility of Identicals. It says,

For any x and any y, x=y only if x and y (1) have never differed, (2) don’t differ, (3) will not ever differ, and (4) could not differ.

The phrase “x=y” here means that the named things are in fact one thing; “they” are really numerically one; it doesn’t mean that they’re similar, or that there is some quantity which is the same. Rather, the term “x” and the term “y” refer to one and the same thing. The principle gives four conditions necessary to an identity statement being true; if any of those four fail to be true, then the x and y must be two, and not one. The basic idea is that nothing can differ from itself at any given time. Of course, things do change, so a thing
might be different at different times. Perhaps now you have a headache, and five minutes ago you did not have one. But this is impossible: that right now, you have and do not have a headache.

Everybody knows this. Suppose you are accused of a terrible crime. There is a serial killer loose in your town, and the media calls this person the Tennis Racket Killer, because he or she beats people do death with a tennis racket. And somehow you are accused; they think you are the Tennis Racket Killer, and they haul you into court. How will you be exonerated? How will you prove that you are not the Tennis Racket Killer? You will show that you and the killer have differed in at least one way. This will absolutely prove that you are not that killer, even if we don’t know who the killer is. If you and this person can be shown to have differed in only the smallest way, that is enough to prove that you are not him or her. You may be similar to the killer in as many ways as you please. Perhaps you live in the same town, and perhaps both of you have a wicked, killer backhand. Maybe you wear the same brand of tennis shoes, and so on. But even if you’re similar to that person in billions of ways, that won’t prove that you’re the Killer. But so long as we know you to have differed in but the smallest way from the Tennis Racket Killer, this proves that you are not that person.

We can apply this reasoning to people in the Bible. Is it true that Saul = Paul, that is, that Saul and Paul are one and the same? All agree that they are one and the same man. The “two of them”
don’t differ at all. (e.g. Both are from Tarsus, both received an education as a Pharisee, both wrote 1 Corinthians, both were in certain years called “Saul.”) Here we have two names for one individual.

What if some Bible interpreter suggested that James is none other than Peter (James = Peter)? This would not be hard to refute, based on what the New Testament says about each. Consider the episode where Peter walks on the water, and then sinks. (Matthew 14:22-33; cf. Matthew 10:1-4) As best we can tell, James is in the boat this whole time. This proves that it is false that James = Peter. They have differed, so can’t be one and the same.

Or what if, more plausibly, some interpreter asserted that the prophet Elijah just was John the Baptist. (Elijah = John) After all, Jesus said that “Elijah has already come, but he wasn’t recognized, and they chose to abuse him...” And the gospel writer adds that “the disciples realized he was talking about John the Baptist.” (Matthew 17:12-3, NLT) Isn’t Jesus implying here that John just is Elijah, and vice versa? Presumably not, for they have differed. At some point in the first century, we think that John baptized Jesus, but we don’t think Elijah did that. And hundreds of years before, Elijah was taken up in a golden chariot, and as best we can tell John didn’t even exist at that time. (We’re presupposing here, I would argue reasonably, that the New Testament assumes the falsity of reincarnation.) But then, we know that it is false that John just is Elijah, for they have differed.
4. Jesus and God are not Numerically One

Let’s get more theological now. Some Christians think that Jesus just is God and vice-versa, that “they” are in fact numerically one (Jesus = God). Is this true? We must ask whether they have ever differed. If so, they must not be numerically one.

All Christians should say that Jesus and God have differed. Any trinitarian should agree that God somehow contains or “is” three persons; God, according to any Trinity theory, is tripersonal. But trinitarians don’t think that Jesus is himself tripersonal, that Jesus contains or “is” three persons. So one is (either now, or in timeless eternity) tripersonal and the other isn’t. According to any trinitarian theology, then, they differ, and so can’t be one and the same. A thing can’t differ from itself, either at one time, or in timeless eternity.

Here’s another argument which should be accepted by any Christian who believes the New Testament, trinitarian or not. There was a time when Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane, knowing that a terrible fate awaited him, of being cruelly crucified by the Romans. He prayed to God, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.” (Matthew 2:39, ESV) At this time, Jesus did not will that Jesus be crucified, and at this same time, God did will that Jesus be crucified. Thus, Jesus and God have differed.

Whatever your theology, you must agree that Jesus and God are not numerically one, for they have differed. It doesn’t matter if
you think Jesus is part of God, or that he’s a member of a group which is God, or that Jesus has a divine nature. All of this is consistent with the falsity of Jesus = God, that is, with them being numerically distinct.

5. The First and Second Arguments are Unsound

Let us return, then, to our first argument:

1. Only God should be worshiped.
2. Jesus should be worshiped.
3. Therefore, Jesus is God

What we’ve just seen is that if the New Testament is to be trusted, or even if trinitarian speculations are acceptable, then 3 is false. The argument, then, though it is valid, must be unsound. And it must have at least one false premise – it must be the case that 1 and/or 2 is false as well, for it is impossible that only true claims should logically imply a false claim, and 1 and 2 would, if true, imply 3 (that is, the argument is valid). But which should be denied – 1, 2, or both?

To answer this, let’s revisit our second argument.

1. Jesus isn’t God.
2. Only God should be worshiped.
3. Therefore, Jesus should not be worshiped.
As we've just seen above, we must accept 1 here. But what about 2? If we also accept 2, then we must accept 3 as well (for the argument is valid), and so we must be careful never to worship Jesus.

I suggest that the Bible will settle the issue for us. In Revelation 4, the prophet has a vision of God in his heavenly throne room.

At once I was in the Spirit, and behold, a throne stood in heaven, with one seated on the throne. ...They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:2, 10-1, ESV)

Who is this one seated on the throne? It is obvious from the whole vision that this is the same one seen by Isaiah and Ezekiel in Old Testament times, and the text says this is “our Lord and God.” This is Yahweh, the God of Israel, the one true God of both the Jewish scriptures and the Christian New Testament. God is being worshiped here in Revelation 4.

Something really interesting, though, happens in chapter 5.
And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing... And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying,

“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.”

Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:6-12, ESV)
In this text both men and angels are worshiping the Lamb, and the basis for their worship is the amazing service that he has just accomplished for God, of willingly giving himself as a sacrifice, to ransom people for God, to make them into a kingdom of priests. But this isn’t even the climax of the chapter! This comes next:

And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying,

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”

And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped. (Revelation 5:12-4, ESV)

Notice that there are clearly two recipients of worship here: the Lamb (Jesus), and God, Yahweh (the one who sits on the throne). The two are being worshiped side by side; it is as if they are now sharing the throne. And this is obviously religious worship. It is not merely the sort of civil honor one gives to a president, governor, or king. The worshipers sing the two of them a hymn of praise and bow down to them, all in the setting of corporate, religious worship, what some scholars would call a “cultic” context. Wow - we see here the human messiah, the man Christ Jesus being worshiped alongside the one true God, the creator of the heavens and the
This should be enough to settle the matter of our second argument. Its second premise - that “Only God should be worshiped” - is false, now that Jesus has been raised and exalted, by God, to God’s own throne. But this same claim, that “Only God should be worshiped” was premise one of our first argument. So for the same biblical reason, we should declare that argument unsound too - not only because it has a false conclusion, which it does, but also because it has a false premise. It is ruled out by Revelation 5, to say nothing of the practice of Christians going back to New Testament times.3

6. The Third Argument is Sound

What about our third argument then?

1. Jesus isn’t God.
2. Jesus should be worshiped.
3. Therefore, it is false that only God should be worshiped.

On this see the work of Larry W. Hurtado, such as his How Did Jesus Become a God? Historical Questions about Earliest Devotion to Jesus (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005). His main point, established by meticulous historical investigation, is that worship of Jesus goes back to the earliest days of Christianity. This disproves a view which has been fashionable among scholars, that the practice Jesus-worship must have evolved somewhat later. Hurtado is, unfortunately, unclear about the theological or christological implications of this fact, though it is clear enough that he assumes it to support or at least be consistent with some sort of catholic, trinitarian view. I disagree, for the New Testament plainly identifies the one God with the Father, which is inconsistent with any Trinity theory. On this, see my screencast lecture “God and his Son: the logic of the New Testament,” http://trinities.org/blog/archives/4054.
This argument is vindicated as sound. As we’ve seen, the Bible directly implies both 1 and 2. And the argument is valid. So we must accept 3 as well. This argument is sound and the others are unsound. The contest between the three arguments should be settled for any Christian who acknowledges the authority of the New Testament.

7. Three Objections and Replies

Let us now consider some objections to all this. First: The text itself (Revelation 19:10, 22:9) asserts that we should worship only God. And yes, Revelation plainly implies that Jesus should be worshiped. Thus, it plainly implies that Jesus is God.

In reply, the first claim here is false. The text doesn’t say that, though some misread and even mistranslate that claim into the texts cited. What happens there is that the angel who is delivering these revelations to John rejects worship for himself. He instructs John not to worship him, but rather to worship God. He doesn’t say to worship only God, which as we’ve seen, would be inconsistent with chapter 5. What the angel says – don’t worship the angel, but do worship God – is consistent with one also worshiping the exalted Lord Jesus. Commenters note that the writer here is concerned to discourage angel worship, which evidently was a problem at the time.4

Here's a second objection: *You're missing the point! No orthodox Christian thinks that only God (that is, the Father) should be worshiped. Rather, any being with the divine nature should be worshiped.*

In reply, I'm not missing the point. I'm well aware of the many Trinity theories, past and present, and theories on which the Father and Son share a “nature.” I’ve written a fair bit about this. But you won’t find anywhere in the Bible the claim that “any being with the divine nature should be worshiped.” You will find the command that only God (Yahweh himself) should be worshiped; in the Ten Commandments, Yahweh says to worship only him. (Exodus 20:1-4) And we know that this is the same one Jesus calls our “heavenly Father,” the one who is both his God and our God. (John 20:17) This is a better objection than the one given, and we’ll deal with it below.

Here’s a third objection, which may come from unitarians who are against worshiping Jesus. *But Jesus (1) worshiped the Father, (2) never demanded worship, (3) taught, like all Jews, that only Yahweh (a.k.a. God, the Father) should be worshiped.*

Consider, for example, Jesus’ temptation. There Satan offers, “All these [i.e. the kingdoms of the world] I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only

---

shall you serve.’” (Matthew 4:9-10, ESV)

In response to this objection, I agree with the objector’s three statements. Jesus arguably never demanded worship, although he accepted either worship or something like it, at various times, both before and after his resurrection. But the answer is that Jesus is talking to Satan here before his exaltation to God’s right hand. At that time, the policy quoted was in place; only God should be worshiped. But God himself can raise up his own beloved Son to a place of honor, and now require us to worship him. As Paul says, because of Jesus’ amazing service as the willing Lamb, after raising him from the dead,

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:9-11, ESV)

Jesus, then, is not competing with God – when he is worshiped, the glory also goes to the one who so lifted him.

8. “Worship”

Let’s talk about the term, the word, “worship.” Many nowadays suppose that by definition “worship” is something which can only be properly given to God. This is a mistake, and will
interfere with properly understanding the Bible. For example, the three wise men, upon finding the little Jesus, “fell down and worshiped him.” (Matthew 2:11, ESV) The Greek term translated “worship” here is \textit{proskuneo}. What is probably the most cited English translation in current day scholarship, though, translates: “they knelt down and paid him homage.” (NRSV) This term \textit{proskuneo} can mean religious worship, and it can also mean just the sort of honor, homage, or obeisance one gives to a king or other human ruler. Both translations are technically correct, although the first one may mislead one into thinking that the wise men thought the baby Jesus to be God, or a god. But the text tells us what they were thinking; they were searching for “he who has been born king of the Jews.” (Matthew 2:2, ESV) They wanted, presumably, to pay homage to this child who was destined to be God’s messiah.

Even the English term “worship” formerly was used, like the corresponding Greek and Hebrew terms, to mean both religious worship and other sorts of honoring. Thus, in the traditional marriage ceremony, one says, “With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship.” This not some weird sort of idolatry in which you give religious worship to your soon-to-be spouse. Rather, you are simply promising to honor this person, by giving them unique access to your body.
9. Idolatry

On to a fourth objection. *Religiously worshiping anything or anyone other than God himself is the sin of idolatry.* But you’ve said that Jesus is someone other than God. Thus, you’re recommending idolatry! Again, it is a sin to worship any creature. *(Romans 1:25)*

*But you think that Jesus is a creature. So, you’re recommending a sin!*

In response, the Bible doesn’t really support, and in fact rules out that worshiping anything or anyone other than God himself is the sin of idolatry, and that it is a sin to worship any creature. I am recommending neither the sin of idolatry, nor any other sin.

The word “Idolatry” can mean a couple of different things:

definition 1: The practice of honoring a representation or symbol as if it were a god or a person worthy of honor.

definition 2: The sin of honoring something or someone other than God in disobedience to God.

The first is the sort of idolatry which is nearly universal in the world’s religions. The symbol could be a statue, a painting, a tree, or a cow, or even a common person. This object, whatever it is, is honored in various ways; one burns sweet-smelling incense before it, kisses it, bows to it, prays before or to it, gazes reverently upon
it, leaves it offerings of money or food, etc. We can call this “literal” idolatry, and it was this type of practice which is forbidden in the Ten Commandments.

When we look at talk of “idolatry” in the New Testament, and in much later Christian theological discourse, they are often using definition 2. In this sense, but not the first, “idolatry” is by definition a sin. It seems possible that a person might commit idolatry in the first sense (according to definition 1) – for instance, by worshiping a statue - and not be committing a sin, because this person is non-culpably ignorant that God is against this sort of practice. But once one has that knowledge, then it will be a sin for one to worship that statue; to worship it then would be idolatry according to definition 2.

Consider the famous episode of the Golden Calf in Exodus 32. Moses is gone, visiting with God. And while he’s gone, the Hebrews, with the acquiescence of Aaron, construct a golden calf and proceed to worship it. Moses comes back, and is furious, for he’s already given them the divine command against idolatry (in the first sense). They are accordingly judged harshly. Some readers think here that the Hebrews have turned away from Yahweh to worship one or more traditional gods of Egypt. Maybe that’s right, but when one looks closely at the text, and translates the word elohim (which can mean gods or God) as best makes sense of the episode as a whole, then it instead appears that the Hebrews here meant to be worshiping Yahweh by means of this golden calf! After all, Aaron, who seems to be leading this disobedient worship,
declares a feast day *for Yahweh.* (Exodus 32:5) Probably, they were returning to their traditional religious practices, worshiping using an idol, but if asked what they were doing, they’d have said they were worshiping Yahweh – not the golden calf as such, but rather what it represents. That is, they would give the defense that idolaters give for their practices even today, that they worship not the object, but what it represents. But according to the text, Yahweh rejected their worship, and they were judged harshly, as they’d just been ordered not to do any such thing. (Exodus 20:4-5) Though they intended to honor Yahweh in this way, he would have none of it. They had committed idolatry in our second sense as well as our first – they honored this object *in disobedience to God.*

What, then, about the objection that it is a sin to worship any creature, but that on unitarian christology (which I accept), Jesus is a creature? Am I not advocating a sin, and specifically the sin of idolatry?

Let’s look at what Paul actually says in Romans 1. He says, of the Gentiles, that “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator...” (Romans 1:25, ESV) I suggest that “rather than” (Greek: *para*) is there for a reason. In the context, Paul is discussing what can be known about God just by observing the world, apart from any special divine revelation, by what theologians now call “general revelation” - information about himself that God has made universally available through the physical world. Paul is saying that
the Gentiles could tell that everything came from one perfect God, and despite this knowledge, they worshiped a creature *rather than* the Creator, God. They did this in opposition to God, in spite of what they knew (or *could have* known?) about God. Now, what if Christians worship Jesus, and Jesus is a creature (whether he was “eternally generated” by God, or whether he came into existence at or after his miraculous conception). Will this be idolatry, in our second sense? No, for even if he is a creature, when we worship him, Christians are not serving a creature *rather than* the Creator, but rather we are honoring the Creator *by means of* this creature, whom God has exalted so that we should worship him alongside God, as we’ve seen, to the glory of God. God exalted Jesus just as predicted long before:

> The LORD [Yahweh] says to my Lord [i.e. the king, originally David, and prophetically the Messiah]:
> “Sit at my right hand,
> until I make your enemies
> your footstool.” (Psalm 110:1, ESV)

When God raises Jesus, as it were, up to his level, when God invites Jesus up to sit at his right hand, this implies that it is now appropriate for us to worship Jesus. To worship Jesus, then, is not to defy God, but rather to obey him! We don’t serve this exalted creature *rather than* the Creator; we worship the Creator *by*
worshiping this man, the exalted Lord Jesus Christ. This isn’t idolatry (in the second sense), because we’re not doing this in disobedience to God, even though we are honoring or worshiping someone in addition to God.⁶

Perhaps a little fiction can help. Once upon a time, there was a mighty kingdom ruled over by Big Kim. This king decreed that all citizens should bow only to Big Kim, and never to anyone else. Suppose now that you’ve lived your whole life in this kingdom, and that as far back as you can remember, you and all loyal subjects of Big Kim strictly obeyed this policy of bowing only to Big Kim. As time goes on, though, Big Kim decides to groom his son, the prince Little Kim, to take over. And Big Kim issues a new decree: “Oh loyal subjects, my people, you must continue to bow always to me. But you must also bow whenever you are in the presence of my son, Little Kim.” By this decree, Big Kim has exalted Little Kim to a place of honor; now it is the law of the land that citizens must bow to Little Kim, even as they bow to Big Kim.

But suppose you’re a stubbornly conservative person. Your first reaction is, “I can’t bow to Little Kim! For my whole life, I’ve bowed only to Big Kim, and I can show where it is written in his old decree that we should bow only to him. It would be treason for me to bow to Little Kim! I would be a traitor; I would be subject to the

---

⁶ Nor is it idolatry in the first sense; we worship Jesus himself, and not merely as a symbol or representation of someone else worthy of worship, although he is those things too. We don’t worship Jesus as if he were a person worthy of honor, but rather because he literally is such a person.
king’s wrath were I to bow to Little Kim.”

What would happen to you if you persisted in this stance? Big Kim would probably say “Off with your head! How dare you defy me. It is not a betrayal of me for you to bow down to Little Kim, since I myself have ordered you to do so! You are a traitor if you defy me and refuse to bow to Little Kim! I’m the king, after all. Don’t tell me that it’s disloyal or illegal to do what I just told you to do.”

How could you argue back? Would you urge that a king can’t do this, can’t revise a previous policy? But that’s ridiculous – a king may change his policies as he likes; he has the authority to do that.

10. Direct and Indirect Worship

Back to theology. An omnipotent and authoritative God can raise his beloved Son up from the dead, and can also raise him up to a place of honor, in effect ordering us to worship his Son alongside him. This makes it obligatory for us to worship that Son, creature or not. And God can do this even though he had previously issued this order: only worship me. As we have seen, this is the New Testament teaching about who Christians should worship: both God and his Son.

Here is a helpful distinction which is already implicit in some things we’ve said. It is not explicitly stated in the Bible, but is presupposed in a passage in Luke where Jesus is addressing the seventy two disciples he is about to send out. He tells them that “The one who hears you hears me, and the one who rejects you
rejects me, and the one who rejects me rejects him who sent me.” (Luke 10:16, ESV) Notice that there are two kinds of acceptance, and two kinds of rejection here. If you *directly* accept these disciples, you thereby *indirectly* accept Jesus. And we could add, if you accept Jesus (directly or indirectly) you thereby accept the one who sent him, God. (Matthew 10:40; cf. John 3:31-6, 1 John 2:22-3) On the other hand, if a person *directly* rejects these disciples, he thereby *indirectly* rejects Jesus who sent them. And, we could add, one who (directly or indirectly) rejects Jesus, thereby rejects the one who sent him, God. There are distinctions presupposed here, then, of direct vs. indirect acceptance, and of direct vs. indirect rejection.

In another passage, a similar distinction is presupposed concerning worship.

...[Jesus] humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:8-11, ESV)

To confess that Jesus Christ is Lord is to worship him, giving him glory as the rightful ruler over both Church and the whole cosmos.
Jesus here is the direct object of worship. But he’s not the only object of worship, for all this is to the glory of the Father. So God is the indirect object of Christian worship here. Paul doesn’t use the terminology of “direct worship” and “indirect worship,” but he’s presupposing that distinction here. I suggest the terms are helpful. They underscore that worshiping Jesus is not disrespecting God, but rather honoring God. The two are not in competition, because it is God who has, as it were, held up Jesus to be worshiped.

11. “Worshiping Jesus as God”

A fifth objection is: How can you say we should worship Jesus as God when you say that he isn’t God?

In reply, the phrase “worship Jesus as God” is ambiguous. Of course, I do not argue that you should worship Jesus because you think Jesus is God himself, for as we’ve seen, the New Testament implies that they are two. It is a confusion, and inconsistent with the New Testament, to think that Jesus and God are numerically one. But yes, you should “worship Jesus as God” if that means worshiping Jesus in the ways that you worship God, that is, doing the same actions with respect to both. Let me explain.

We can distinguish four aspects of an act of worship: object, mode, motive, and directness. Think of the worship of God and Jesus in Revelation chapter five. There are two objects, two recipients, of the group worship there. But the mode of worship – what one is physically doing – is the same. The worshipers sing to
both, and bow to both. Their motives are different. God is worshiped because he’s the creator in Revelation 4. But when Jesus is added in Revelation 5, he’s worshiped on the different grounds that he willingly served as a sacrifice (something which God did not also do – he’s immortal, so incapable of death). And we thank God for sending his Son, but we can’t do that to Jesus, who has no son. Finally, an act of worship may be direct or indirect. As in Revelation 5, we worship Jesus directly, and by means of him, we also indirectly worship God. And of course, we may also directly worship God himself, as in Revelation 4.

12. Equal Worship of Father, Son, and Spirit?

It’s part of the catholic tradition which one sees in the so-called “church fathers” and later theologians, that Father, Son, and Spirit are to be worshiped equally. This is often expressed in medieval art by depicting these three as similar-looking, bearded and enthroned men, sitting at the same level, sometimes even on one throne. We should observe a couple of things about this tradition.

First, saying that it’s so, doesn’t make it so. Suppose you meet a polygamist with three wives, and he loudly informs you that he loves them all equally. Well, maybe he does, but I suggest that you not take his word for it, but rather watch what he actually does! (Of course, you could also ask the wives, or even just read their body language while he makes this fair-sounding proclamation.)
Saying it is one thing, and it actually being true is another. There are liturgical statements in these catholic traditions which say that we worship each of the Three equally. But of course when you look at actual practice, and this is true from the New Testament till today, you will find that the Father and Son are worshiped to a much greater extent than the Holy Spirit ever is.

Second, you will not find this idea or image of the Three being equally worshiped anywhere in the New Testament. As scholars with many different commitments (trinitarian or unitarian, Roman Catholic or Protestant or atheistic) have observed, it the New Testament, the Holy Spirit (or holy spirit, or holy Spirit) is never an object of worship. You may have noticed, for example, that this alleged third divine person, this third object of worship, is not a recipient of worship in Revelation 5. Is this Spirit (or spirit) not assumed to be active there, in that corporate act of worship? Any Christian would say that he or it surely is assumed to be active there, and yet, it is indisputable that the Spirit/spirit is not a third object of worship there.

In other artistic depictions we see the Father and Son placed on a level, two men seated together, with the Spirit as a sort of afterthought, and not as prominent, pictured as a bird (inspired by Mark 1:10). We should keep in mind that the Father is not, never has been, and arguably could not be a man. Yet, it makes sense to depict the Father as if he were a man, because like a human being, God is a self, an intelligent agent. But as to Father and Son being
placed on a level, arguably this is not quite the New Testament picture; Jesus, God’s Son, isn’t exactly God’s peer, even though both are worshiped.

In yet other depictions, we find simply Jesus on a throne. There is nothing objectionable about this, unless there is a background assumption that this too is the one God Yahweh on his throne. That is, sometimes art reflects the confusion that Jesus is God himself, rather than the unique human mediator between God and humankind. (1 Timothy 2:5) We see this same confusion in the contemporary worship song, which says “I’m getting back to the heart of worship, and it’s all about you, all about you, Jesus.” Of course, Christian worship is about Jesus, but it is also about the one true God who sent Jesus. God sent his Son to be the savior of the world, but Jesus did not send his Son to be the savior of the world. Thus, Jesus is not God and God is not Jesus; they are not numerically identical, for they have differed. A leading scholar has described this confused vision as “Jesus-olatry.”

He doesn’t mean that it is a sin of idolatry to worship Jesus, but rather there’s something out of whack here, as Jesus is being given a kind of prominence and centrality that he simply doesn’t have in the New Testament. Jesus has eclipsed or taken the place of God here, in

---

7 “The danger of Jesus-olatry is... that Jesus has been substituted for God. ...the danger... is that the worship due God is stopping at Jesus, and... the worship of God through Jesus is being stifled and short-circuited.” (James D.G. Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence*. (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2010), p. 147.)
these works of art and in these Christians’ imagination. But this picture should give way to the New Testament; there, ultimately, it is “all about” God – the one who predestined, sent, empowered, raised, and exalted the man Jesus. Yes, it is about Jesus too, but God has made it so. “For God so loved the world, that he sent his only Son...” (John 3:16) The final or ultimate emphasis is on the Father.

Some Christian art just about gets this right. Consider the popular medieval and early modern “throne of grace” composition. The Holy Spirit is still a little bird in the scene, but the focus is on the Father, usually presented as a large, majestic, elderly, human king, holding out the crucified Jesus to us. Jesus here (oddly enough, still on the cross) is at the center, but holding him there, offering him to us, is God. This, bird aside, gets the New Testament picture right. Both Father and Son are central, but God is primary in a way that his Son is not. It is God who has made this path for us to himself, who has given us this eternal high priest (Hebrews 3:1), this eternal advocate (1 John 2:1), this wonderful mediator of the New Covenant (Hebrews 8:6, 9:15, 12:24), who gives us to access God without the intercession of popes, priests, or saints.

13. Conclusion

In sum, the Father, the one true God (John 17:1-3) is the ultimate, primary, or most fundamental object of Christian worship. And yet, Christians rightly worship Jesus too, as God would have
us to do. This worship may involve all that religious worship involves – prayer, singing hymns, bowing, and so on. It need not and should not involve confusing Jesus with God. It is all to the glory of the one who exalted Jesus, the one who gave the fullest revelation of himself by means of this man (John 1:15-8). Jesus said, “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” (John 14:9, ESV) not because he is his Father, but rather because he is the perfect human representation of God.

What if Jesus walked into the room right now, wherever you are? Would you worry about committing a sin of idolatry? Would you worry about distinguishing different kinds of worship, and deciding which can be given to Jesus and which can only be given to his Father? Or would you, like me, immediately fall to the floor, face down, silent before the exalted Lord, simply worshiping him in awe, and God through him?
The Philosophical Legacy of the 16th and 17th Century Socinians: Their Rationality

Marian Hillar
Texas Southern University
noam@swbell.net

ABSTRACT: The doctrines of the Socinians represent a rational reaction to a medieval theology based on submission to the Church’s authority. Though they retained Scripture as something *supra rationem*, the Socinians analyzed it rationally and believed that nothing should be accepted *contra rationem*. Their social and political thought underwent a significant evolutionary process from a very utopian pacifistic trend condemning participation in war and holding public and judicial office to a moderate and realistic stance based on mutual love, support of the secular power of the state, active participation in social and political life, and the defense of social equality. They spoke out against the enserfment of peasants, and were the first Christians to postulate the separation of Church and state. The spirit of absolute religious freedom expressed in their practice and writings, ‘determined, more or less immediately, all the subsequent revolutions in favor of religious liberty.’ (1) The precursor ideas of the Socinians on religious freedom later were expanded, perfected, and popularized by Locke and Pierre Bayle. Locke’s ideas were transplanted to America by James Madison and Thomas Jefferson who implemented them in American legislation. The rationality of the Socinians set the trend for the philosophical ideas of the Enlightenment and determined the future development of many modern intellectual endeavors.

Several religious and intellectual movements today claim the right to the heritage of the religious group, the Socinians, that developed in Poland and in Transylvania in XVIth and XVIIth centuries. The claimants vary from the Christian churches to the atheistic or deistic Humanists and each
of them usually selects a specific set of Socinian views ignoring the rest. The Socinians were known under various names such as the Polish Brethren, Antitrinitarians, Arians, and Unitarians. The name Socinians was used mostly in western Europe. (2) They were eventually expelled from Poland in 1660 to fulfill King John Casimir's religious vow to the Holy Virgin to avenge the denial of the Divine Trinity by "heretics." Such a denial was deemed an act most blasphemous according to Catholic ideology.

**Historical Outline**

At the roots of Socinianism are the theological ideas transplanted from western Europe and the social ideas borrowed initially from the Anabaptists and Moravian Brethren. Discussions at the meetings of the secret society of Catholic scholars in Cracow since 1546 had, as a purpose, reform of the church and included the works of Michael Servetus. (3) Several visitors from abroad including Adam Pastor from Holland and Lelio Sozini from Italy transplanted the Antitrinitarian ideas and the doctrines of the Radical Reformation. About the middle of the XVIth century a variety of Antitrinitarian sects emerged that were separated from the Helvetian church. They called themselves Christians or Brethren, hence the Polish Brethren, and also the Minor Reformed Church.

Their opponents labelled them after the old heresies as Sabellians, Samosatinians, Ebionites, Unitarians, and finally Arians. The most brilliant period for the Polish Brethren was between 1585 and 1638 with the center at Raków which won the name of the Sarmatian Athens. They founded a world-renowned school in 1602. Its rector until 1621, Jan Crell, codified the ethical system of the Brethren. Their famous printing press filled Europe with treatises written in Polish, Latin, Dutch, and German. They were well praised and read by people like John Locke, John Stuart Mill, Isaac Newton, and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz. They represented a small number but held high ethical values. The Polish Brethren lasted in Poland for about 100 years from the time when Peter of Goni_dz delivered his credo at the Calvinist synod in Secemin on January 22, 1556, to the death of Samuel Przypkowski in 1670. Socinians made an outstanding contribution to Polish literature and had the most advanced and pioneering
ideas in the social, political, and religious fields. (4) They left about 500 treatises largely unexplored and still waiting to be examined.

They were inspired by a sincere application of original Christianity to personal, social, and political relations. Their ideology was characterized from the beginning by:

1. Propagating freedom of religious thought;
2. The principle of applying reason to the interpretation of the Scriptures, the Revelation, and theological matters in general;
3. Absolute tolerance of all creeds;
4. The struggle for social equality among people. At their first synod, the Polish Brethren settled the matter of freedom of conscience: "Everyone has the right not to do things which he feels to be contrary to the word of God. Moreover, all may write according to their conscience, if they do not offend anybody by it." (5) Protestant and Catholic reaction termed freedom of conscience and tolerance propagated by the Socinians as "that Socinian dogma, the most dangerous of the dogmas of the Socinian sect." (6)

Rationalism of the Socinians

One of the characteristics of Unitarianism/Socinianism from the very beginning was the insistence on applying reason to interpret Scripture, Revelation, and theological matters. The immediate reason for the establishment of the Antitrinitarian church was the denial of the traditional dogma of the Trinity and the arguments used in support of this view were based on rational interpretation of the Scripture. This early "rationalism" was, however, very particular and limited. The conviction was maintained that one was supposed to believe in God and not in reason. False dogmas were presented as the product of human reason. Thus among the early Antitrinitarians reason was contrasted with Scripture which was accepted as self-evident. At the same time it was believed that to understand Scripture, one has to rely on supernatural assistance from the Holy Spirit.
In Socinianism or mature Unitarianism a question was raised as to the role of reason in religious matters and especially what was the relationship between reason and Revelation. Faustus Socinus maintained that:

1. the content of the Revelation must be exposed in accordance with reason, and whatever is contradictory to reason must be rejected;
2. true religion must remain in accordance with reason;
3. human reason is not able by its natural powers to acquire the knowledge of the fundamental truths about God including the fact of His existence;
4. natural religion does not exist either as an innate knowledge or a posteriori, i.e., deduced from reflection on the world;
5. all that people know about God derives from God through His Revelation.

From the 1630's this Socinian thesis against natural religion was questioned by later Racovian Socinian theologians and with time their new views became recognized as the classical Socinian doctrine. They attempted now to provide philosophical arguments for natural religion and develop a scriptural exegesis to support this view. Traditional views among orthodox Catholics maintained that:

1. interpretations of the Revelation (Old and New Testaments) may vary;
2. the teaching authority of the church inspired by the Holy Spirit and actuated in the pronouncements of the Roman bishop and Councils and known as Tradition, is necessary for their correct interpretation;
3. the church is at the same time the guarantor of the correctness of the interpretation.

The Protestants maintained that:

1. the Scripture is self-evident;
2. the believer is only reassured about the truth of the Scripture by an inner illumination from the Holy Spirit.
In fact the Protestant theologians often used Tradition, the pronouncements of the Fathers of the church, in the same way as their Catholic brethren did.

The new Socinian theory was disclosed in 4 treatises: (7) Brevis disquisitio (1633) and De iudice et norma controversiarum fidei (1644) by Joachim Stegmann Sr., Animadversiones apologeticae ... in ... J.A. Comeni ... libellum (1660) by Samuel Przypkowski, and Religio naturalis (1670) by Andrzej Wiszowaty. The main tenets of the doctrine can be summarized as follows: The norm in religious matters is God, but today He does not speak to us directly. The Scripture is left as his Word and is considered only as a norm of faith just as a legal code is a norm for the law—though the actual judgment is pronounced by the judge. Someone has to interpret the Scripture, but it cannot be the Holy Spirit as is maintained by the evangelicals. Some Socinians now demanded a rational argument and not faith. Also, invoking the authority of the church or the pope is baseless, since this authority in turn must itself be somehow justified. This would lead to a vicious circle: the church authority is justified from the testimony of the Scripture and the Scripture's veracity in turn is affirmed by the church authority!

The solution which the Socinians proposed was as follows:

1. the highest judge in matters of faith on earth is human reason;
2. the Scripture must be interpreted in accordance with the principles of reason;
3. the doctrines formulated from the Scriptures must also be formulated in agreement with reason; they cannot contradict reason;
4. reason is also the measure of the veracity of the Scripture, i.e., whether it contains the Word of God or not.

Hence, we must conclude that human reason becomes the sovereign authority, and that it also judges the provenience of the Scripture and its interpretation.

The remaining issue to be clarified concerns the understanding of the
truths defined as "above reason" (supra rationem). Socinians used it with two meanings. However, neither agreed with the traditional, orthodox usage. First meaning: The mysteries of religion are the truths which cannot be reached without Revelation, though the human mind is capable of understanding them. As an example, the Socinians gave the mystery of the salvation of mankind by Christ. The mystery was mentioned in a vague and enigmatic way in the Old Testament. It ceased to be a mystery and became truth "above reason" when Jesus revealed and explained it. Second meaning: Truth "above reason" is a truth that can be reached by independent human reason, but reason is not able to explain it completely. It is perceived as something in accordance with reason and in a certain way, necessary. This is exemplified by the truth of God's eternity. This truth is often treated as something inconceivable, however, reason convinces us that it is not impossible, and God even becomes a necessity as the first cause of all causes.

These types of truths "above reason" constitute the content of natural religion accepted by the Deists. Of course, such a concept of religious mystery is quite different from the traditional one. One of the Socinian writers, J. Stegmann, went further in his rationality and claimed that the concept of religious mystery is not necessary in the Christian religion, and the term truth "above reason" becomes inadequate. Everything that is taught by a religion is measured by human reason. He agrees that certain religious truths cannot be understood completely, but the same can be said about natural ones. Everything, matters pertaining to nature, to God and religion, remain within the reach of human reason. Hence we can know and understand the truths exposed in the Scripture which are necessary for eternal salvation. Thus, the divine matters contained in the Scripture are not "above reason." We may, however, say that some truths are "above reason," (supra rationem) since we are not able to know them by natural means— i.e., without the Revelation.

This was an extremely radical position, and it was not accepted among the Socinians— it was simply too radical for the Christian world. So later Przypkowski and Wiszowaty used the term "above reason" in the strictly Socinian meaning. Orthodoxy was not concerned with the mysteries of religion mentioned by the Socinians such as the eternity of God, the
creation of the world, or even the resurrection of the dead. This specific rationality of the Socinians was not acceptable to the orthodox mentality and was dramatically and erroneously evaluated by Pierre Jurieu, the French Huguenot.

The Fate of the Socinian Doctrine

As we have seen since the 1630's certain later Socinian writers present their doctrine as remaining in all aspects in accordance with human reason and impute to the human mind the obligation to decide how to understand Revelation and the privilege of deciding about the veracity of the Revelation itself. From a rational point of view these declarations are subconscious mystifications — the Socinians had never intended to submit to critical evaluation the authenticity of the Christian Revelation contained in the Bible since it was for them a self-evident fact. Their attitude vis-à-vis Scripture was not critical but apologetic.

The claim made by the Socinians, however, that one should believe in the Revelation because natural reason dictates so, was the link uniting the traditional form of religion with the Deism of the Enlightenment. This thesis suggested that as soon as human reason finds a justification, it will be completely in a position to question the divinity of the Revelation. Socinianism itself in its late-Socinian form provided enough reasons for this to state that they served as precursors to the later critical intellectual trends of the Enlightenment. Socinianism thus played a double role for the development of religious during the Enlightenment: one role was positive, the other was negative.

Its positive role was expressed by the fact that: 1. it considered the moral content of religion as its center and minimized the importance of dogma, reducing at the same time almost to zero the ritual side of religion; 2. it propagated "religion in accordance to reason" (religio rationalis) and traced such a model of the relationship between the Revelation and reason such that reason was to be an absolute hegemon. These two postulates became adopted in the ideological program of the Deists. The negative effect of the Socinianism was that: in the opinion of the ideologues of the Enlightenment, the Socinians were supposed to undertake the final attempt
to rationalize Christianity. According to them it was the most ambitious and the farthest reaching attempt that ended in a fiasco. They deemed unconvincing the Socinians' attempts to rationally interpret the behavior of the Biblical Yahweh and to show that it can be understood in the categories of humanistic morality. The Socinians, standing on the position that Jesus is identical with the Messiah promised by the Old Testament, also had to defend the authenticity of the Old Testament Revelation and consequently of its cruel God of Joshua and David with the God of Gospels. Hence, they claimed that there arose some deep inadequacies resulting from the impossibility of including the moral image of the Biblical Yahweh into the system of religion in which moral values were considered the highest.

From such an analysis of the Socinian doctrine, which they considered a failure, the thinkers of the Enlightenment drew two conclusions: The first one was formulated by Pierre Bayle who claimed that religion is in its essence irrational and that any attempt to reconcile it with the demands of rational thinking, is futile and doomed to failure. Later this conclusion led the most radical thinkers to the conviction that the irrationality of religion is not a proof of its supernatural origin, but on the contrary, it constitutes a proof that it is a product of human mind. The second conclusion served to build Deistic religious conceptions, namely, the failure of the Socinians does not prove that they undertook an impossible task, but that they chose the wrong approach. The Socinians are right in claiming that religion is in agreement with reason, and also with the humanistically understood morality. If the Christian doctrine does not agree with these postulates, it is evidence against them and not against religion. In order to understand this, one has to go further and break the ties with the Old Testament. Then Jesus will cease to be the Messiah, and instead he will become still more meritorious of reverence as the one among very few moral leaders of humanity who have shown the ways to return to the pure sources of natural religion that is as unchanging as is God, the Creator of Nature.
Notes


Introduction

The interrelationship between the Devil, demons, diseases, illnesses, possession, exorcisms, and the problem of evil is a controversial and intriguing issue. Both Jewish and Christian scholars have long discussed the fine details of such matters. Pastoral counselors, psychologists, and social scientists have made several attempts at integrating and explaining mental and physical health with the psychic, physiological, and spiritual dimensions of the subject.

Such scholarly and professional interest pale in comparison to the attention this topic has received at the popular level within various Christian circles, in particular charismatic/Pentecostal believers, the Christadelphian denomination, and some within the Church of God General Conference. Various extremes can be found within the literature, preaching, and adherents of these sects of Christianity. Some feel that satanic attacks and demon possession is a very real and active threat in today’s spiritual world. Others say that there is no such thing as a literal devil and that the demons are merely personifications of illnesses, diseases, or some other explanation. Still others allow for multiple perspectives to be believed within a congregation. And even some, within a group holding various views, consider the topic forbidden and taboo from inquiry or public discourse.

I must admit that I am both perplexed and troubled at the current state of affairs. Three aspects are most disconcerting. First, the insistence of those who hold to extreme perspectives, at either end of the spectrum, that anyone who reads the evidence otherwise are confused, lost, or
otherwise spiritually blind. Second, the seemingly absurd arguments given by some whom, to me, ignore the specific details concerning the Devil and demons within the biblical accounts of Scripture. Third, the divorcing of these discussions from the abundance of instances where Jews wrote on the subject in the contemporary literature seems to be missing in almost every discussion. These texts determined how the biblical authors worked and dialogued in the matrix of thought and beliefs concerning the Devil and demons. Therefore, the following study seeks to be an exegetical and interpretive journey to discover what the New Testament authors most likely meant (and wanted to convey to their readers) about the Devil (ὁ διάβολος/ὁ σατανᾶς) and demons.¹⁸

The general approach of this study is informed by James D.G. Dunn’s *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament⁹* and John Christopher Thomas’ *The Devil, Disease, and Deliverance: Origins of Illness in New Testament Thought.*¹⁰ Like Dunn’s work, this study seeks to listen to a diversity of voices before attempting to come to a conclusion of the subject. Similar to Thomas’ work, this study attempts to offer an in-depth examination of the ways in which texts attempt to express their understanding of our test subjects.

My methodological approach employed in this investigation will be to first look at the Devil by itself, as distinct from the later topic of the demons. The Hebrew Bible will be mined for relevant texts. Then the New Testament authors will be allowed to speak their voices on the Devil. The demons will be examined afterwards from both testaments. The study will turn to the various Jewish writers within the Second Temple period in order to gain the relevant and necessary Sitz-im-Leben. Afterwards the study will turn to overcoming various objections to the

---

¹⁸ All scholars and authorities agree that there are times when the devil or satan are used in a lesser sense, such as when David is called satan in 1 Sam 29:4 (for a fuller discussion, see Victor P. Hamilton, ‘Satan,’ *ABD* 5:986. What this essay is concerned with is the how to best understand the Satan, the Devil, and the demons.


evidence found in this investigation. Then I will draw some concluding observations and thoughts.

The Devil in the Hebrew Bible

The Hebrew satan is used thirty one times in the MT, seventeen of them with the definite article. In each of the instances where the definite article is not used, satan seems to denote a general adversary or opponent, either human or divine. Yet when the Satan is spoken of with the definite article, the data shifts significantly to indicate an external accuser. Fifteen of these usages are in the first two chapters of Job while the remaining two are in Zechariah chapter three.

In Job, the Satan is described as coming before the LORD in the same manner that the angels do (1:6). David Clines argues that the phrase “among them” (Heb. tavek) regularly denotes membership of the group in question. This suggests that the Satan is a member of the divine counsel, and the sons of God here are almost certainly angelic messengers. The Satan has a regular dialogue with the LORD and

11 These texts are Num 22:22-23 (angel); 1 Sam 29:4 (David); 2 Sam 19:23 (the sons of Zeruiah); 1 Kgs 5:4 (unspecific adversary); 1 Kgs 11:14 (Hadad the Edomite); 1 Kgs 11:23, 25 (Rezon the son of Eliada); 1 Chr 21:1 (perhaps an exception to this list, as the chronicler uses satan instead of the anger of the LORD which 2 Sam 24 uses); Psa 71:13 (unspecified accusers); Psa 109:6, 29 (paralleled to a wicked man/men). The LXX does not translate any of these passages with o satan or o diabolos. Yet where the definite article is used, in the Job and Zechariah passages, the LXX always used the definite article with satan and diabolos.


13 It is interesting that Ron Abel in his Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) offers the possibility that the sons of God in Job 38:7 are angels, but argues against the same interpretation of the sons of God in Job 1-2 (pgs. 166-167). He fails to take seriously the same Hebrew b’ne haelohim is used in both the introductory chapters of Job as well as 38:7. The LXX translates all occurrences of b’ne haelohim in Job as
discusses his activity of roaming on the earth (1:7). God gives the Satan authority to tempt Job in 2:6. The next verse describes that Job was smote with boils by the Satan. It seems that the first two chapters of Job describe the dialogues between God and a supernatural angelic adversary who is responsible for Job’s plight.

In the third chapter of the prophet Zechariah, the Satan introduced as standing at the right side of Joshua the priest while in the presence of the angel of the LORD (3:1). He is ready and willing to accuse. Yet the Satan receives rebuke from the LORD in 3:2. Upon further reflection, this scene is very similar to Job chs. 1-2 in that they both portray the Satan as an accuser of a human servant of God, both stories portray God talking to the figure called Satan, and the presence of angels. In commenting on this passage, Ralph Smith states that there can be no doubt that the scene is that of the heavenly council.

In light of the few pertinent examples of satan used with the definite article, one comes away thinking that this adversary is a real figure who communicates to God, is associated somehow with the angelic hosts of heaven, and functions as the accuser par excellence. It is appropriate now to move onto the New Testament evidence which speaks of the Devil.

**The Devil in the New Testament**


*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil.*

These three accounts of the same episode offer a lot about the nature of the Devil, his temptations, and the power he holds. First of all, the Devil...
approaches Jesus in the same manner that the angels approach Jesus later on in the passage.\textsuperscript{16} Both individuals have an open dialogue back and forth about the temptations that are taking place. Satan is able to supernaturally transport Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple. He reveals that all of the kingdoms of the world have been given to him and he can give them to whomever he wishes. The divine passive used here (Luke 4:6) denotes that God is the giver of these kingdoms to the Devil. Jesus does not dispute these claims of ownership of the kingdoms as false nor does he quote a passage from the Hebrew Bible to counter this claim as he does with the temptations. The Devil also demands worship from Jesus.

The result of reading these accounts reveals that Jesus was tempted by an external, powerful being.

-Matthew 9:34; 12:24-29

*But the Pharisees were saying, "He casts out the demons by the ruler of the demons."*

*But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, "This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons."*

The only way that the Pharisees could explain how the miracles and exorcisms of Jesus, which were legitimately occurring in their sight, was to attribute the empowerment to Beelzebul, the ruler of the demons.\textsuperscript{17} *Beelzebul* is most likely a combination of the Hebrew *ba’al* (lord/master) and *zebul* (residence/abode). This figure is not to be confused with Ba’al zebub, the Philistine god of the flies in 2 Kings 1:2.\textsuperscript{18} In the minds of the

\textsuperscript{16} Ron Abel is forced to ignore the plain meaning of προσελθων in the narrative and argues instead that “Satan is only a personification of the pull of the desires of Jesus”. Ron Abel, *Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts* (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 173.

\textsuperscript{17} It is interesting to note that the *Testament of Solomon* calls Beelzebul was formerly “the highest-ranking angel in heaven” (6:1-2).

\textsuperscript{18} Some NT mss. have assimilated this figure into the Matt 10:25.
Pharisees, the ruler of the demons was the only alternative of empowerment to God’s involvement in this exorcism. Jesus responds that this logic does not make any sense, primarily because if Satan (Jesus’ identification of Beelzebul) were to exorcise Satan, his kingdom cannot stand. Therefore, Jesus does not dispute the assertion that the demons have a ruler prince nor his power over them, which are a part of Satan’s ruling dominion. In fact, Jesus states implicitly that Satan is a potential empowering figure and that demonic activity is attributed to him.

- Matthew 13:38-39

And the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels.

This parable given by Jesus needs to first be interpreted based on its designated name given in Matthew 13:36: the parable of the tares. It is specifically given to explain the nature of the tares. Jesus explains who they are, where they came from, what they are doing, what will happen to them, and when this will occur. The tares are the sons of ‘the evil one’ (τοῦ πονηροῦ), which is a proper name according to W.D. Davies and D. Allison.¹⁹ This figure is identified as both ‘the enemy as well as ‘the Devil’.

Since the parable notes that there are only two types of people in the world, the sons of the kingdom as sowed by the Son of Man and the sons of the evil one as sowed by the Devil, this parable seeks to give insight as to why there is so much opposition and lack of response to Jesus’ kingdom ministry. The primary culprit is the Devil who sows those who have not responded with faith and understanding to the message of the kingdom that Jesus is preaching.

2 Corinthians 11:13-14

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light.

Paul is discussing with the Corinthians about their common opponents. He first discusses how the pseudo-apostles are currently disguising (μετασχηματίζομενοι) themselves as apostles of Christ. He then moves the argument forward by saying that it is no wonder that these deceptions are occurring, for the Satan disguises (same verb) as an angel of light. The logic of Paul’s argument is that since there is a black and white contrast concerning the deception of the fake apostles/Christ’s apostles then Satan is disguising himself as an angel of light from an angel of darkness. Paul here seems to be drawing upon what other Jews were saying about the masquerading powers of Satan to change into a bright angel, such as what is found in Life of Adam and Eve and the Apocalypse of Moses. The Testament of Job also speaks of the transforming ability of the Devil.

Therefore Paul’s argument strongly suggests that Satan is a fallen angel capable and powerful enough to disguise himself deceptively.

2 Thessalonians 2:9

The one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

20 Ron Abel twists the Greek here, which uses a singular verb for Satan, and writes instead that “The Satan of this passage is not a rebel angel but rebel Jewish adversaries who were undermining the apostle Paul’s influence in the Corinthian ecclesia.” Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 177, emphasis mine.

21 Life of Adam and Eve 9:1.


23 Test. Job 6:4 has Satan disguising himself as a beggar and then in bread seller in 23:1.
Paul speaks of the Man of Lawlessness whose coming (parousia) will commence prior to the Day of the Lord. Yet this figure’s parousia will be according to the working and empowering of the Satan, and will be visible in all power and signs and false wonders. Paul wants his readers to know that this figure will have a pseudo-parousia and will be gifted by Satan to do supernatural works. Ben Witherington helpfully points out that the text is not suggesting that the signs and wonders are not real; rather the legitimacy of their works is what is misleading about them.\textsuperscript{24}

Therefore, Satan is presented here as a figure that has the ability to grant power, miracles, and wonders to human individuals as well as energizing a pseudo-parousia.

-\textit{James 4:7}

\textit{Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.}

In a similar way to the temptation stories of Jesus and the Devil, James states that resisting this figure will result in his fleeing. The Greek preposition \(\varphi'\) denotes that this departing of the Devil will be away from the tempted individual. This is not an internal struggle, but rather one coming from an external tempter who subsequently retreats \textit{away from} the victim.

-\textit{1 John 3:8}

\textit{The one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.}

This passage reveals that the Devil is an individual who has committed sins from the beginning. People who go on with their lives sinning are

derived in some special way from this figure. Therefore, this being is one who is morally responsible to the point to where he is held accountable for his sins. Both the one practicing and the Devil are active participants in the sinning. He is also noted as existing in the beginning, although the author does not elaborate further as to the nature of timing.

-1 John 5:19

*The whole world lies in the power of the evil one.*

This is another passage that ascribes power and influence to an individual. This person is called the evil one (τῶ πονηρῶ). The entire *kosmos* is currently held in the sphere of the evil one’s power. This is hardly someone that refers to a human adversary or to internal struggles with sin. For John, this is a very real and pertinent threat that he and his community know and recognize.

-Jude 1:9

*But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

The archangel Michael disputed and argued with the Devil concerning the body of Moses in this passage. He also rebuked him with the authority of God. This is certainly not the talk of an internal struggle of an archangel. 

25

---

25 Nor is it, as Rob Abel argues, an argument with “disaffected priests debarred from priestly office” in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. *Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts* (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 181-182. He has to do make the most nonsensical interpretation by claiming that the body of Moses was actually Joshua the High Priest!
-Revelation 2:10

_Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days._

In this passage, John is warning the believers in Smyrna that the Devil is about to put them into prison. This means that this Devil (ὁ διάβολος) has the power, influence, and ability to cast believers into various places which will result in temptation and persecution.

-Revelation 12:9

_And the great dragon was thrown down, the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him._

John reveals much information about our subject. The Devil is called Satan and is equated with the serpent of old (presumably the serpent of Genesis chapter three). This figure is currently deceiving the whole world with his influence, power, and authority. He also has a group of rebel angels at his disposal.

After surveying and assessing the pertinent evidence, many points can confidently be presented as conclusion. First of all, it is difficult to explain away the multiple statements that Satan the Devil is a conscious, external tempter. He has been given a lot of power and authority and bestows this upon whomever he wishes. He disguises himself as an angel of light, is

---

26 Ron Abel spends three pages attempting to show, unsuccessfully, that this passage does not mean what most take it to mean, but fails to give his readers an affirmative answer on what it does mean! He also fails to take seriously the connection of the serpent with Satan and the activity of this figure as deceiving the world. His entire argument tries to steer readers away from concluding that Satan is a fallen angel, which is not the aim of our investigation. _Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts_ (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 182-184.
linked with the serpent of old, and can enter into the heart of his victims in order to oppose the will of God. Although some texts, all of which are without the definite article, speak of a general accuser in a secondary sense, the primary way that Satan (the Devil) is spoken of seems to refer to a literal, external being who is opposed to the will of God and his children.

Now that the pertinent evidence concerning Satan has been examined, it is now appropriate to move on to analyzing the nature and definition of demons in both the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

**Demons in the Biblical Tradition**

Examining the nature of demons, at least within the Hebrew Bible, is not quite as simple as searching for the word and reading the passage. There are quite a few ways in which various demonic entities are described in Hebrew.

1. To start, many of the demons are referred to be named *shed* or the plural *shedim*. These instances are as follows:

   - **Deuteronomy 32:17**
     
     \[
     \text{They sacrificed to demons who were not God, to gods whom they have not known, new gods who came lately, whom your fathers did not dread.}
     \]

     Demons here are paired synonymously with false gods who were sacrificed to. They were considered objects of worship and therefore a legitimate threat to the Israelite community.

   - **Psalm 106:37-38**
     
     \[
     \text{They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and their daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with the blood.}
     \]
Demons again are equated with the false idols of the nations, this time directly in the Hebrew text. Since offering a sacrifice is considered an act of worship, the psalmist is feeling remorse for this disobedient act of prostration on behalf of Israel.

2. In the Hebrew Bible one finds the goat-demons in four occurrences, coming from the Hebrew *sairim*.

- *Leviticus 17:7*

*They shall no longer sacrifice their sacrifices to the goat demons with which they play the harlot. This shall be a permanent statute to them throughout their generations.*

The *sairim* here are depicted as prohibited objects of worship for the children of Israel.

- *2 Chronicles 11:15*

*He set up priests of his own for the high places, for the goat-demons and for the calves which he had made.*

King Jeroboam installed priests and built high places towards both the *sairim* and the calves.

- *Isaiah 13:21*

*But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches also will live there, and goat-demons will frolic there.*

- *Isaiah 34:14*

*The desert creatures will meet with the wolves, the goat-demons also will cry to its kind; yes, the Lilith will settle there and will find herself a resting place.*

In the Isaiah passages the *sairim* are spoken together with the ostriches, howling creatures, and wild animals as a part of apocalyptic texts located

---

27 NRSV translation.
in the desert. Some even think that the Lilith figure here is another name for a desert-dwelling female demon.

3. Leviticus 16 speaks of *azazel*, a Hebrew word that has divided readers as to its meaning. Four times it is mentioned as a goat-demon that lived in the wilderness in reference to the Day of Atonement.\(^\text{28}\) It is unlikely that the meaning of *azazel* here refers to what many translations call a “scapegoat”, a guess based on the assumption that the name derives from *ez* (“goat”) and *azav* (“go away”). The problem with this interpretation is that in Lev. 16:8 the goat is said to be for *azazel*. In 16:10 the goat is sent but it goes to *azazel* in 16:26. One of the more telling aspects is that 16:8 places “for Yahweh” and “for azazel” in parallel, suggesting that there is best understood as an actual divine being opposed to God.

4. Sometimes the translators of the LXX interpreted the idols as ‘demons.’

-Psalm 96:5 MT (95:5 LXX)

*For all the gods of the people are idols* (LXX δαιμόνια).

This text shows that there were some who understood the false gods (idols) as demons.\(^\text{29}\)

Now that all the various ways that the demons are spoken of in the Hebrew Bible, it is now appropriate to move right into the New Testament evidence.

-Matthew 4:24

---

\(^{28}\) Lev 16:8, 10 (twice), 26.

\(^{29}\) This also occurs in LXX Lev 17:7; 2 Chr. 11:15; Isa 13:21, 34:14, 65:3.
The news about Him spread throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all who were ill, those suffering with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics; and He healed them.

In a narrative summary statement about the healing that Jesus performed those who are possessed by demons are spoken of as distinct of those with illnesses, diseases, and the paralyzed.

-Matthew 8:28-34

When He came to the other side into the country of the Gadarenes, two men who were demon-possessed met Him as they were coming out of the tombs. They were so extremely violent that no one could pass by that way...

Jesus comes over into this Gentile territory and comes into contact with two unclean, demon possessed males. Their possession gave them seemingly super-human strength which made it to where no one was physically able to pass along that road. Before Jesus even utters a word, they cry out to him by acknowledging him as the Son of God, a rather shocking piece of information for unlearned Gentiles, who never met Jesus before, to utter! They know of the future time of judgment and ask if Jesus was here to torment them prior to that time. The demons continually entreated Jesus so that if he was to cast them out to send them into the herd of swine. Jesus agrees and exorcises the demons with a command. They come out of the two men and immediately into the pigs, which subsequently perish in the nearby water.

-Mark 1:34

---

And He healed many who were ill with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and He was not permitting the demons to speak, because they knew who He was.

Jesus did not allow the demons, who had just been cast out of the victims, to talk because they recognized his identity. Mark is clear to differentiate the demons from the many of whom he healed. Jesus was rebuking the demons, not the people.

-Luke 4:40-41

While the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to Him; and laying His hands on each one of them, He was healing them. Demons also were coming out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But rebuking them, He would not allow them to speak, because they knew Him to be the Christ.

Luke is very precise in his depiction of this episode. He makes a distinction between the people that Jesus healed (αὐτούς) and the demons which he verbally rebuked (αὐτὰ). The crowds are masculine in Greek while the demons are neuter. This avoids any possibility of confusing the object of Jesus’ rebukes. He was clearly addressing the demons who spoke to him, not the victims of the demonizing.

-Luke 8:29

For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.

This passage provides two important pieces of data for our inquiry. First of all, it alerts us to the fact that demons are sometimes equated to unclean spirits. Secondly, this demon gave empowering strength to its
victim. If this man were merely sick with an illness, how does it explain his supernatural strength?

-1 Corinthians 10:20-21

No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

In Corinth, Paul was attempting to settle a dispute as to whether or not eating food that was sacrificed to pagan gods was acceptable Christian behavior. Surely some of the adherents felt that since the idols were just worthless images, there was no harm in eating the meat. Others felt that this was a compromise to the uniqueness of Christian worship. Paul responds in similar manner to Deut. 32:17 that these idols are really demons which should not be interacted with. The Apostle Paul saw the participating in meals sacrificed to demons as a real threat to the Christian community and therefore forbade this form of religious fellowship.

-Ephesians 6:12

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The author of Ephesians defines the nature of the opposition that believers will struggle against. Although the powers and world forces have been mentioned already in the epistle, the κοσμοκράτορας are mentioned here. This term is not mentioned anywhere else in the NT or in the LXX. It is doubtful that the author of Ephesians coined this term because it shows up in non-Jewish and non-Christian sources. It appears a
few times in the magical papyri.\textsuperscript{31} It is used to describe the spirits called up to help the conjurer. For example, one of the magical papyri mentions Nephotes making a recipe to the Egyptian king Psammetichos so that he can conjure up a god to answer his requests.\textsuperscript{32} This god is called the \textit{kosmokrator}. It is used to describe the deities Helios,\textsuperscript{33} Ra,\textsuperscript{34} and Hermes.\textsuperscript{35} The phrase also shows up in an inscription found in a bathhouse in Rome which reads, “One Zeus, Sarapis, Helios, world-power, unconquerable.”\textsuperscript{36}

The Jewish \textit{Testament of Solomon} mentions the \textit{kosmokrators} as parallel to the \textit{stoicheia}.\textsuperscript{37} This passage goes in to associate these \textit{kosmokrators} with thirty-six demonic rulers of the heavenly sphere.\textsuperscript{38} This text demonstrates the interchangeability with these “world powers” and the \textit{stoicheia}, a phrase used elsewhere in Paul.\textsuperscript{39}

In light of this evidence, the term in Ephesians begins to take form. There is not one \textit{kosmokrator} but many (the term is plural). These are not beneficial spirits but rather evil, being modified with τοῦ σκότους τοῦτος. The pagan deities are not lifeless or imaginary and therefore harmless. They are powerful agents, dwelling in the heavenly places (ἐν τοῖς ἐπουρανίοις), which need to be resisted with the full armor of God. They will eventually be summed up in Christ.\textsuperscript{40}

\textsuperscript{31} The earliest of these papyri date to the second century CE, but these occurrences reflect earlier usages than the date of the documents.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{PGM} IV.166.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{PGM} III. 35.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{PGM} IV.1599; 2198.
\textsuperscript{35} \textit{PGM} V.400.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Eis Zeus, Sarapis, Helios, kosmokrator, aneikitos.}
\textsuperscript{37} “I commanded another demon to appear before me. There came seven spirits (\textit{pneumata}) bound up together hand and foot... When I, Solomon, saw them, I was amazed and asked them, “Who are you?” They replied, “We are the elemental beings (\textit{stoicheia}), rulers of this world of darkness (\textit{kosmokratoras toras tou skotous}). –T. Sol. 8:1-2.
\textsuperscript{38} T. Sol. 18:3.
\textsuperscript{39} Gal 4:3, 9; Col 2:8, 20.
\textsuperscript{40} Eph 1:10.
James 2:19

You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

James identifies the demons as conscious entities that can believe important truths, understanding them, and shudder at the reality of those truths. They are posed in this passage as a contrast to Christians who merely believe truth without having the corresponding works which are appropriate. This assertion by James should not be surprising since the Synoptics regularly have demons professing truths about Jesus which he subsequently tried to hush.

When all of the pertinent evidence is surveyed, assessed, and evaluated, some rather obvious conclusions can be drawn. The Bible sometimes speaks of demons as the reality of the pagan idols which receive worship. These beings inhabit victims, both human and animal. They speak distinct from the voice of their victims. They have supernatural understandings of truth about the identity of God, Jesus, and the judgment to come. They talk to Jesus and Jesus talks back to them. They fear the coming judgment as well as the reality of the oneness of God. They are ruled by Beelzebul, who is called both the ruler of the demons as well as Satan. While it is obvious that the side effects of demon-possession include various

41 The attempt by Ron Abel, *Wrested Scriptures: A Christadelphian Handbook of Suggested Explanations to Difficult Texts* (Birmingham: Printland Publishers, 2003 reprint) 178, to reduce these demons to illnesses makes the argument by James incoherent, since he is continually giving examples of how faith without works does not constitute legitimate faith. Understanding the demons as supernatural, conscious entities opposed to the will of God makes for a much more likely acceptable interpretation in light of the argument of James.
ailments and illnesses, the evidence of both testaments seems to indicate quite strongly that these demons are not to be confused with the side effects they bring. They are conscious, threatening, supernatural beings which are at odds with the will of God.

**Devil/Demons in Jewish Literature**

One of the most neglected collections of texts within the theological discourse about the identity of the Devil and the demons is the Jewish literature found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and Rabbinic sources. The purpose of examining this body of literature is to look at all the relevant texts which create the context of meaning for our inquiry interests. Almost always, in discussions about the identity of the Devil and demons, are these texts ignored. Since the texts of the Bible were not written in a vacuum, it is actually necessary to look at this body of literature in detail to more confidently ascertain the definitions our study seeks.

1. **Qumran Literature.**
The Qumran literature uses *satan* in only three places. Of greater interest is the proper name given to this figure: Belial. This word is also used in the Hebrew Bible 27 times to denote a “worthless person.” Sometimes Belial is used with the alternative rendering Beliar, which Paul uses in 2 Cor. 6:15. This figure is identified as the spirit of darkness, the one who exercises dominion over the world, and the one who casts his nets of fornication, wealth, and pollution of the sanctuary. He is the figure who, along with the spirits of his lot, rebelled against God and turned aside from the commandments in order to do evil instead. In the

---

42 1QSB 1:8; 1QH 4:6; 45:3.
43 Six times in 1 Samuel, four times in 2 Samuel, three times in the Psalms, three times in Proverbs, twice in Deuteronomy, twice in Judges, twice in 1 Kings, twice in Nahum, once in 2 Chronicles, and once in Job.
44 1QM 13:12.
45 1QS 1:18, 24; 2:5, 19; 1QM 14:9.
46 CD 4:17-18.
47 11Q13 2:12.
War Scroll, Belial is labeled as an angel who is accompanied with the angels of destruction:

You created Belial for the pit, an angel of enmity, his dominion is in darkness, his counsel is for evil and wickedness. All the spirits of his lot, angels of destruction, walk in the laws of darkness.\(^{48}\)

The members of the Qumran community of Jews who failed to remain faithful to their covenant stipulations were under threat of being turned over to destruction at the hand of Belial.\(^{49}\) This spirit of Belial is a threat that the members of the community have to be ever watchful for.\(^{50}\) As regular blessings are to be offered unto God, counter curses are to be spoken against Belial.\(^{51}\) The armies of the Qumran community will fight the end-time decisive battle against Belial, his armies, the sons of darkness, and the king of Kittim.\(^{52}\) Belial will be devoured with fire at the time of judgment.\(^{53}\)

The ruler of the demons is designated in ways other than Belial at times. The angel Mastema is the one who retreats from the Jew who turns to the law of Moses.\(^{54}\) Curses are called down upon a figure called Melkiresha who plans are full of guilty inclinations.\(^{55}\) In the noncanonical psalm 11Q Ps\(^a\) there is a plea for deliverance in which the author asks God to “let not Satan rule over me, nor an unclean spirit, neither let pain nor the evil inclination take possession of my bones.”\(^{56}\) Demons are mentioned a few times in these psalms, once in connection with the “prince of enmity” who is identified as Belial “who rules over the abyss of

---

\(^{48}\) 1QM 13:11-12.
\(^{49}\) CD 8:1-2.
\(^{50}\) CD 12:2-3.
\(^{51}\) 1QM 13:1-2, 4.
\(^{52}\) 1QM 15:2-3; 16:11; 18:1-3.
\(^{53}\) 11Q13 3:7.
\(^{54}\) CD 14:6.
\(^{55}\) 4Q280 1:2.
\(^{56}\) 11Q Ps\(^a\) 19:15-16.
darkness.” A rebuke of Belial is given in one of these psalms which speaks of him as having a face of futility and the horns of a wretch.

4Q510 is a hymn against the demons which lists it along with the spirits of the ravaging angels, Liliths, owls, jackals, and the bastard spirits. These spirits are highly likely to refer to the offspring of the Watchers and the beautiful daughters of men described in Gen. 6. The Aramaic incantation 4Q560 incantation describes a midwife attempting to rebuke both a male wasting-demon and a female wasting-demon entering into the child in her care. She speaks to the two of them and admonishes them from disturbing the child any longer. Although there is some dispute over how the first verse of this passage is to be reconstructed, many think that Beelzebul is the leader of these demons.

2. Tobit
Tobit comes into conflict with a wicked demon named Asmodeus. He is the one responsible for the deaths of Sarah’s seven husbands. When Tobit marries Sarah, she is set free from Asmodeus’ destructive behavior. Raphael, an angel sent from God, helps the couple overcome the demon. The demon shows feelings as it is said to love Sarah. Asmodeus is cast out by the aroma of a burnt liver and heart of a fish, where he subsequently runs away to the remotest parts of Egypt. Raphael the angel immediately binds the demon after it exits Sarah’s body.

3. Wisdom of Solomon
The Greek diabolos occurs only once in the Book of Wisdom. At the conclusion of the second chapter the author contrasts the creation of humans by God for incorruption and the bringing of death into the world

---

57 11QPsAp² 1:4-6.
58 11QPsAp² 4:5-7.
59 4Q510 1:5-6.
60 4Q560 1:2-4.
61 Tobit 3:8.
62 Tobit 3:17.
63 Tobit 6:15.
64 Tobit 8:3.
through the envy of the Devil. The dissimilarity of the two intentions for humans, one being on the part of God and the other on the part of the Devil, seems to indicate that the Devil is responsible for death. Of note for our study is that the Devil is described as having the emotion of envy.

4. Jubilees
The Book of Jubilees speaks quite regularly of the Devil and demons. In the tenth chapter we see that demons were responsible for leading astray the descendants of Noah after the flood. Not only were the demons drawing them away from God, they were also binding the victims and slaying them. Their origin is attributed to the mating of the angelic Watchers with the daughters of men that is recounted in Gen. 6. These angels are called the fathers of these spirits. Noah prays to God that he would imprison these spirits and hold them in the place of condemnation. The chief of these spirits is a figure called Mastema. He comes forward and beseeches God to allow a tenth of them to remain before him and be subject to Satan (an apparent alternative name for Mastema) on the earth. He is also the one who comes before God and incited the temptation of Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, very similar to the episodes in the first two chapters of Job.

5. 1 Enoch
Like Jubilees, 1 Enoch attributes the origin of fallen spirits to the incident of the angelic Watchers cohabiting with the daughters of men. Their judgment has been slated for the day of consummation, which is located at the end of the age. Satan is often spoken of with the alternative name Azazel. Azazel is the being who is responsible for teaching men how to make weapons of war. He is attributed with teaching all

---

66 Jub. 10:2-3.
67 Jub. 10:5.
68 Jub. 10:7-12.
69 Jub. 17:16-17.
70 1 Enoch 16:1.
71 1 Enoch 16:2.
72 1 Enoch 8:1.
unrighteousness and revealing the secrets of heaven to mankind. The angel Raphael is commanded to bind Azazel hand and foot, and to cast him into the darkness of the desert. Enoch has conversations with Azazel, condemning him for his sins. Azazel is spoken of on multiple occasions as having a host (of angels) in his possession. He is called an angel and listed with the dozens of other angels who are prepared for judgment.

6. 2 Enoch
This document speaks occasionally but openly about Satan. In one of the visions given to Enoch the giant Grigori are introduced. They are said to have rejected the Lord of light along with their prince Satanail. The twenty-ninth chapter puts into the mouth of God a commentary on his original creation. He speaks about creating Adam and placing him in the garden of Eden. The devil is spoken of as understanding the plans and will of God. Then he is described in vivid details:

The devil is the evil spirit of the lower places, as a fugitive he made Sotona from the heavens as his name was Satanail, thus he became different from the angels, but his nature did not change his intelligence as far as his understanding of righteous and sinful things.

It seems that ‘Satanail’, an alternative way of speaking of the devil, is the intelligent, conscious ruler of disobedient beings. He was present during the life of Adam prior to the fall described at the end of Gen. 3.

7. Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs

73 1 Enoch 9:6-7.
74 1 Enoch 10:4-5.
75 1 Enoch 13:1-3.
76 1 Enoch 54:4-5; 55:4.
77 1 Enoch 69:1-3. Interestingly enough, he is listed as both the tenth angel as well as the twenty-first.
78 2 Enoch 18:1-3.
79 2 Enoch 29:4
This document uses the terms ‘satan’ and ‘the devil’ rather sparingly. Yet there are 29 occurrences of Beliar. This figure is spoken of as the enemy of God that sins will bring one near to. The children of Jacob are told to choose between the precepts of God or the works of Beliar. They are warned that in the last days their descendants will turn from God and cleave unto Beliar. Various spirits are attributed to him. Those who turn away from God are said to be ruled by Beliar, showing his power and dominion. On the day of judgment, when the righteous will have access to the tree of life, Beliar will be bound by God. Afterwards he will be cast into the fire where he will no longer be able to deceive the children of Israel.

8. Apocalypse of Abraham

This text does not speak of the Devil, Satan, or demons. Rather the figure opposed to God is Azazel. He first shows up in chapter thirteen in dialogue with Abraham. The angel reveals Azazel to have his lot on earth because he chose this as his dwelling place (in contrast to heaven). In him is the spirit of lies but God has not permitted that the righteous are to be within his power. He is called “the tempter” and the one who deceives. Azazel is spoken of by God as a figure that offers acts of worship. He is labeled as a crafty worm (snake?), perhaps alluding to the serpent in Gen. 3.

82 Test. Issachar 6:1.
84 Test. Asher 1:8; Test. Benjamin 3:1.
86 Test. Judah 26:3.
90 Apoc. Abr. 29:5-8.
9. Martyrdom of Isaiah
The second chapter describes the ascension of Manasseh to the throne after the death of Hezekiah. It is said of him that he failed to serve God in the manner that his father demonstrated but rather turned and served Satan, his angels, and his powers. The author gives two other names, Beliar and Matanbachus, for Satan, and calls him “the angel of lawlessness” and “the ruler of this world.” This angel is then described as delighting in Jerusalem because of Manasseh’s devotion to him. Satan therefore made the king strong in apostasy and in the lawlessness of the nation. Satan worship commenced and brought forth the prophet Isaiah to bring rebuke.

10. Life of Adam and Eve
This document describes an expansion of the beginning chapters of Genesis. It is rather striking how forward the author is in regards to the Devil and his relationship to the serpent that tempted Adam and Eve. In the fifteenth chapter Eve begins to recount the story of “the enemy” deceived her and her husband. The Devil told the serpent to come towards him, and the serpent complied. The Devil turns the serpent, which originally was loyal to the Lord, against Adam. The serpent is to be the vessel through which the Devil will speak to Adam. The serpent complies and ends up tricking Eve into eating the forbidden fruit with the Devil talking through his mouth. Eve goes on and even states that the Devil spoke through her when she tempted Adam with the fruit!

---

92 Even though this document is a composite text coming from different authors writing in different centuries, the initial chapters are universally agreed to be from the second century BCE.
93 Martyrdom of Isaiah 2:2-3.
94 Martyrdom of Isaiah 2:4.
95 Martyrdom of Isaiah 2:5
96 Martyrdom of Isaiah 2:7-8.
97 Life of Adam and Eve 15:1-3.
98 Life of Adam and Eve 16:1-5.
99 Life of Adam and Eve 17:4.
100 Life of Adam and Eve 21:3.
It would seem that the Jewish writers and theologians who discussed the Devil and/or the demons believed them to be very real and potent threats to the people of God. Satan (or one of this other names) is often called an angel who disobeyed God and leads the rebellion against him. The demons inhabit their victims, are able to communicate effectively, understand doctrine, and are sentenced to judgment. Of special interest to this particular study is that every Jewish author that mentions the Devil or demons speaks of them as external spiritual beings. Their theologies, although showing only minor trends, are in their basic understanding of who Satan is and what the demons are in agreement with the authors of the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. If we are to list all of the documents that provide this contextual evidence, we would have these eighteen witnesses: The Rule of the Community (1QS), The War Scroll (1QM), The Damascus Document (CD), 4QBlessings, 4QSongs of the Sage, 4QAagainst Demons, 11QPsalms, 11QApocryphal Psalms, 11QMechizedec, Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon, Jubilees, 1 Enoch, 2 Enoch, Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs, Apocalypse of Abraham, the Martyrdom of Isaiah, and Life of Adam and Eve.

Overcoming Objections

It is now appropriate, after citing the evidence in favor of a literal external Devil and conscious demons in the biblical records as well as the relevant Jewish literature, to give attention to some commonly proposed objections.

1. “The Devil is to be understood as a human opponent/adversary.” It is certainly true that satan and diabolos can be attributed to humans. It is however demonstrable that the Hebrew Bible reserves satan with the definite article to denote an external accuser, as seen in Job 1-2 and Zech 3. Every instance where ha satan occurs indicates one who is not human but rather in all likelihood a powerful angel.

Another point that needs careful consideration is that the Devil is often spoken of having power and dominion over the kingdoms of the world, statements which would be nonsensical if attributed to a human adversary.

One should remember that twice in Revelation the Devil is equated with the serpent of old. As the evidence in the relevant Jewish literature of the time indicated, this was a commonly held belief by many of John the Seer’s contemporaries.

2. “The Devil is internal human nature/sin.”
Since the Devil incites opposition to God, it seems appropriate that he is linked among the categories of sin and unrighteousness. However, there is too much evidence to ignore which indicates that the Devil is an external, conscious figure. He approaches God in Job, stands at the right hand of Joshua in Zechariah, approaches Jesus in Matthew and Luke, and is said to flee from anyone who resists him in James. He has authority, power, and influence over the kingdoms of the world in various texts. He has the ability to empower others to do miraculous deeds, wonders, and signs.

One might argue that the Devil is an outward personification of sin. This is one of the primary responses of Duncan Heaster, a leading Christadelphian apologist. He writes that personifications occur in Proverbs and in various chapters of Romans. This, he suggests, is the best way to understand the instances when the Devil are described as a person. The problem with this is that we can expect personifications in Wisdom literature, such as Proverbs. Paul indeed elaborates metaphorically about sin in Romans (but he also poetically speaks of “righteousness” in the very next breath). Yet in narrative passages, such as the introductory chapters of Job, Matthew 4, and Luke 4, the genre requires a straightforward reading. One is not supposed to read narrative

---

103 Rev 12:9; 20:2.
104 Duncan Heaster, Bible Basics (Xlibris Corp, 2001) 179. He cites Prov. 9:1; 20:1; Rom. 6:23; and various passages out of Romans 5-7.
the same way one reads poetry in Wisdom literature. He does not offer any comment on the various ways that the Devil is clearly understood as a real, external figure in the variety of Jewish literature which creates the context for the writers of the Bible. The literary conventions created by genre require, primarily, a literal reading in narrative passages.

3. “The demons are to be understood as illnesses/sicknesses.”
It is obviously true that the demons are often presented as causing the illnesses of their victims, although the Gospel of Mark makes this the exception to the rule.\(^{105}\) This should not give cause to equate the demons with the demonized. First of all, Jesus addresses the demons as distinct entities from their victims in Luke 4:41. This indicates that the demons are not illnesses but rather refutable beings that Jesus spoke to and identified as such.

Secondly, the demons often have supernatural and miraculous knowledge of doctrines such as the identity of God, Jesus, and of the eschatological judgment which do not make sense if these insights are attributed to the demonized victims (see Matthew 8:28-29; Mark 1:23-26; Luke 8:30-31; James 2:19). In the case of the Geresene demoniac, this victim was a Gentile and recognized Jesus as the son of the Most High and the future judge immediately. How did a Gentile come to know this information apart from the knowledge of the inhabiting evil spirit’s knowledge?

Thirdly, there is no occurrence of demon-possession among the followers of Christ in the New Testament. Every single instance where a demon occupies its victim indicates one who has yet to turn to the Lord. On the other hand, converted believers often struggled with sickness and

\(^{105}\) When one looks at the ten specific healing stories in Mark’s Gospel (1:29-32, 40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6; 5:21-43; 6:54-56; 7:31-37; 8:22-26; 9:14-19; and 10:46-52) only once is an illness attributed to demonic possession (9:14-19).
illnesses. We have indications that even influential figures in the churches such as Paul,\textsuperscript{106} Epaphroditus,\textsuperscript{107} Timothy,\textsuperscript{108} and Trophimus got sick.\textsuperscript{109}

Fourthly, exorcism is regarded by modern experts to in fact be a legitimate experience. W.D. Davies and Dale Allison argue that, “exorcism, even if foreign, and perhaps even distasteful, to many, \textit{does take place}, no matter what explanation one may give to it.”\textsuperscript{110} They cite a physician with a M.D. who has gone on record as a first-hand witness to an exorcism and claimed that his findings are not explainable in conventional medical terms.\textsuperscript{111} Therefore, an argument that claims that the exorcising of demons in the ancient world was an immature way to talk about diseases and illnesses is no longer convincing according to many experts.

Fifthly, demon-possession is often argued to be understood as a way of speaking of illnesses in the ancient world and that modern medicine deals with these illnesses adequately. The problem with this view is that the ancient world did have medicine and herbal ways of dealing with sicknesses. Physicians did exist in these times, as the evidence of the frequency of the Greek \textit{ἰατρος} indicates.\textsuperscript{112} There were times that even physicians were unable to deal with certain ailments, as in the modern world.

It should also be noted that illnesses are given by various sources throughout the biblical accounts, thus weakening the position that all demons are illnesses. The source of infirmities is attributed to the following:

\textsuperscript{106} Gal 4:13-15; 2 Cor 12:7-10.  
\textsuperscript{107} Phil 2:25-30.  
\textsuperscript{108} 1 Tim 5:23.  
\textsuperscript{109} 2 Tim 4:20.  
\textsuperscript{112} In the LXX: 2 Chr 16:12; Tob 2:10; Psa 87:11; Ode 5:14; Pro 14:30; Job 13:4; Sir 10:10; 38:1, 3, 12, 15; Isa 26:14; Jer 8:22. In the NT: Matt 9:12; Mark 2:17; 5:26; Luke 4:23; 5:31; 8:43; Col 4:14.


Therefore, the assertion that all illnesses are caused by demons cannot stand on the basis of how God can inflict humans and how illnesses are often unattributed to a particular giver.

Conclusions

In light of the textual evidence, the lexical definitions of words, the support of commentators, and the context of the Jewish literature, it is now appropriate to put our finger in the air and assess where the wind is blowing. I feel that the proper conclusions can be summarized as follows:

1. The Devil/Satan is a supernatural figure, believed by many to be an angel, who accuses and tempts humanity from doing the will of God. He goes by many names, such as Belial, Beliar, Azazel, Beelzebul, Satanail, Matanbachus, and maybe others.\(^{113}\) He works personally and through the agency of his demons, over which he is their prince/ruler. He is in control of the kingdoms of the world and has been given this authority by God. He currently is deceiving the nations through his lies. He has the ability to empower humans to do wonders and miracles. He has control of the elements and forces of nature. Often times he is spoken of with groups of people associated with him, such as children of the Devil, sons of Belial, sons of the evil one, etc. In light of all of these attestations, God, in his providence, allows for this figure to maintain his position and authority for the time being.

\(^{113}\) Melki-resha and Mastema.
2. There are occasional instances where humans or other figures are called an ‘accuser’ or a ‘slanderer’. These occurrences cannot be ignored, but neither can they be used as the controlling category through which the rest of the instances where satan and diabolos occur, especially when they are used with the definite article. There is a significant difference between a satan and the Satan, being that figure that the rest of the Jewish people know about. All instances of the lexical use of these terms must be taken seriously.

3. The demons are supernatural creatures that are capable of inciting idolatrous worship, possessing human beings and swine, causing illnesses, and oppressing their victims. They are far more common in the Hebrew Bible than most tend to notice. Like the Devil, they are given various names/designations. They are known as the sairim, azazel, Lilith, the shedim, and daimonia. In one instance we have talk of both male and female demons. Some are actually named. They are able to talk, converse, understand theology, recognize the identity of Jesus, know who God is, and fear the judgment to come. Their ruler is Beelzebul. They are distinct personalities from the victims whom they possess. The demons are considered an extension of the kingdom of Satan, acting as his agents and emissaries.

4. The evidence of the Jewish literature, being the Dead Sea Scrolls, Apocrypha, and the Pseudopigrapha, show beyond the shadow of a doubt that the belief in an external Devil and his demons was widely held and expounded. In just the documents surveyed, all of which overlap with the writings of the Bible and thus are a part of the same matrix of thought as the biblical authors, spoke of the Devil and/or demons as real supernatural threats. In many instances, there is in fact a noticeable relation to what the biblical authors wrote as dependent upon what the Jewish literature was saying at the time.\textsuperscript{114} Eighteen sources were cited as correlating

\textsuperscript{114} Such as Matthew’s Parable of the Tares with the Qumran literature, Paul’s description of Belial in 2 Cor 6:14-15; Jude’s dependence on 1 Enoch (and perhaps...
the theology shared by the biblical authors. What is important for subsequent discussions on the meaning of the Devil and/or the demons must take seriously the lexical and descriptive evidence found in the Jewish sources of the time of the writing of the biblical books. The abundance of voices on the subject cannot be ignored or dismissed if one seeks to be faithful to the evidence available.

5. The survey on the source of infirmities, diseases, sicknesses, and even death, revealed that the demons are not always involved in such affairs. Often times they are, although our earliest Gospel record only attributes 10% of illnesses healed by Jesus to demonic activity. More commonly is God the source of these afflictions, given as punishment for disobedience or for other reasons. It was also indicated that often the source is unidentified. The Devil is also occasionally the source, but probably should be grouped together with the demons based upon the Beelzebul discourses in the Synoptic records. Therefore, it must be admitted that illnesses and demons cannot be interchangeable concepts if one wants to be faithful to the evidence.
Hell: A Final Word
The Surprising Truths I Found in the Bible
Edward William Fudge

Review & Critique
B. Buzzard

This is a very exciting book to review since the movie Hell and Mr. Fudge is current (as of 1/13) and the effects could be so great with potential to ignite real Scriptural investigation. Hell and Mr. Fudge, A little story about a big lie is a full length movie predicated on this book and his previous ones. Please see the trailer of the movie at hellandmrfudge.com and please email Jim Wood of LLT Productions (jww@me.com) to see how to arrange showings in your area. The aim of the producers (and of the book’s author) is to enlarge the conversation; to cause people to stop and consider why we believe what we do and to alert them to the abysmal lack of support for commonly held beliefs. This movie will provide a most excellent talking point for speaking to neighbors and friends. (“Have you seen/read the new movie/book about hell?”) What a gift that the subject is so boldly on the table now. I was a guest at an Ethics class at the University of Southern Indiana recently and spoke to an atheist who had given a presentation against Christianity the previous evening. One of his severest criticisms of the Christian faith is its doctrine of everlasting torment. He was relieved to hear that there are Christians who do not believe in that eternal torture. Hell and Mr. Fudge was recently shown in Nashville and a viewer had this to say:

Regardless of one’s views, the movie is very much worth seeing. It is well done both in terms of writing, acting and filming (which was on location in Alabama). The movie is both informative and entertaining. Interestingly enough, it is stimulating beyond the subject of “hell.” The greater underlying story of the movie is the life of Edward Fudge himself. His is a life spent in the pursuit of truth. Fudge perused a
better understanding, and stood for that understanding even when it
cost him dearly in terms of relationships and his place as a minister.
That is a life which ought to be carefully considered by every
Christian.

Mr. Fudge tells us that when he began his study, the subject of hell
would have gone in his “things-we-know-for-sure” box. He embarked on
a year-long study to “discover the origin of the doctrine of everlasting
conscious torment. As it happened, I found that origin to be in Greek
philosophy and not in Holy Scripture… I will tell you this — with no
desire to exaggerate or to be controversial — that no one before or after
could have been more *astounded* at the things I found throughout the Bible
during the course of my study.”115 (Is this not something you would want
to share with everyone you know?)

We are reminded that this book and his previous ones116 challenge
the orthodox view held by nearly all of the Christian world for at least
1600 years. In the secular world, this might be akin to challenging what
orbit earth takes. But the religious world is not one that is very good at
“fessing up.” I don’t hear “we were wrong” coming from church officials.
It is most interesting to note that three editions of *The Fire That Consumes*
were published over a 29-year span, during which time seventeen scholars
wrote twelve books in response to Fudge’s challenges (and to others, no
doubt). “Hell is a subject that the sixteenth-century Reformers did not
reach to restudy. It is a topic still crying out for serious Bible study.”117 (I
am thinking that there might just be several other subjects crying out for
serious study and rethinking. Why would this be the only one they got
wrong?)

“In all the teaching of Jesus, no element stands out more vividly
than that final judgment will result in two destinations. Hell will involve
separation from family and friends, if some are redeemed and some have
rejected God’s grace. But far more important, it will mean final separation
from God…The world of Jesus’ parables is a world full of separations:
weeds must be separated from grain (Matt. 13:30). And in Jesus’ most
famous parable of this sort, he compares God’s final separation of human

---

115 Edward William Fudge, *Hell, A Final Word*, pp. 16, 17
116 Edward William Fudge, *The Fire That Consumes* and *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical and
Theological Dialogue*.
117 *Hell, A Final Word*
beings to the separation of sheep and goats by a Palestinian herdsman (Matt. 25:31-46).”118

“The traditional majority view says that hell is eternal, that those who go to hell are eternal, and that they will live eternally in hell. In addition, this view says the torments of hell are eternal and will never end...Where did the details of that hell originate? Did they come from the Bible? If so, in which Scripture text can they be found?”119 Fudge points out amusingly that in Hebrews nearly everything in sight is considered “eternal.” Could it be that without some study of what “eternal” means we might have made some wrong assumptions? (And what does this say about those who have studied it; why so little deviation from orthodoxy in 1600 years?)

“Our supposedly Christian culture has accepted a view of hell that owes more to human imagination and pagan myth than to the Bible.”120 “What does the traditional doctrine tell your mind and heart about the character of God whom you love and worship, the same God you sometimes beg in prayer to relieve your own suffering and that of others? Is this picture of hell consistent with the Bible’s stories about Jesus — whom to see, is to see the Father? Must we believe that God, who made every human being in His own image, and who is sorry when even a sparrow dies, will torment men and women forever — although He could easily allow them to die instead?”121

“Astonishingly, many believers have become so accustomed to the idea that the lost will agonize in conscious torment forever that they scarcely give it a second thought. Indeed, the traditional doctrine of hell as everlasting conscious agony has gained such acceptance during the past sixteen centuries that millions of good-hearted people placidly accept it as necessary to believing the Bible. Yet these same individuals instinctively recoil in horror whenever they hear the news of some temporary human atrocity...Others, who have not become desensitized by long familiarity with the traditional doctrine of hell are appalled. Thousands, perhaps millions, of people created and loved by God have fled from Him in horror at the thought that He would torture anyone forever. Famous atheists have

118 Ibid., p. 24, 25
119 Ibid., p. 26
120 Ibid., p. 29
121 Ibid., p. 32
attributed their unbelief to this traditional Christian teaching...Scripture nowhere suggests that God is an eternal tormentor.”¹²²

Mr. Fudge challenges his readers by asking if God’s character is not slandered in attributing to Him these grotesque charges? If Scripture does not teach these things, it does appear to be slander against the Most High God. He asks us to consider this imaginary scenario: the babysitter you hired told your children that you said you would punish them for any naughtiness by putting staples in their fingers, cutting off their ears, and stuffing them into the microwave until they popped. Our emotional response to such lies would be nothing in comparison with the slander against God.

“Jesus never mentions unending torment, and what he says about hell explains why he does not. Jesus uses the word ‘hell’ (Gehenna) eleven times and is the only person in the Bible who uses it at all to speak of final punishment. It is important to know what Jesus says about hell. Hell is the place, Jesus warns, where God is able to destroy both soul and body (Matt. 10:28). The same verse says that this destruction is total and includes the whole person, soul and body alike.”¹²³

Mr. Fudge makes the point that those who go to hell are those who refuse to be saved and not for the following reasons: because of Adam’s sin, because one was born in the wrong place or wrong time, because one did not belong to the “true” church, for misunderstanding some Scripture while sincerely seeking truth.

One of the pillars of the traditional view of hell is the theory (stated as fact) that the Old Testament says nothing about hell. Fudge explains that the Old Testament is full of teaching about divine justice, about the fate of the wicked and indeed what they will be like — broken pots, vanishing smoke, stubble in the wind, chaff blown away, etc. and then asks his readers if these images are more consistent with a fire that torments forever, or a fire that consumes. This pillar of a tormenting hell Fudge effectively demolishes as well as the other three. They are either true or they are false.

The following is a gem of understanding: we know that God rained fire and brimstone upon Sodom and Gomorrah and that everything was destroyed there. Jude states that Sodom and Gomorrah “are exhibited as an

¹²² Ibid., p. 33, 34
¹²³ Ibid., p. 36
example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire” (Jude 7). “If we did not have the Bible’s own definition of ‘eternal fire,’ we might assume that it was fire that burned forever and never went out…However, we have Jude’s own statement that Sodom and Gomorrah are examples of ‘eternal fire.’ Sodom’s fire is not still burning, but what it burned will never be seen in this world again. That is what makes ‘eternal’ fire eternal — the fact that its destruction is permanent and that it will never be reversed.”

The powerful images of the wicked in Isaiah 66:24 simply do not fit what is taught in most churches. The wicked are dead, unburied; they are disgusting and they are disappearing. Fudge emphasizes that these are dead corpses rather than living people; that they are being destroyed rather than tormented, and that the worms and fire consume rather than torture. “Jesus was not yet born when someone began to change the picture — essentially reversing all its details — making it exactly opposite to the picture that Isaiah had given.”

Fudge does battle with his opponents when it comes to meanings of words and shows how important it is to be simple and consistent. “‘Perish’ does not mean ‘perish’ here, they say, ‘destroy’ surely cannot mean destroy.’ In fact, when these words are used to describe what will become of the wicked in hell, they mean that the wicked will never perish as that word is commonly used, and they will never be ‘destroyed’ in the ordinary sense of that word. So instead of letting simple words have their usual simple meanings…the scholars who teach everlasting torment go looking for other texts of Scripture that use ‘perish’ and ‘destroy’ in a figurative sense.”

“It is not uncommon for a traditionalist author to praise Scripture’s teaching as the written word of God, then, when Scripture seems to contradict the traditionalist view, to dismiss the argument as contrary to what most theologians have always believed…This inconsistent behavior is not new. It has been going on for about 1,600 years since St. Augustine. Earlier writers such as the unknown author of the Didache, Justin Martyr, Ignatius, and others taught the fire that consumes, the view throughout Scripture. Athenagoras and Tertullian urged the fire that tortments.
Clement of Alexandria, and especially his successor Origin, favored the fire that *purifies.*

I found Fudge’s relating of this story both tragic and amusing: the question of what happens in hell is not an open question since it was settled long ago by a *church council.* It is both abhorrent and silly at the same time that a church council would decide such a thing! So too the example of anyone challenging the traditional view of hell by appealing to the Bible and that troubleshooter being reminded of “what evangelicals have always taught,” and thus turning out the lights. This is not indicative of an intelligent society, and frankly I doubt that I would have believed it to be true had I not experienced it myself.

“Those three words — die, perish, and be destroyed — are the very words that New Testament writers use most often to describe the final end of the wicked. Isn’t it interesting that most modern believers think they are sure that those who go to hell will *not* die, will *never* perish, and certainly will *never* be destroyed.”

If only we believed 1 Timothy 6:16 which makes it clear that only God has immortality, we would have been spared a lot of grief. “The doctrine of everlasting torment was the direct descendant of the doctrine of immortal souls. *Once the idea of everlasting torment was accepted and established, the church explained every Scripture to match the accepted doctrine, even when that meant creating an explanation that seemed to say the opposite of what the Scripture itself seemed to say.*”

Mr. Fudge reveals that Martin Luther was one who expressed his belief that souls were asleep at death and that there was no conscious intermediate state, thus questioning/denying the immortality of the soul, as did the Anabaptists. Religious history is nothing if not murky and that is to be kind. “Calvin wrote his first religious book against the Anabaptists on these issues…the volume accused the Anabaptists of getting their doctrines from hell, stated that their name alone is enough to damn anything they say, and many other intemperate and inflammatory statements…When Luther recognized Calvin’s vehemence on these points, he became quiet, leaving the Anabaptists standing alone in the

---

127 Ibid., p.99
128 Ibid., p.135
129 Ibid., p.157, emphasis added.
world, and everyone else — Catholic, Reformed, and perhaps also Lutheran — hating and persecuting the Anabaptists.”

Mr. Fudge finds the doctrine of the immortality of the soul an astonishing one. Think about it: as frail and finite as we are — we would be as long lived as the eternal God. Though we refer to God as the ‘ancient of days’, we would be that too. We could not cease to exist; never mind “It is the person who sins, himself, who must die.” (Ezek. 18:4) “Today, teachers of the Bible and theology in almost any accredited college or seminary know that the idea of immortal souls imprisoned in mortal bodies does not come from the Bible. Yet many fine people — professors, preachers, and pastors included — have not realized the pivotal role of that truth in the present rethinking of hell.”

I appreciated Mr. Fudge’s warm personal style; his own story is effectively woven throughout the chapters. I certainly respect the fact that he gave himself to this study of hell for 40 hours a week for a year (and in doing that, apologizes to his wife for his driven-ness.) He consistently points out that Christians are given two choices: life or death, not heaven or hell. The truth, he says, hit him like a tornado when he read Oscar Cullman who “convincingly shows that the concept of immortal souls is unbiblical and that it sprung from Greek philosophy and not from divine revelation.”

The title of this book, says Mr. Fudge, is to remind us “that when hell finally has completed its job, there will be nothing left to say. Everyone who goes there will be gone, entirely and eternally.”

I am conscious that Mr. Fudge chose the courageous route in publishing this book. When one bucks the system, the system is usually neither kind nor forgiving. I am thankful that Fudge followed his conscience rather than the safety of staying with the herd. The famous biblical writer John Stott who wrote an article called “Stott on Hell” received such flack from colleagues that he chose not to allow a wider publication of his article. (I think he felt he had received enough “hell” already.) Thankfully, Mr. Fudge speaks of an evangelical climate change

---

130 Ibid., p. 159, emphasis added.
132 Hell: A Final Word, p. 160
133 Ibid., p. 17
and *The Fire That Consumes* is considered “the standard reference on annihilationism” by *Christianity Today*. F. F. Bruce, one of the 20th century’s most respected scholars, wrote the foreword to *The Fire That Consumes*. Scholars such as John W. Wenham, Dale Moody, E. Earle Ellis, Homer Hailey, Philip E. Hughes, Stephen Travis, Michael Green, I. Howard Marshall and the previously mentioned F. F. Bruce have all rejected the concept of unending conscious torment in hell. But my concern is this: when does this ever filter down from the pulpit to the lay person?

“In short, the doctrine of everlasting conscious torment strikes countless numbers of people, ranging from devout believers to militant atheists, as intuitively and irreconcilably inconsistent with fundamental justice and morality.” 134 Amen from me! Even the numbers of times I have had to type the phrase everlasting conscious torment has affected me adversely. What a hash our theologians have made of this! And how dare we hallow such men, their councils, or their unbiblical ideas? They have reigned too long. We well know the phrase “the sanctity of life.” There is also the sanctity of God’s name and His intentions to consider. Is it not a scandal to attribute everlasting torture to the God who, being the Judge of the whole earth, shall do right? (“Shall not the judge of all the earth do what is just?” Gen. 18:25b.)

I heartily recommend this book; the need to know for our spiritual and mental health is great. If indeed it is “a little story about a big lie,” we need to know. The very sobering nature of thinking of these things for me is this: were a very similar study to be done on the nature of heaven — would we not come to find that this concept, too, has been corrupted? We need “think tanks”; we need serious study, careful thought, reflection, consideration and perhaps most of all — courage.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Buzzard
December, 2012

134 Ibid., p. 47
Embracing Obscurity
Becoming Nothing in Light Of God’s Everything
Author: Anonymous

Book Review & Critique
B. Buzzard

I shall begin with this quotation from another reviewer to give you the flavor of this most remarkable book: “It is a paradoxical sign of the times that a book advocating the virtues of anonymity yet requires named endorsements in order to be properly marketable. Thus, it is with some sense of irony, if not incoherence, that I commend this work. We live in an age where self-promotion is the norm and where even many sincere Christians have bought into this culture with enthusiasm. Yet the message of this important book is that such self-promotion is not simply a neutral cultural tool but is in fact antithetical to biblical Christianity. This is a timely call in modesty, privacy, and humility. It is painful but necessary reading that is likely to be hated, disparaged, or simply ignored by the very people who most need to heed its message.”135

Another reviewer had this to say: “It hits hard. There were sentences in this book that stopped me cold. Conclusions from its provocative critique will vary, but the book is prophetic and needed.”136

And finally this which I think encapsulates the author’s whole point: “Many of us are drunk right now, intoxicated with a desire to be respected, honored, and widely known. And yet this intoxication derails our ability to give God the respect, honor, and renown that He so rightly deserves.”137 And from the author: “We live in a culture that bases significance on how celebrated, or common, we are. And now the church

135 Carl R. Trueman, Westminster Theological Seminary
136 Owen Strachan, Assistant Prof. of Christian Theology and Church History
137 Bruce Riley Ashford, Dean of the College Research Fellow, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary
seems to have followed suit. This is serious stuff. It’s serious because of its source. It’s just the sort of lie that Satan – the father of lies – manufactures and sells best. It’s not too shocking. It can be justified and religious-sized and explained away easily enough. But it kills with the same force as the ‘big sins’ from which we distance ourselves.”

*The Message* translates John 17:15-16 in this telling way: “I’m not asking that you take (my people) out of the world, but that you guard them from the Evil One. They are no more defined by the world than I am defined by the world.” But the author’s point is that we have allowed ourselves to be defined by the world, on its terms, and following its example, to our peril.

Our anonymous author gives a most humorous account of “giving up” Facebook and describes it as being similar to the Wizard of Oz’s Dorothy who discovered that it was all smoke and mirrors, but dangerously so, as it can feed our ego and give us a blinding idea of self-importance. He even refers to his time spent there as “web sin,” allowing triple digit “friends” to become a status symbol. “Once again I saw that the depth of my pride knows no bounds. And in the months since that experience, I’ve been chewing on this question: *What else do we allow to define us?*” There are many sobering Scriptures which validate his point: “Everyone with a proud heart is detestable to the LORD; be assured, he will not go unpunished” (Prov. 16:5). And “Pride comes before destruction, and an arrogant spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18). “His ego is inflated; he is without integrity. But the righteous one will live by his faith…An arrogant man is never at rest” (Hab. 2:4-5).

Each chapter is followed by discussion questions and would therefore be great for a class or a book club. An example: “We spend most of our lives trying to prove how valuable we are – to our friends, our coworkers and families, and even to our God. How might God’s offer of ‘significance without strings’ revolutionize your life?” The author maintains that “The world is in a frenzy trying to find lasting, eternal significance. But their efforts are in vain. Only God has ultimate, eternal significance, and the only way we mortals get it is by joining our lives to His. Instead of spending our days struggling for significance, living under the shame of failure, and watching what temporary significance we do

---

138 *Embracing Obscurity*, p. 2
139 Ibid., p. 19
achieve fade away, Christ offers His significant life to us all. We cannot earn it; we simply receive it by faith. He is our significance.”

The New Living Translation offers a stark rendering of 1 John 2:16: “The world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world.” To verify this as the current state of affairs, our author states that: “Thirty-five percent of ‘born-again Christians’ think having a sexual relationship with someone of the opposite sex to whom they are not married is ‘morally acceptable.’”

“A lot of us are caught up in this religious version of the American dream, even in the church” (emphasis mine). “The committed Christian’s unhealthy ambitions may take different forms than you’d expect from general society, but unless our pride is intentionally and ruthlessly cut out of our lives, it can be just as dangerous — maybe even more so. That’s why God gave us an entirely different business model to emulate. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus boldly charged us to replace the world’s view of success with His when He said…” Of course what He said or charged us with is recorded in Matthew 5:3-12, but these are qualities not highly respected by our world’s system, nor are they widely sought after.

The writer notes that suffering changes us; how right he is. He then offers this insight: “There’s a startling trend in Christian thinking about suffering. Though subtle, this misconception is no less dangerous than many other of Satan’s lies. I call it the ‘Joseph Principle,’ and it goes like this: If I am suffering in obscurity today, God must be preparing me for something greater, better, or more prominent later in life.” He finds this thinking faulty and notes that this is not an easy pill to swallow. He maintains that we like to view setbacks as having inevitable success at the end. He quotes a blogger who feels that his time in the waiting room of life is just a season of growth and development, getting him ready for his moment on stage. The idea of always remaining in obscurity or indeed suffering for God’s glory is not comforting. He then stresses that the “all things working together for good” Scriptural principle, while ultimately true, is misunderstood because we have catered to the world’s definition of

---

140 Ibid., p. 59
141 Ibid., p. 77
142 Ibid., p. 83
143 Ibid., p. 116
good and thereby swallowed a “gross misinterpretation” — i.e. the end of the story may look quite different than what we had hoped.

Author Anonymous offers a final caveat in the nature of full disclosure. “If we obey God it is going to cost other people more than it costs us, and that is where the sting comes in. If we are in love with our Lord, obedience does not cost us anything, it is a delight, but it costs those who do not love Him a good deal. If we obey God it will mean that other people’s plans are upset, and they will gibe us with it – ‘You call this Christianity?’ We can prevent the suffering; but if we are going to obey God, we must not prevent it, we must let the cost be paid.”\textsuperscript{144} This certainly adds a further “ouch” to his message. He asks if we can deal with driving uglier cars, wearing older clothes, losing a well-loved circle of acquaintances, to use Chambers’ phrase, “consequences of obedience.”

In Matthew 18:1-5 Jesus gives an active command, notes our author – we are to humble ourselves; this is not something done to us. Excellent point, and I would think that this would also include the passage which states that every knee shall bow; opportunity is given to us to act as we should; failing to strive for humility will mean failure.

Critique

Now my reservations and reasons for giving this book a mixed review. I would not wish to take anything away from the author’s purpose in his book. I agree with so many readers that it is absolutely necessary for self-examination, perhaps even a Godsend, certainly a wake-up call. I feel that one of the greatest gifts we could ever receive is to see ourselves as God sees us and this goes hand in hand with what the author is attempting to point out.

Having said that, I think that we must ask not only “Where do we go from here?” but “Where did we go wrong?” Not only have we inherited (and added to) a culture of deceit, but even more importantly, we have followed a broken model. As has been eloquently said: “It is not that Christianity has failed; it is that it is never been tried.” I think that the whole system that is the backbone of our religious orthodoxy is seriously flawed. It is a system which enforces obscurity upon all those who do not give their assent to manmade religious doctrines. One has only to read the

\textsuperscript{144} Oswald Chambers, \textit{My Utmost for His Highest}, p. 11
history of orthodoxy to see that it is filled with thuggery of the worst kind. Much can even be learned from the titles of books attempting to give the history, e.g. *When Jesus Became God*, \(^{145}\) *The Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years*.\(^{146}\) See also *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*.\(^{147}\)

The history of both our Protestant and Catholic churches is riddled with violence, brutality, and tyrannical force. It is a system which has played fast and loose with truth. It is a system which uses thought police to guard against inquiry; it bullies and persecutes and tyrannizes and silences. The culture of deceit which the author recognizes so clearly in his dealings with the world is, I am sorry to say, also true of the church and its powerful determinations and hallowed traditions. It has not allowed certain very important fundamentals of truth to be known, but suppresses them by clever tactics, illusions, masking, and avoidance. I wish there was a kinder way to say this. This insight says it well (the author is speaking of the loss of Jewish core beliefs): “That was a disaster to the Church itself. It meant that the Church as a whole failed to understand the Old Testament, and that the Greek mind and the Roman mind in turn, instead of the Hebrew mind, came to dominate its outlook; from that disaster the Church has never recovered, either in doctrine or in practice.”\(^{148}\)

I have another criticism of *Embracing Obscurity*. The word “obscure” according to Webster’s means “dim or dark, hidden, or shrouded, unknown.” Should that really be our aim and ambition? I thought we were meant to shine like stars, and not hide (our light) under a bushel. We surely do not want to aim for the nirvana of Buddhism where one just becomes a part of a great mass. In this age of information through media, how could a seeker find truth if truth were not advertised, and I don’t think truth can be offered in an obscure way. It has to have a presence and be accessible. Could an organization offering truth be obscure? True believers will not be obscure in any way once Jesus returns. Indeed, they will be looked up to as great models and examples for those

\(^{145}\) Richard Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God*,

\(^{146}\) Philip Jenkins, *The Jesus Wars: How Four Patriarchs, Three Queens, and Two Emperors Decided What Christians Would Believe for the Next 1,500 Years*

\(^{147}\) Mark Knoll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*

\(^{148}\) Canon H.L. Goudge, *The Calling of the Jews*, Judaism and Christianity
who repent at that time. If that “shining, wining, and dining” in the future Kingdom is of the Lord’s doing — so be it. I don’t think I would be saying “No, thank you!” Is it not ironic that the Church uses enforced obscurity as punishment? Since it is no longer kosher to persecute by way of torture, drowning, and the like, it simply ignores the dissident and pretends he has no case, hushing up his protests, and squelching uncomfortable truths. So to actually strive for obscurity seems strange. Would that the same examination/introspection be requested of the church — it would be a healthy thing. As Mark Twain said: “The Church is always trying to get other people to reform; it might not be a bad idea to reform itself a little, by way of example.”

This book’s author does understand that it is not wrong to be aware of the rewards which Jesus will bring with Him. In fact, he says: “In this journey of learning to embrace obscurity, I’ve become somewhat of a reward-monger. And why not? If God didn’t mean for us to calculate future reward into our present decisions, He wouldn’t have told us what we have to look forward to.”\textsuperscript{149} I would differ with the author in what precisely that is that we have to look forward to and defend my position by saying that Jesus always spoke of the Kingdom as our inheritance and our hope. (Someone has said that Jesus couldn’t open His mouth without speaking about the Kingdom. The Church has changed that and offers something different.) Jesus did not correct the disciples when they asked what they might receive for their efforts. The parable of the talents and many other of Jesus’ sayings encourage the striving for excellence in doing good and thereby gaining a greater reward.

I think that whoever this writer is, he might have done his readers a greater service by urging them to embrace truth. This seems to be a virtue we have all but done away with. It might even be foreign sounding. It is certainly not high on the lists of those shopping for a church, nor for many ensconced there. In \textit{No Place for Truth} we find this: “It may be the case that Christian faith, which has made many easy alliances with modern culture in the past few decades, is also living in a fool’s paradise, comforting itself about all of the things that God is doing in society…while it is losing its character, if not its soul.”\textsuperscript{150} \textit{Embracing Obscurity} should cause one to stop and reflect as to what we should regard

\textsuperscript{149} \textit{Embracing Obscurity}, p. 172
\textsuperscript{150} David F. Wells, \textit{No Place for Truth}, p. 68
as the chief virtue. No doubt, most would answer “love” but have we not been warned that whoever does not love the truth is not worthy of the Kingdom? And when Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, the first verb in His answer was to listen — i.e. to Deuteronomy 6:4-5. I fear that we have not listened well and created our own system of beliefs as well as dishing out some pretty rough “justice” to those who point this out.

Respectfully submitted,
Barbara Buzzard
January 30, 2013