

"Watchman, what of the night?"

"The hour has come, the hour is striking, and striking at you,
the hour and the end!" *Eze. 7:6 (Moffatt)*

The Biblical View of God

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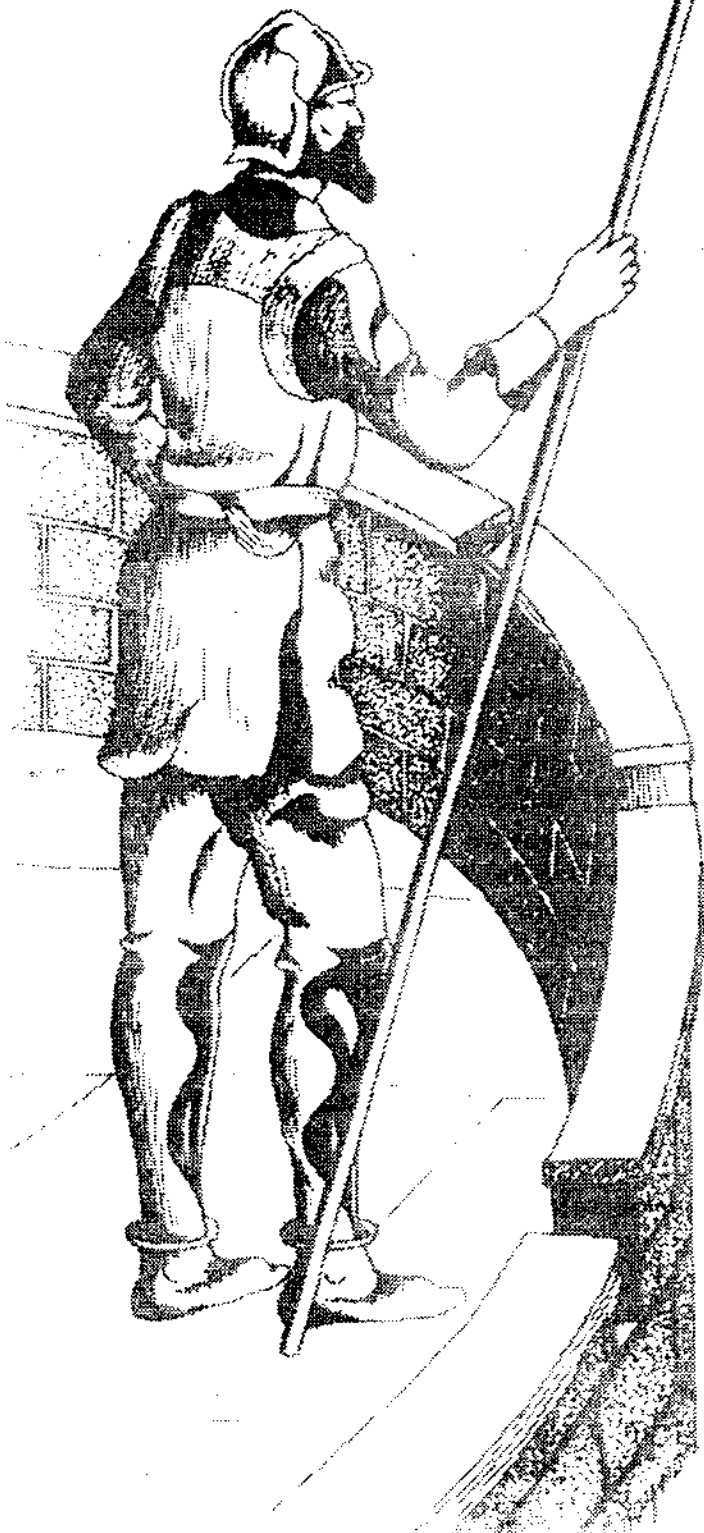
"MORE THAN THE CRUCIFIXION"

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Editor's Preface

As one opens his Bible, he is first introduced to God as the Creator. In this issue of WVN, we discuss in review, "The Biblical View of God." We endeavored to make it as simple as possible, but in facing the issues being raised in the Community of Adventism today, we found it necessary to give textual evidence, which meant using the Greek. Even then, we sought to give enough explanation so that the average reader could perceive the meaning of the Biblical references discussed. Yesterday (1/18/00) as we were concluding the first rough draft of this issue, we received through the mails an independent journal from Australia. It contained a lengthy article on the Godhead. Finally it focused on the basic question at issue - "Christ's EQUALITY with the Father." During the day, I picked up a paper which had come some week's earlier, but due to press of time, I had not scanned. It, too, contained an article discussing certain Biblical references on the Godhead. I cringed as I read some of the exegesis. It was obvious that the writer was a novice and was in deep water well over his head. In our first article, we emphasize and give the Biblical basis, backed by linguistic support, to the fact that Christ was underived, and in Him was life original and unborrowed. Jesus Christ was the I AM of the burning bush, and though having died, is "alive forevermore."

The last two articles are a follow-up to the previous review on "Salvation Basics." One cites the length to which some will go in seeking to justify the Tridentine "work-merit" concept of salvation which they promote. When will we come to the realization that the highest place to which one can attain, in and of himself, is to kneel "in faith at the cross." "There at the foot of the cross, he may look "up to the One who died to save him."



“Review,
then Review again, and
Review all that you’ve Reviewed”

The Biblical View of God

As one opens his Bible, the first statement that he reads is a revelation of God. “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). However, the Hebrew word - Elohim - for “God” is plural. The use of the plural form is considered by Judaism as the pluralis majestatis - the majestic plural. It is used in this first chapter of Genesis with singular verbs and in other Old Testament texts with singular adjectives thus strengthening the concept of the majestic plural usage.

The last Gospel, and possibly the last book written of the New Testament canon, gives the answer to the question. “Elohim” is a plural - there are Two. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God” (John 1:1-2). However, before John concludes his Gospel narrative, he introduces “another Comforter, ... the Spirit of truth” (14:16-17). Further, the Word came to be flesh (σαρξ ἐγένετο) and dwell among men, a full revelation of grace and truth (1:14). Twice in this prologue, the Word in the flesh is described as “the only begotten” (μονογενής - one of a kind) (1:14, 18). From this point on in the gospel of John, the Word is designated as either “the Son of God” (1:34), or by His self designation, “the Son of man” (3:14).

It is evident beyond question, that the great divide in both time and eternity is the incarnation of the Word. This not only had consequences for the Word Himself, but also for the Godhead. No question about God can be accurately or truthfully answered without consideration of the factor of the Incarnation. Today, in the Adventist Community, the theological agitation over God has again been raised. The regular Church by its own action in General Conference session (Dallas, 1980) adopted the Nicene Creed formula - “There is one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” The reaction among some of the peripheral groups in the Community has been to take an anti-Trinitarian stance.

First, we must note a question raised by the anti-Trinitarian position; and this in the light of the Gospel of John. John begins his Gospel stating that the Word was “in the beginning with God” (1:2). Now the question: Was He truly “in the beginning with God” or was He derived from God at some point in the eternity past? As far as I am able to understand from what has been written in current anti-Trinitarian literature, it is on this point that the present agitation finds common ground with the Nicene Creed. Both have Jesus Christ, prior to His incarnation, a “derived Being.”

The Nicene Creed reads - “I believe ... in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, ... begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.” (The Creeds of Christendom, Vol. II, p. 58) On the other hand, I have read and heard those taking an anti-Trinitarian stance state that the Word was “birthed” at some point in eternity past even as “Abraham begat Isaac.” This position is difficult for many other anti-Trinitarians to “swallow,” and they chose to express it as E. J. Waggoner did: - “There was a time when Christ proceeded forth and came from God, from the bosom of the Father, but that time was so far back in the days of eternity that to finite comprehension it is practically without beginning.” (Christ and His Righteousness, pp. 21-22) Whether expressed as in the Nicene Creed, or as stated by E. J. Waggoner, the conclusion is obvious, the Word is a derived Being, and therefore, is not co-eternal, or ever-existent. Thus the name - I AM - affirmed to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14), and claimed by the incarnate Word in the Temple (John 8:58), would be a false assumption.

The name - I AM (Ἐγὼ εἰμι) - a verbal form, conveys self-existence and ever-existence. This concept is attested in other New Testament references: 1) Heb 1:3 - “Who being (ὄν - present active participle of εἰμι - “to be”) the brightness of His glory.” He did not come to be that brightness (ἐγένετο - as in John 1:14 - “came to be flesh”), but was (ἦν), as in John 1:1, the “brightness of His glory.” 2) Rev. 1:17-18 - Literally - “I am the first and the last, even the Living One (καὶ ὁ ζῶν) and became dead, and behold living I am (ζῶν εἰμι) into the ages of the ages.” This Living One proclaimed himself in the same language as the Almighty. Compare the self declaration (Revelation 1:8) - “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and

the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty" - with a great voice "as a trumpet," which John heard proclaiming - "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (verse 11). Turning to see whose voice he heard, John testifies, I saw "one like unto the Son of man" (ver. 13). In the final chapter of the book the same self proclamation is given - "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (22:13).

The Biblical conclusion cannot be muted. The pre-existent Word was underived. He was in the beginning with God, and God in His own right. There never was a time in the eternity of the past that He was not. But not only was the Eternal Word underived but in Him was life original and unborrowed.

John's major epistle begins with the same emphatic pronouncement as his gospel, but more so. He wrote - "The One who was from the beginning (ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς)" we heard, we've seen with our eyes, we have touched with our hands - even "The Logos of the Life" (περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς) (1:1). Note it is a specific "life" - "the Life" (ἡ ζωὴ). John comments, it was manifest, we saw it, and bear witness to you that this eternal life (τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον) was with the Father (ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα) (not ἐν (in), nor ἐκ (out of) but πρὸς - "a plane of equality and intimacy, face to face with each other" - Robertson) even as he twice wrote in the Gospel - "the Word was with God (πρὸς τὸν θεόν) ..the same was in the beginning with God" (1:1-12). The "eternal life" manifest in "the Logos of Life" was original, unborrowed, even as the Logos was Himself underived.

Son of God

It should be quite obvious to any clear thinker and honest seeker of truth that inasmuch as the Scripture presents the Logos as underived and as an eternal, co-existent Deity - the I AM, "the Alpha and Omega," "the first and the last," "the beginning and

the end" - that the earthly human Father-Son concept cannot be applied except as in the Gospel of John, where the incarnate Logos is called both Son of God and Son of man. (John 3:14-16).

The Messianic second Psalm, which the New Testament applies to different experiences in the in-

carate existence of the Logos, must be given due weight in the appellation of the term, Son of God, to the Lord Jesus Christ. In this Psalm, there are Two, the same Two as John indicates in the prologue of his Gospel - "the Lord and His anointed" (2:2). Further, they are in face to face communion as indicated by John - "The Word was with (πρὸς) God." The discussion and the result of the communion is clearly indicated: The Lord declares that He has set His "anointed upon Zion, the hill of my holiness" (v. 6, Heb.; See margin) and the "Anointed One" announces the decreed purpose - "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee" (v. 7).

Paul very early in his ministry stated one fulfilment of this Messianic prophecy. In his recorded sermon in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, he declared:

We declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. (Acts 13:32-33)

In his letter to the Church at Colosse, he declares Christ to be "the firstborn (πρωτοτοκος) from the dead" (1:18). He states the reason for such a conclusion - "that in all things He might have the pre-eminence." Prior to His resurrection, others had been called from the dead, notably, Moses, and during His own earthly ministry, Lazarus. This same term of pre-eminence (πρωτοτοκος) is used by Paul to designate the relationship of Jesus Christ to all creation - "He is the firstborn of every creature" because "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (1:15, 17) - the same as John declared in the prologue of his Gospel - "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (1:3).

This same word is used in Hebrews in connection with another fulfilment of the "second Psalm." It is asked, quoting the Psalm, "For unto which of the angels said (God) at anytime, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee"? The answer is clearly - none of the angels. But when this pre-eminent one (πρωτοτοκος) was brought into the world, God commanded, "let all the angels of God worship Him" (Heb. 1:5-6). In quoting Psalm 2, another text which makes explicit the status meaning of the decree is

cited. God told David that to his son, Solomon, He would be his father, and "he shall be my son" (II Sam. 7:14)

Literally, David fathered Solomon, but God gave Him a status relationship to Himself. In the messianic fulfillment, the "anointed" One became, in the incarnation, "the son of David." The angel Gabriel specifically told Mary that the "Holy One which was to be born of her "shall be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). The word, κληθησεται, is future passive indicative, and does not mean, "was called" or "had been called" the Son of God but "shall be" in this new relationship "called, Son of God." Further in the Greek text, the article is omitted before "Son of God" (υιος θεου). Robertson remarks that this omission makes it possible for Son of God to stand as a title, "like the Son of Man was a recognized designation of the Messiah" (Word Pictures in the NT, Vol. 2, p. 14). The anti-Trinitarian refuses to recognize the meaning of the status implied in the term "Son of God" as given to Jesus Christ.

The Bible gives unquestioned place to Jesus as the Second Adam. (I Cor. 15:47) In so becoming, He became a Son of man, nullifying the power of death (Heb. 2:14). Having regained the lost dominion (Micah 4:8), He was exalted "as a Son over His own house" (Heb. 3:6); designated to be "High Priest forever after the Order of Melchizedec" to bring "many sons to glory" (Heb 2:10).

It is clearly stated that Adam was "the son of God" (Luke 3:38). But in Adam all die (I Cor. 15:22). However, in "the last Adam" who, too, became a "Son of God," all who will, can find life. In the same prologue which outlines the transition from the Word who was Deity to the Word who became flesh, it is stated that "as many as received Him, to them gave He authority (εξουσιαν) to become sons of God" (v. 12). To subject the Father-Son relationship to the level of the flesh is to blur the intent of Christ's condescension to restore the first dominion lost in Adam. While it is true that Christ in regaining that dominion pointed those who believed on Him to a new Father, it was a higher conceptual relationship than that of the flesh. We are to pray - "Our Father who art in heaven" (Matt. 6:9).

Thus far in analyzing the Scriptural revelation of God, we have noted the two major events in the

New Testament where the Messianic second Psalm is declared fulfilled, - in the incarnation and the resurrection. Further, we have observed that John in the prologue to his Gospel clearly and plainly sets forth the Godhead as being Two co-eternal Beings - the Theos and the Logos. This echoes the prophet Zechariah who naming the coming Messiah as "the BRANCH" declares that "the counsel of peace shall be between the Two of Them - "the Lord of hosts" and that Branch, the Incarnate One (6:12-13).

The Holy Spirit

With the Incarnation, the Holy Spirit is introduced in the New Testament. As noted above, Luke made some very precise statements to Mary in regard to the "Holy One" which she was to conceive. When she asked, "How shall this be?" Gabriel replied - "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee" (1:34-35). This could be considered as using Hebrew parallelism - a mark of Hebrew poetry - and thus the conclusion drawn that the Holy Spirit is the "power" of God. But Luke was a Greek not a Hebrew, thus placing a question on whether he would use this Hebrew literary form. However, it should also be noted that Gabriel differentiated between the "Holy Spirit," and "the power of the Highest." This Jesus was to be called, "the Son of the Highest" (1:32). Here again in the Greek text, the article is omitted as in verse 35 before "Son of God" thus denoting a title rather than a previous state of being. The same future tense of καλεω - "shall be called" - is used as in verse 35. Never do we find the name - "Son of the Holy Spirit" - used in connection with Jesus Christ. Perhaps we should ask ourselves, "Why?"

When we come to the book of Acts, while Luke gives the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost in the symbolism of "cloven tongues like as of fire" (2:3), he writes of the Holy Spirit as a Being in full charge of operations, a Divine CEO, of the Church Christ left behind. Observe carefully: To the Pneumatikoi (men of the Spirit) in the Church of Antioch, "the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul to the work whereunto I have called them" (13:2). And when Paul and Barnabas left on this first missionary journey, Luke's record reads - "being sent forth by the Holy Spirit" (ver. 4). There is

no way that one can conclude from these verses that the Holy Spirit is simply a power or an influence, but rather the opposite, a Being who can make decisions and issue commands. Further, the book of Acts clearly distinguishes between the directives of the Holy Spirit, and the direct intervention of Jesus as Lord in the life of Paul. (See Acts 9:4-5, 23:11; 16:6-7, 21:4, 11)

While there are specific verses in the Gospel of John and his first Epistle which relate to the question of the Holy Spirit - John 14:16-18; 16:7, 13-14; 1 John 5:6 - we shall pass to the symbolism of Revelation.

In Revelation 4, John beheld a throne set in heaven and on the throne a Being veiled in light "like a jasper and a sardine stone" (vs. 2-3). "Before the throne" were "seven lamps of fire" defined as "the seven Spirits of God." While there were other attendants at the throne - the four and twenty elders, and four living creatures (ζωα), only Two divine entities are symbolized. They are pictured as distinct from each other - One on the throne, and One before the throne.

In Revelation 5, the scene changes - a Third symbol is added. "A Lamb as it had been slain" is seen standing "in the midst of the throne" (5:6), or as Thayer translates this verse - "nearest the throne" (p. 402). The "Lamb" is further defined as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (5:5), in other words, the Incarnate Word, resurrected and ascended to the right hand of God. There is, however, a distinct difference in the two scenes which dare not be overlooked. No longer is the "Seven Spirits of God" before the Throne, but has become incorporated as one in the Lamb as "eyes" and "horns" which has been "sent forth into all the earth." This is symbolism and must be interpreted, yet there are certain aspects of this symbolism which stand forth with a clear revelation of relationships in the Godhead since the Incarnation. This needs to be carefully studied. Within these symbolisms of Revelation 4 and 5, and the mysteries involved with the question asked by Mary, "How shall this be?" there is a veil drawn before which we must bow in silence.

There is one further point in the book of Revelation which involves the Spirit which needs meditative contemplation as to its significance and meaning.

Rev. 22:17 reads - "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come." Two distinct entities, yet they speak with one voice. Is this saying that Christ became one flesh with us that we might become one Spirit with Him? #

What the Old Covenant Teaches

We return briefly to "Salvation Basics." The experience of "the church in the wilderness" (Acts 7:38) illustrates the gospel proclaimed by Paul which resisted, created controversy in the apostolic church.

God in a direct manifestation of His power brought Israel out of Egypt. They passed through the Red Sea on dry land (Ex. 14:16). They were fed manna of God's providing (Ex. 16:15); they drank water from a rock (Ex. 17:6). Arriving at Mt. Sinai, they heard God speak audibly amidst fire and smoke. The confrontation with God was so awesome, that the people requested that God not speak with them again, but rather that Moses tell them what God required of them (Ex. 20:18-19). To this He consented.

In a prologue to the judgments which God gave Moses to set before the people, He stipulated - "Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold" (Ex. 20:23). At the conclusion of the recitation of these judgments, God plainly indicated that this covenant contained no mercy. It was either obey: live; disobey: die (Ex. 23:21). When the people heard these commandments of the Lord, they responded with one voice - "All the words which the Lord hath said we will do" (Ex. 24:3). After Moses wrote them in a book, he again read them to the people. The response was the same - "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient" (24:7). On the basis of the word of the people, God entered into a covenant with Israel and both the book and the people were sprinkled with blood (vs. 7-8).

Within forty days, while Moses was in the mount with God, the very first command in the prologue to the covenant was broken; Israel worshipped before the golden calf (Ex. 32:7-8). The first lesson of the Old

Covenant experience is - Man cannot of himself do what God wants him to do, however much man may commit himself to do so. In God's reaction, and the intercession of Moses, we find the basic elements of the Gospel given to and proclaimed by Paul.

God had clearly stated in the covenant, there was to be no mercy if broken. God sent Moses down from the mount and back to the Israelite camp. In doing so He declared - "Thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves" (Ex. 32:7). Rejecting them, God would destroy them and make of Moses, "a great nation." To this Moses would not consent. He admitted the gravity of the sin of Israel, but pled - "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin --; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou has written" (32:31-32).

God provided another way. He would make a covenant with Moses and with Israel (Ex. 34:27). Moses became the surety. God dealt with Israel through him. This interim covenant could be called a "type" covenant because it became the earthly pattern of the new covenant of which Christ is surety and the mediator. God deals with us through Him.

If you will take time to note the chapters in Exodus from the time that Moses ascended into the mount, to the time he was sent down because of Israel's transgression - Chapters 25 through 31 - you will find that God was giving Moses instruction regarding the erection of the wilderness sanctuary. In this would be set forth in ceremonial type the gospel message of man's only hope.

The book of Exodus is followed by Leviticus in which are outlined the services to be carried out in the sanctuary structure, the blue print of which was given to Moses during the forty days in the Mount (Ex. 25:8-9). Two major points form the basis for the objective of the services: 1) When man sinned, he brought a prescribed offering (Lev. 4). On this victim, he placed his hand and confessed he had sinned. The priest then took the blood and "made atonement for him concerning his sin, and if (was) forgiven him" (4:20, 26, 31, 35). The sinner confessed, but only the ministry of the priest through the blood brought forgiveness. This is the second lesson

resultant from the Old Covenant experience.

2) On the annual Day of Atonement, the High Priest alone ministered the atoning sacrifice. The penitent could afflict his soul, but only the ministry of the High Priest with the mingled blood of the bullock and the Lord's goat could cleanse his soul. (Lev. 16:18, 29-30). This is the third lesson.

All of this was merely ceremonial, - "the law made nothing perfect" (Heb. 7:19). The reality was Jesus Christ, "the Lamb of God which beareth the sin of the world" (John 1:29, margin). As the great High Priest, He is able to "purge (our) conscience to serve the living God" (Heb. 9:14).

This can be summarized in Paul's all inclusive statement - "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:1-2).

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"More Than the Crucifixion"

Last year, we received two special issues of publications which reflect what is called, "Historic Adventism." Each contained readings for a Week of Prayer. Both reflected the Tridentine Gospel of Rome in their various articles by various authors. One article in Landmarks actually carried the section heading we have listed above (p. 25). We will quote it in full context so that you can consider for yourself the implications of what is written.

Since Christian character perfection is developed through obedience to every word of admonition which God has revealed to us on any given point in our Christian experience, is this a genuine possibility for us today? The glorious news is that Christ demonstrated that this is so.

If the single purpose of Christ's incarnation was to die on Calvary and be raised from the dead, that was accomplished in three days. If, in addition, He needed to train His disciples, this was completed in 3 years. Yet, Christ spent over 33 years upon the earth. Why? so that He could give us an example as a child, teenager and adult, (that) a man, filled with the Holy Spirit, could over-

come sin. "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in His steps: Who did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." 1 Peter 2:21,22.

Read it carefully once more. Where is the cross of Calvary placed in the purpose of Christ's incarnation? In third place behind the Example set, and the training of Twelve men. Christ could have spent 66 years setting an example, and there would still have been no salvation. Example does not give salvation, it merely shows how saved men should live. He could have taught the Twelve for another three years, yet unless they had the message of a risen Lord, their preaching would have been in vain. (1 Cor. 15:14). The premise assumed in this scaled value of the Incarnation reveals the writer's ignorance of Scripture.

First, the 33 years were lived for more than a mere Example. The book of Hebrews states that Christ "hath suffered being tempted" so that "He is able to succor them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). He was made like unto "His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people" (2:17).

Paul, after reviewing Abraham's experience, declares that his experience of imputed righteousness "was not written for his sake alone... but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on Him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised for our justification. Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ ... and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 4:21-5:1-2).

"Without shedding of blood is no remission of sins" (Heb. 9:22). This is primary, not third on the list. Of the victorious ones who overcome the "dragon," it is written - "They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and the word (not "works") of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto death" (Rev. 12:11). They perceived the Example as Peter pictured it, not out of context as Standish quoted it. Read all of 1 Peter 2:21-24. It is the Christ of the Cross that is the Example.

Let us check some other distorted Scripture. Mark

begins his gospel with the words - "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." He begins the recitation of that Gospel with the preaching of John the Baptist. John's Gospel after the prologue starts at the same point in the life of Jesus (1:19). Matthew while reciting events connected with the birth of Jesus, begins his narration with the ministry of John (Matthew 3:1). Luke alone cites a single story from the childhood of Jesus, and then also starts his recitation of what Jesus did and said with the ministry of John (Luke 3:1-3). The emphasis of the Gospels is on the 3 years of public ministry and the final week of that ministry leading to the Cross and Resurrection.

Is there more than the Crucifixion? Yes, there is a resurrection, and an ascension of our Lord to the right hand of power and authority, where as High Priest He ministers to us His "redemption" (Rom. 3:24). There as High Priest, He alone will accomplish the final atonement - with my works? Never, for if any man trusts in his works "the same soul will (God) destroy from among His people" (Lev. 23:30).

Let us free ourselves from this deceptive work-merit gospel of Rome and "stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free" - that liberty purchased at Calvary.

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"Kneeling in faith at the cross, (the sinner) has reached the highest place to which man can attain." Acts of the Apostles, p. 210

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