

No Greater Liberty

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Introduction

Supposing you consider from time to time the idea of liberty, you more likely than not associate it first and foremost with this troubled country of ours. If I were to stand on a bustling street corner in Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, or here in Kansas City, and ask each passerby what first comes to their mind at the mention of the United States, no doubt the overwhelming majority of people would answer with either the word “liberty” or “freedom.” It is, after all, a concept which goes directly to the heart of what it means to be an American, and which you won’t find regarded near as highly within the collective consciousness of any place else in the world, the only real exception being the nation of Israel. Evidently, and I think very much in spite of those here who seem more and more to be arguing for less of it, liberty remains as American a thing as can be; you see, notwithstanding the wailing and moaning of my unhappy friends who for whatever reason have taken quite a strong disliking to the fair and impartial nature of the thing itself, as Americans you and I may

still take our freedom for granted. Again, contrary to what a few malcontents might say, this notion of liberty is by a long way nonexistent elsewhere in the world. That is, the American experience of liberty in particular—to which most of us give little to no consideration, but by which our lives are made infinitely better than if we were deprived of it—occurs in such a way almost no place else. Can you, for example, think of any place abroad, of any culture or society where liberty maintains as significant a role? The truth is that by and large the world craves liberty. Indeed, even now there is no freer nation, and few, if any, more desirable places to go in the world. We need only to look at the rate at which folks from all over the world continue to immigrate to the United States as compared with other nations, and the picture becomes as clear as day. Studies have shown that the United States has more immigrants by far than any other country in the world, with an estimated 46.6 million people. 19% of all immigrants reside here in the United States, almost 4 times as many as live in the world's next largest immigrant destination, Germany, which is home to a mere 12 million. Now why do you suppose that is? I for one believe it is due to the fact that no matter what corner of the world a person may be in, he or she is desperate to have just a little more freedom, a little more liberty.

As Americans we have been endowed with a unique gift of autonomy; that is, for all intents and purposes we are at liberty to go about our own lives however we see fit. There is no denying that throughout the course of our nation's history we have witnessed the size and scope of government expand radically, and yet, in the face of the slow but steady

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erosion of America's promise, and in spite of the tendency of empowered individuals to behave as kings rather than public servants, it is as a result of our collective extolment of this notion of liberty and by the grace of God that we continue to be the freest and most beneficent society the world has ever known.

But wherefrom exactly does our understanding of liberty originate? It is very evident if we study the writings of our nation's founders that liberty, or some form of it, was at the very forefront of their minds. Take for instance George Washington's words in a letter to the Reformed German Congregation of New York City in November, 1783: "The establishment of civil and religious **liberty** was the motive which induced me to the field—the object is attained—and it now remains to be my earnest wish and prayer, that the Citizens of the United States could make a wise and virtuous use of the blessings placed before them."

In a letter to James Madison in the spring of 1788, Washington wrote: "**Liberty**, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth."

And yet another of Washington's demonstrative statements on liberty, in delivering his first inaugural address to a joint session of Congress on April 30, 1789, he said: "The preservation of the sacred fire of **liberty**, and the destiny of the republican model of government, are justly considered deeply, perhaps as finally, staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people."

Moreover, there are the *Federalist Papers* and *Anti-Federalist Papers*, two collections of essays written by a number of our founders in an effort to encapsulate their philosophies regarding the shape they felt the American structure of government should take. These writings are replete with references to the concept of human liberty. It bears mentioning that while the Federalists, which included Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, John Adams and James Madison, did indeed firmly believe in a small, decentralized and accountable federal government, they were troubled by what they considered an unsustainable and vulnerable prevailing structure, which they sought to replace with a new constitution. They succeeded, of course, but against the wishes of the Anti-Federalists, who feared that the Federalists' new Constitution, which was to supersede the thirteen colonies' original Articles of Confederation, did not protect individual liberty and the rights of states adequately. Their contentions aside, however, both Federalists and Anti-Federalists alike valued and upheld the principle of individual liberty above all else; that much is clear.

Speaking to what he saw as the indispensable nature of liberty, James Madison wrote in *Federalist No. 10*: “**Liberty** is to faction, what air is to fire, an aliment without which it instantly expires. But it could not be a less folly to abolish **liberty**, which is essential to political life, because it nourishes faction, than it would be to wish the annihilation of air, which is essential to animal life, because it imparts to fire its destructive agency.”

Alexander Hamilton proposed in *Federalist No. 1* that the institution of a republican form of government, as opposed

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to those with an apparent “zeal for the rights of the people” was crucial to the avoidance of autocracy and the advancement of liberty. “The vigor of government,” he said, “is essential to the security of **liberty**; that, in the contemplation of a sound and well-informed judgment, their interests can never be separated; and that a dangerous ambition more often lurks behind the specious mask of zeal for the rights of the people than under the forbidding appearance of zeal for the firmness and efficiency of government. History will teach us that the former has been found a much more certain road to the introduction of despotism than the latter, and that of those men who have overturned the liberties of republics, the greatest number have begun their career by paying an obsequious court to the people, commencing demagogues and ending tyrants.”

Bearing to light the inherent fallibility of the judicial system as opposed to the excellence of liberty, in *Federalist No. 78*, Hamilton offered this consolation: “Though individual oppression may now and then proceed from the courts of justice, the general **liberty** of the people can never be endangered from that quarter . . .”

These few statements no more than scratch the surface with regard to the measures to which our founders went in order to profess their enthusiasm for the cause of liberty, and yet from them we can glean a great deal. Indeed, there can be no denying whatsoever the importance the individual’s personal and political liberty had to these men; we can read and find for ourselves in their own words the magnitude of their love of freedom as much as that of their resentment for tyranny.

We can see by virtue of history that our founders delighted in their idea of liberty, but now we must ask ourselves how precisely it was they became so enraptured with it in the first place. What had so convinced them that, of all things, liberty ought to have been the natural birthright of every living soul? To know the answer to this question, we first have to understand the fact that at the time the notion of a primarily self-governed society should have appeared an utter absurdity to the world at large. To be sure, a number of civilizations throughout history had already defined and embraced their own versions of a free society, however they had each envisioned their society through the lens of their preexisting culture, which automatically compelled that certain conditions be placed on the individual's liberty; that is, the prevailing culture in these societies ultimately determined who among them was free and who was not. Ancient Greece may serve as one example, where a man was free and had some personal and political liberties, so long as he was in fact a free man, so long as he did not have a master. But perhaps the best example of such a society is that of the First Persian Empire, where, under Cyrus the Great, citizens of all manner of ethnic and religious backgrounds were treated equally under the law, granted they paid tax and did not disturb the peace. The problem there was that the individual's freedom was not his or hers by matter of birth, but by matter of conference from Cyrus the king, which, naturally, is no freedom at all, for if Cyrus, or any king for that matter, could be the benefactor of their freedoms, he could just as easily have become the one to steal them away.

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To be sure, when Thomas Jefferson asserted in the Declaration of Independence, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, **Liberty** and the Pursuit of Happiness...,” he was affirming he and his fellows’ collective confidence in a principle seldom thought of before, let alone with the intent of basing upon it a system of government. To be absolutely clear, such a political philosophy, established wholly on the maxim that man was enriched with liberty by God, not by the state, nor by the king, nor for that matter by any other human authority, had been for the most part unheard of until then. Now, for us to best understand where and how our founders came by their convictions, we first ought to consider their inspirations, of which there were many, though none I suspect so pronounced or as of yet still so well-known as the English philosopher John Locke. Indeed, I have yet to find evidence that any other individual during or prior to the Enlightenment had near as significant an effect on the initial stirrings of the American consciousness as John Locke.

Accompanying a letter to a painter named John Trumbull in 1789, Thomas Jefferson drew in the margin a simple motif alluding to the triquetra, and scrawled in the midst of each of its three wings a name, identifying “...the three greatest men that have ever lived, without exception.”

In a letter commissioning this fellow for their portraits no less, Jefferson was indicating Francis Bacon, Isaac Newton, and John Locke. When later asked by Alexander Hamilton

about their finished portraits on display in his home, Jefferson called them his “trinity of the three greatest men the world has ever produced.”

Jefferson was not the only one to celebrate the work and philosophy of John Locke. On the contrary, in fact, most historians today agree that Locke was likely the most widely-read and often-cited philosopher leading up to the Revolutionary War and throughout the formative years of the republic. Benjamin Franklin also lauded the intellectual, calling him one of the best English authors to have ruminated on the matters of history, rhetoric, logic, and moral and natural philosophy. To name just a handful of others, John Adams, Samuel Adams, James Monroe, James Wilson, James Otis and Noah Webster, all of whom were powerfully involved in the excitation of the American experiment in government by exclusive consent of the governed, in each their own words praised both the principles and the person of John Locke.

Albeit composed over the course of his life, the larger part of Locke’s works were published between 1689 and 1695, the last of which therefore would have come into the fray of philosophical discourse only nine years prior to his death in 1704. This means that his writings, particularly the *Two Treatises of Government* (1689), *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), and *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695), the three articles most indicative of his principles, and thus presumably those most informative to the outlooks of the founders, would have been in circulation for less than eighty years when there began increasing among the New England

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colonies an attitude of hostility toward the British crown. Locke's principles as delineated in his writings would have seemed then to the American patriot a near perfect reflection of his own, and thus, I have to imagine, would have served as a special source of encouragement to him, as a provenance of some consolation that his cause was a good and warranted one.

In his *Second Treatise of Government* Locke asserted, "Though the Earth, and all inferior creatures be common to all men, yet every man has a property in his own person. This nobody has any right to but himself. The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his."

Hereby Locke was saying that both a man's work and whatever he might gain by his work, are naturally to be counted as his own property. That much is Biblical. Ecclesiastes 5:18 says, "Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the sun all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion." Here we have support in the Scriptures for private property rights, which to Locke served as the basis for an individual's liberty. His idea was that if to begin with one's body did not belong to him, then nothing one might have worked to achieve with his body belonged to him either.

Without a doubt Locke was onto something, and were it not for his theories of natural rights, private property, and so forth, it is for certain that you and I would not know freedom today so intimately as we do. Nevertheless, the trouble with Locke, Washington, Jefferson, Adams, Franklin, and so forth is that to them liberty concerned one thing, and one thing

only. Its purview was entirely one-dimensional. As we will see, while certain principles of Scripture inspired Locke, and by means of association many of our founders as well, the Bible did not take up full residence in their hearts and minds. They alluded to it often in their writings, and some even read and studied it daily, but for the most part they did not make the word of God their ultimate and final authority (for that they chose the scientific method instead). If they had then I suspect most Americans today would view their freedom in a much different light. You see, despite all you've heard, the United States is not, and never was, a Christian nation. It was raised up by Christians and non-Christians alike. The founders were not only Christians like John Jay and Patrick Henry, but also humanists and deists like Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine. In any case, for a nation to be a Christian nation, it must have Christ as its head. That much should be obvious to anyone, and try as you might, you will not find in any of our founding documents a single mention of the name Jesus Christ. You'll find "God," "Creator," and "Providence," but you will not find Jesus Christ.¹

Psalms 33:12a says, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord." That has never been true of the United States in any official capacity, and it is not true of any nation in the world at present. As always, it may be true of individuals

¹ Alexander Hamilton once said, "The greatest man that ever lived was Julius Ceasar." Upon his death in 44 B.C., Julius Caesar was officially promoted to the status of a deity in Rome. He was called Divus Iulius, or, the Deified Julius, and a temple was built in his honor. His great-nephew, adopted son and heir Octavian thus became known during his reign as "divi filius," that is, the "son of god." By his own admission, Hamilton's god was not the God of the Bible. So far as he was concerned, the greatest man that ever lived was not Jesus Christ, but a counterfeit straight out of the Imperial cult of Rome.

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(Psalms 146:5), but it is not true as we speak of any nation. The god of this nation was never given a proper name, first of all because it's not a person, and secondly, so that anyone may call it whatever they will, whenever they will. The American god as worshipped by the vast majority of our founders, therefore, is not Jesus Christ; it is the unrestricted, unviolated human will. You say, "How do you know that for sure?" I know it for sure because there is nothing in this country that every citizen treasures more than their freedom. The American god, then, we must understand, is personal freedom. Perhaps you think that freedom can't be a god. Well, then I'll just prove it to you. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers since the Revolutionary War have sacrificed their lives in reverence to this god. That's a lot of blood on one altar, and that's just for starters. There are more monuments on American soil dedicated to liberty and freedom than anywhere else in the world. If indeed we have not idolized freedom in this country, then what are we to make of the green giant in New York Harbor we've so lovingly named *Lady Liberty*? What are we to make of the fact that people of all manner of faith systems come from all over the world to live the "American dream?" The only explanation is that in the United States it has been established that nothing may displace or supersede the sovereignty of the individual, not Allah, not the Buddha, not Mother Nature, not the virgin Mary, and not even Jesus Christ.

Now, in the process of writing this book I've come to find out that, whereas every American has inherited from our forefathers a unique cultural identity characterized by per-

sonal freedom, very few have any concept as to the true nature of liberty. That was little surprise, however, just as soon as I realized that most of our founders didn't either. Though it was I believe their greatest aspiration, when it came to the subject of liberty itself I have determined that Locke, Washington, Jefferson, and most others barely knew the half of it.

Ecclesiastes 6:7 states that, "All the labour of man is for his mouth, and yet the appetite is not filled."

The strange fact is that for all of our labor, all of the blood, sweat, and tears expensed in this country for the sake of liberty, as of today the majority of Americans grieve over some form of oppression or another, be it physical, mental, or emotional. For a nation whose god is personal freedom, and whose society champions above all else the independence and natural rights of all people, it is a curious thing to me that most Americans, who are without a doubt the freest people on the face of the earth, still desire more than anything to be at liberty. The most independent, freethinking people in the world, who truly need for nothing, still ache for liberty as though they had none at all. Why do you suppose that is? It is because, in spite of all their labor, their appetite is not filled.

We know that since its founding the United States has been regarded by its people and allies around the globe as the single finest example of a "free society." We've seen how our founders alluded often in their personal writings and correspondence to the individual's liberty as the sole object

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and life of our representative republic. The modern world's apperception of liberty is a uniquely American apparition, but anymore it is an altogether abstract principle, an idea that seems to have been stripped of almost all substantive meaning. In actuality, there are two types of liberty, and the sad fact is that both, although widespread not only in America, but throughout the world, have become virtually unknown to us. What are these two types of liberty? Where do they come from? Why should we care? As The culmination of a year-long study on the subject of Biblical liberty, in this book we will seek to answer these questions and more by presenting directly from the word of God the unvarnished truth about liberty, its twofold nature, origin, and purpose. If you have a Bible, as we begin I would ask that you keep it handy. Please read all of our references as we go along, and don't take my word for anything. Prove it out for yourself.

Condescend, merciful Father! to grant as far as proper these imperfect petitions, to accept these inadequate thanksgivings, and to pardon whatever of sin hath mingled in them for the sake of Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Savior; unto Whom, with Thee, and the blessed Spirit, ever one God, be rendered all honor and glory, now and forever.

Unto Him who is the author and giver of all good, I render sincere and humble thanks for His manifold and unmerited blessings, and especially for our redemption and salvation by His beloved Son. . . . Blessed be His holy name.

Mercy and grace and favor did come by Jesus Christ, and also that truth which verified the promises and predictions concerning Him and which exposed and corrected the various errors which had been imbibed respecting the Supreme Being, His attributes, laws, and dispensations.

By conveying the Bible to people . . . we certainly do them a most interesting act of kindness. We thereby enable them to learn that man was originally created and placed in a state of happiness, but, becoming disobedient, was subjected to the degradation and evils which he and his posterity have since experienced. The Bible will also inform them that our gracious Creator has provided for us a Redeemer in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed – that this Redeemer has made atonement “for the sins of the whole world,” and thereby reconciling the Divine justice with the Divine mercy, has opened a way for our redemption and salvation; and that these inestimable benefits are of the free gift and grace of God, not of our deserving, nor in our power to deserve. The Bible will also encourage them with many explicit and consoling assurances of the Divine mercy to our fallen race, and with repeated invitations to accept the offers of pardon and reconciliation.

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. . . They, therefore, who enlist in His service, have the highest encouragement to fulfill the duties assigned to their respective stations; for most certain it is, that those of His followers who participate in His conquests will also participate in the transcendent glories and blessings of His Triumph.

I recommend a general and public return of praise and thanksgiving to Him from whose goodness these blessings descend. The most effectual means of securing the continuance of our civil and religious liberties is always to remember with reverence and gratitude the source from which they flow.

The Bible is the best of all books, for it is the word of God and teaches us the way to be happy in this world and in the next. Continue therefore to read it and to regulate your life by its precepts.

(The preceding is an extract from the personal writings of John Jay, an author of the *Federalist Papers*, the original Chief Justice of U. S. Supreme Court, second governor of New York, and second president of the American Bible Society.)

1. *Free Will, or the Liberty of the Flesh*

Some are apt to wonder what liberty has at all to do with Christianity or the Bible. The answer, I have found, is nearly everything. In fact, the basic principle of liberty is as fundamental to Biblical Christianity as the principles of salvation by grace through faith in this dispensation, believer's baptism, or discipleship. Indeed, this is my foremost reasoning behind writing this book, for up to now I have been merely trying to fix upon what liberty ought to mean to you and I as Americans in a general sense. To that end alone, we would have no further to look than the things presented in our founding documents. However, the Lord has made it abundantly clear to me that liberty promises much more than whatever personal or political freedoms we may experience in this part of the world, or even in this lifetime. It is my view after much prayerful study that liberty has a great deal more to do with the Scriptures than it does with the United States Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, or any other founding document. If anything, I would say that it is simply because of the peculiar faith

of certain of our forebears in the promises set forth in the Scriptures that we came to inherit the freest nation on earth in the first place, and it is only by the grace of God that the United States remains even today the most favorable of situations in the world for anyone who has a desire to exercise their will freely and deliberately.

Now, inevitably, the argument arises in some form or other that if God indeed intended all men to be free, and secured by design for them the rights to life and liberty, as Locke suggested, how then is it that we should live in a world where oppression and inequality of races and societies persist, where human trafficking, slavery, genocide, murder and rape transpires every day? This equates to nothing more than an argument either against the existence of God or against the notion of individual liberty, either of which would be irrelevant without the other. It's a similar argument in nature to that which contends that if a god existed who cared so immensely for humankind as Christianity claims, such a god could not in its goodness permit egregious things to happen to good and decent people. Interestingly enough, however, the rebuttal to any such argument lies to a great extent within the Scriptural context of liberty itself.

If we look, we'll see the word occurs a total of 25 times throughout the Bible. It appears 8 times in the Old Testament, and 17 in the New Testament. Its first mention is found in verse 10 of Leviticus 25. For context, let's begin in verse 9:

“9 Then shalt thou cause the trumpet of the jubile to sound on the tenth day of the seventh month, in the day of atonement shall ye make the trumpet sound throughout all your land. 10 And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim **liberty** throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family. 11 A jubile shall that fiftieth year be unto you: ye shall not sow, neither reap that which groweth of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of thy vine undressed.”

Here, just as in the rest of the book of Leviticus, Moses is passing on to the Jews—particularly those of the priestly tribe of Levi—the word and will of God. In all 27 chapters of Leviticus, through Moses God is handing down to the Levitical priesthood direct instructions for dealing with matters of diet and behavior, atonement for sins, purification, sacrifice, capital punishment, marriage, burnt, sin, peace and other offerings, feasts and holy days, and the significance of blood. Chapter 25 has to do specifically with the year of Jubilee. Spelled “jubile” in your Authorized Version, it’s designated as the year following every seventh sabbatical year, which, to do the math, translates to every fiftieth year in the Jewish calendar.¹

1 It’s key to remember that the legislation set forth by God in the books of the Law, (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy) was intended for none other than the children of Israel. The Old Testament is abundantly clear on this; whether you like it or not, the first 39 books of your Bible were written to and only to Jews living prior to the Church Age, or the Age of Grace. Having a firm grasp on this is essential, not only for you to understand the Scriptural implications of liberty, but to understand

You see, if we apply to the word “liberty” in verse 10 the rule of first mention, we should be able to find out its fundamental doctrinal context throughout our Bibles. By reading Leviticus 25 in its entirety, we can be sure of several things. First and foremost, God is prescribing to the Jews through Moses that a super-sabbatical year be observed in the fiftieth year (Year of Jubilee), in addition to the “Shmita” (meaning “release” [verses 1-8]), which was to be observed in the seventh and final year of every agricultural cycle. Also apparent from verses 14-18 is God’s opinion of oppression and slavery among his people. In verse 18, He commands the Jews explicitly not to subjugate one another, but to fear Him. The Jews were thereby forbidden to take their own as slaves under any circumstances. Thus, to me, it seems obvious that at the onset a part of God’s plan with the nation of Israel was to create the world’s first known “free society.” Herein Scripture tells us a great deal of what we need to know about liberty, for had the Jews at that time actually given the proper care to living in accordance to the will of God as revealed to them through Moses, a free people they most certainly would have been (Psalms 81:10-16). Indeed, the ramifications of their disobedience to God have followed them doggedly throughout history, and still today as a nation Israel faces continual threat and vilification from hostile actors in the Middle East and abroad. Albeit now internally perhaps the freest and most autonomous nation on earth next to the United States, Israel is a far cry from a free society in the sense God intended. For the last 70 years alone, since its establishment in 1948, the state of Israel has been under constant siege.

your Bible generally (see Clarence Larkin’s book *Dispensational Truth; or God’s Plan and Purpose in the Ages*).

It's nonetheless by Israel's sorrowful example that we may now grasp the Biblical and spiritual implications of liberty in our own lives. There is little elsewhere in the Old Testament to indicate the Jews so much as once observed the Jubilee. It's not mentioned anyplace else in Scripture. What's mentioned all through the Old Testament, however, is the Israelites' recurring infidelity and ensuing exile and subjugation to the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon. So, by now putting Leviticus 25:10 into this context we observe that God's own impression of liberty is in actuality twofold, with both a positive and negative definition. Expressly, whereas the Lord intended that liberty would be for Israel the natural outcome of their adherence to the law, it was equally as much a part of His design they had the will to choose one way or another, the unique volition either to fulfill His desire for their lives or deny it altogether. To put it another way, liberty was for the nation of Israel a promise of both spiritual and physical restoration from God only to be fully realized in its complete and total obedience to Him, while at the same time the free will of the nation to disregard that promise entirely. Psalms 119:41-45 says:

“41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O Lord, even thy salvation, according to thy word. 42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in your word. 43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgements. 44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. 45 And I will walk at **liberty**: for I seek thy precepts.”

Herein the psalmist (it's unknown who, but we are safe to assume David, Ezra, or Daniel) validates the fact that honest-to-goodness liberty is gotten as a result of living after and according to God's will. Notice the psalmist doesn't say that he's compelled or even required to do anything for God's sake; on the contrary, verse 41 portrays the psalmist under no obligation from God whatsoever; rather, we find him in prayer, with a practical and sincere desire that God would do a transformative work in his heart. He is requesting that God's will be done in his life. God's will is not forced or prescribed.

We have therefore two definitive types of liberty present in Scripture. The first, as a matter of course, is synonymous with man's free will (Joshua 24:15, John 7:17), with which our Creator dignified us the same instant he conceived of us in Adam. It would seem that free will and the notion of liberty espoused by John Locke, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, not to mention most of the American public today, are actually one and the same. Indeed, they are, and that much is evident from the outset of man's existence on earth. It's demonstrated in the fall of man, in Genesis 3, where we see the first instance of man being faced with a critical choice to make between his will and God's will. We see it repeatedly throughout the Old Testament with the apostasy of Israel. We see man's inherent liberty, his free will, emblazoned throughout the history of the world, and still today, with so many folks continuing to look after the mainstream news media and government social programs, religion, Godless philosophy and phony science for all the answers to life's problems; and whereas they have yet to find any answers, notice they are free all the same to bang

their heads against the metaphoric wall; notice they are at liberty to do so, to cast about in the dark, to stumble down every path imaginable. To that point, is not the atheist himself justifiable and living proof of God's affection for liberty?; is not the Moslem, the Buhddist, the Pagan, or the religious Jew?; why not the Roman Catholic, too, or even the Bible-believing Christian who is living in apostasy?

There's no disputing that this type of liberty, which we've identified simply as free will, is integral to all human consciousness. All the five-point Calvinists haven't got a clue, since there's no disputing, either, that every one of us is born with our free will as a direct reflection of the intelligence of our Creator. Nevertheless, some folks nowadays—and not just theological determinists—take exception to the very concept. More or less, they find the principle of individual liberty objectionable because it gives allowance for speech, ideas, actions, or behaviors that may collide with their own code of ethics or self-inspired sense of morality. This is the very definition of bigotry, and yet we see that even bigots are given allowance by virtue of their liberty to try and put constraints on the free will of others. Their trouble is they have been duped by the likes of Hegel, Marx and Lenin, Wells, Nietzsche and Freud, into thinking that social justice and civil uniformity are somehow preferable to liberty. You'll notice, by the way, that none of these geniuses have ever suffered so much as five minutes inside a Cuban labor camp or Red Chinese prison; not one of them has ever been sodomized with the barrel of a rifle or beaten within an inch of their life as a captive of al-Qu'aida or Hamas. Nevertheless, I believe their problem is not at heart

with differing worldviews or ideologies. Ultimately, their problem is with God. It's my conclusion that anyone who has got a bone to pick with liberty has really just got a bone to pick with their Creator. You could not for one second convince me it's merely a coincidence the majority of these fools entrenched in the progressive movement today utterly reject the Bible and the Biblical premise of God. I'd have you try to name one predominant figure involved with the modern progressive, socialist, Marxist, secularist, environmentalist, feminist, and ethno-nationalist movements that's not a self-proclaimed atheist, agnostic, Wiccan, Pagan, Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist, liberal Jew, or Roman Catholic, but you couldn't do it. This is not to say there aren't some "Christian" formalists and legalists out there who aren't equally as despotic, but let me be clear in saying that they're just as far off the mark. My point is, there's not a one of these people who's not threatened or appalled in some way by the manifestations of another individual's free will, and not a one of them who could care an iota less about reading, let alone actually comprehending the Scriptures. The reason for this by now should be obvious to anyone with a third-grade education. We'd best get a solid hold of this thing, that liberty and God Almighty are invariably and incontestably linked together. There is no separating the two. And in as much as the first man was made in the image of his Creator, so then must our free will be without any real purpose or meaning should we fail to see it as a subtle yet verifiable implication thereto, and as a solemn guarantee from the living God that He, in the interest of preserving the truth and profound authority of His word, will not in this lifetime inhibit or deny us of it. Suffice it

to say that, so long as you consist upon this earth within a vessel of flesh and blood, your liberty can and will not be diminished at the hand of God. Sure enough, the sole obstruction or limitation there may be to one's liberty is but the same liberty, which the Lord has given in equal measure to another.

2. *Spiritual Liberty* & the *Tri-Partition of Man*

This brings us to the second type of liberty found in Scripture, which could very well be considered a recurring theme of the New Testament. If you're a Bible-believer you might have some idea as to what we're talking about; if you're unsaved, on the other hand, you simply won't have any clue. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." If you're "natural" in the context of this verse, then you're lost, unsaved, spiritually blind, and it just so happens we'll be talking about matters of a spiritual nature from here on out. So, if what comes next sounds like "foolishness" to you, then you had best read the verse again.

Our study no doubt is geared toward a saved crowd. Nevertheless, it is my sincere hope in writing this book that should any of you reading it in fact be unsaved, unsure or unconcerned about the realness of Heaven and Hell, or

to which place you'll be going when you die, you might be moved enough to not let another day go by without taking responsibility for the security of your soul. To do so is to exercise your free will in the manner God has always desired; it's to choose of your own volition an eternity spent in fellowship with your Creator; as you will see, it's even more to *liberate* your soul from the duress of your human nature once and for all time.

Of course we are dealing now with a spiritual liberty, and it's not at all to be confused with your free will. Your free will isn't spiritual by any means, but carnal, that is, an integral part of your flesh. You came with it fresh off the assembly line, so to speak. You were born with a free will the same as you were born with two eyes and a mouth. It's a function of the human brain, which everyone ought to know is just as much a part of their flesh as their teeth, kidneys, muscles, intestines or sex organs. Whether or not the academic world admits to this fact, our notions of personal and political liberty were developed around the singular principle of free will. Certainly, the ideal of a free society would have been originally conceived of as a society that both emphasized and encouraged the free will of every one of its members by providing that one's will could not violate the will of his neighbor. Now, though it serves as the most pristine model in existence for the extended association of any decent and well-disposed people, the free society in this sense remains of an utterly carnal nature, in that it still revolves around man's innate free will. Our task now therefore is to discern between this liberty of the flesh and that of the Spirit.

The semblance of the body to a prison has been alluded to repeatedly by countless philosophers, poets, novelists and artists since before the time of Christ. The Greek philosopher Plato, theologians John Calvin and Joseph Hall, poets William Blake and Victor Hugo, Confederate soldier and freemason Albert Pike and the expressionist painter Willem De Kooning each likened the body in some manner to a prison for the soul. Not surprisingly, I've heard similar comparisons made by manic-depressives, transgenders, paranoid schizophrenics and folks otherwise distraught, who have described feeling helplessly trapped or imprisoned within their own bodies, but this is beside the point, which is that we have listed above the names of several known figures in the realms of art, literature and philosophy who've got nothing in common with one another, except for their ambiguous portrayals of the body as either a cage or a prison cell for the confinement of the human soul, or "psyche," in addition to the rather telling fact that not a single one of them knew the Bible well enough to save his own soul. You see, regardless how wise or enlightened various scholars today might like to picture these men, in all likelihood they were as lost as lost could be; that is, when they died, their souls were bound straight for Hell. It's really something uncanny when you realize, with as gifted as all of these men were in their respective times and fields of study, there was not a one among them who ever could "rightly divide the word of truth" with any consistency.

So now we must ask ourselves, how was it each of them managed to arrive at the same profound and Biblical conclusion that man's "true self" was either literally or figuratively held

prisoner inside his fleshly body? It was not by any accident. On the contrary, they were describing the feeling of entrapment that each of them had experienced on a personal level, just like you and I have, if we're being honest with ourselves.¹ Theirs were in this case not merely sagacious or literary meanderings, but personal admissions about internal suffering passed off as scholarly wisdom. The problem is, they were speaking in wholly symbolic terms all the while attempting to expound upon something of a very real and material nature. Like a vast number of today's "Christians" who've almost ceased entirely reading or studying their Bibles, these men could not comprehend the soul as anything other than an abstract theory, an apparition existing as though on an alternate plane. It's no wonder the soul is by far the most misunderstood element in the original tri-partition of man (body, soul, and spirit), so we ought to be careful considering it in such obscure and unaccountable terms. After all, there's a reason Plato committed that the soul was "simply fastened and glued" to the body and "only able to view existence through the bars of a prison" (*Phaedo*, 82e). There's a reason that for thousands of years mankind has referred to his true self as though it were transfixed inside his body, and for just as long, through the practice of pagan rituals and ceremonies, suicide and euthanasia, or "mercy killing", has not left off striving to be free of it. The reason is this: Your soul has a palpable, physical location, and that's inside your body (Job 14:22; Daniel 7:15). To suggest the soul is somehow less phenomenal due to the fact it can't be seen would be like saying that gravity is a hoax. Albeit invisible to us, there's no

¹ Psalms 142:7a says, "Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name..."

denying the forces of gravity are as physical and effective as anything in the world that is visible; so it is also with your soul, an organism that's both physical and spiritual simultaneously. In practical terms, then, the soul is your spiritual body. Although it can't be seen, your soul possesses a bodily form and a mouth for speaking (Revelation 6:9-11), eyes for seeing (Luke 16:23) and ears for hearing (Jeremiah 4:19).

Furthermore, just as your body is uniquely suited to accommodate your soul, so your soul was designed to accommodate a spirit. Where do you think we dreamt up the "matryoshka principle?" God thought of it first in Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul."

Every human being that will have ever lived when all is said and done will have been composed of three distinct elements, each of which is noted right there, all within a chapter and six verses of the title page of your Bible. Your body consists of nothing other than "the dust of the ground," what's otherwise known as dirt. It's no wonder, then, that when we die in the physical sense our bodies, muscles, bones, organs and blood, through the process of decomposition, inevitably revert back to soil. In the same verse the Bible says that God breathed into man's nostrils the "breath of life."

John 3:8 says, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

Additionally, the Hebrew word for “spirit”, *rûwach*, is translated 92 times as “wind” and 27 times as “breath” in your Authorized Version. While neither the Greek nor Hebrew have any bearing on your ability as an English-speaking person to fully understand the word of God, we see there is a direct correlation in Scripture between all kinds of spirits and the invisible flow of air, a gentle breeze or gust of wind, and the respiratory system. Hereby we see the “breath of life” can only be a reference to the spirit of man.²

Lastly, God’s word resolves in Genesis 2, verse 7, with the first mention of the human being’s “true self;” once more it reads, “and man became a living soul.”

Notice man did not become a living body or a living spirit; man became a living soul *with* a body, *with* a spirit.

We are therefore made up of three parts (1 Thessalonians 5:23), a body (an “earthly” vessel literally made of earth), a soul (the “true self”), and a spirit (the breath of life). There’s no fixing humankind’s problems without understanding first what humankind is: a body, soul, and spirit, a triune being thus modeled after the image of its Creator, three distinct parts in one living creature.

Now this is as good a place as any for us to begin seriously examining the principle of spiritual liberty, for if your free will is the liberty of your flesh and it only interests your

² We will see later on that this is not the spirit a man needs in order to be “spiritual.” It more likely has something to do with the earth’s atmosphere, specifically oxygen.

flesh, does it not follow that spiritual liberty should solely interest your spiritual self, which is your soul? Moreover, if we're born already endowed with the liberty of the flesh and not with that of the spirit, what means have we to come by the latter? If we're to gather from the Scriptures that liberty in its original sense implied not only God's promise to the Old Testament Jew that had faith in Him and lived according to His purposes for their life, but just as well man's innate free will generally, we may infer that liberty can and will only occur in connection with some form of birth. You see, if we indeed were born into the liberty of the flesh, by what means or procedure outside of birth might we then possibly come by the liberty of the Spirit? For much the same reasons as Locke believed a man's liberty was his birthright for the duration of his time on this earth, I submit that spiritual liberty is almost no different, in the sense that it cannot be earned, but inherited solely in the event of birth. The difference lies not in their means of achievement, you understand, but rather in the time and place of their application. With this I mean to pose another question: what, when you die, will become of your free will? What do you suppose will become of the liberty of your flesh? Given its nature we have only to assume it will go right along with your body to the grave, where it'll be just as worthless to you as your old worn-out corpse. Certainly the freedoms you enjoy today as an American will be completely useless. If you've ever attended the wake or visitation service in honor of a friend or loved one who's passed away on account of an accident, illness or old age, perhaps in the midst of your grief you observed that something was different about the body situated within the open casket. This person you had

known and possibly loved for many years, now deceased, appeared nothing like themselves. There's a perfectly reasonable explanation as to why the people in our lives who've passed away looked after the fact so unfamiliar to us, and it hasn't got anything to do with the "setting" of the corpse's features or the displacement of its blood. It's got to do with the fact that something has really and physically abandoned that body. No corpse ever needed an undertaker to make it look different from a living body, the physical appearance of which is altered as a matter of course within mere seconds of its death, because the "true self," the soul, is no longer there.

The fact is that even if you and I have met face-to-face more than a hundred times I have never had the real pleasure of seeing you. I've seen your body, and sure enough I've seen the impression you've made on that body, but, all the same, I've never seen you. Just as we're able to recognize when a body is occupied with a soul, we're able to recognize when a body is not occupied with anything at all.

By catching on as best we can to the differences between the body, soul, and spirit, though between the body and soul especially, we are now better equipped than ever to learn the crucial difference between material and spiritual liberty. We've established that in order for a body to inherit free will it must be born, and that accordingly, for the soul to inherit a liberty of its own, it must also be born. Therefore we know that in order for there to exist both a physical and spiritual form of liberty, there must be for each of us the respective means to be physically *and* spiritually born.

In John 3:1-7, the Lord Jesus Christ reveals explicitly the process for a second, spiritual birth.

“1 There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.”

The Pharisee Nicodemus here is a symbolic representation of the unsaved religious individual who has completely missed the point of the Gospel. Because they are a “moral” person, well-meaning and even prayerful, or because they attend Catholic mass or worship services on Sundays or go regularly to confession, conveniently they’ve decided they’re inside God’s good graces, when there’s nothing anywhere in Scripture that supports that way of thinking. Interestingly enough, the view of Jesus held today by nearly all modern religious Jews is almost identical to that originally held by Nicodemus, who referred to Jesus as “rabbi” and “teacher.” He did not at first acknowledge the deity of Jesus Christ.

The passage continues with Jesus’ response to Nicodemus.

“3 Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?”

Notice Nicodemus' complete bewilderment. This was coming from a "religious leader," the Second Temple Period equivalent of a modern Bible scholar, an "old hand" with the Torah, and yet somehow, it seems in spite of all his scholarly research and study that Nicodemus missed every direct prophetic reference to Jesus Christ in the Old Testament; for instance, to His virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14, 9:6), His "triumphal entry" into Jerusalem (Zechariah 9:9) and His torture and crucifixion (Psalm 22 [predates the events approximately 1,000 years], Isaiah 50:6 [predates the events approximately 800 years], Daniel 9:24-27 [predates the events approximately 600 years], and Zechariah 12:10 [predates the events approximately 500 years]).

Jesus answers the foolish Nicodemus once more in verse five:

"5 Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

It's worth noting that nearly every "Christian" denomination infers from Jesus' words "born of water" a reference to water baptism. All Catholics and the majority of Protestants fail royally in their interpretation of verse 5. They've ignored altogether the context Jesus provides in the following verse where He replaces "born of water" with "born of the flesh," not to mention the extent to which water in the Bible is associated with physical birth (Genesis 1:20;

Isaiah 48:1; Proverbs 5:6-18), or the fact that water baptism and “spiritual birth” aren’t mentioned in conjunction in the Book anywhere at all. If not now, you’ll see in no time why this is dangerous territory; clearly, Jesus used the words “born of water” in reference to the “first” birth, or childbirth, which begins as soon as the mother’s “water” breaks.

Jesus in this passage told Nicodemus plainly that in order for him to have everlasting life, to be in eternity forever with his Creator, he had first to be born of the flesh and then of the Spirit. Nicodemus was only part of the way there. Obviously he’d been conceived by a man and woman, developed “in utero” and born of his mother’s womb “in the flesh”; his capacity for the Spirit of God, on the other hand, as a natural, unregenerate man, was completely nonexistent. We know this from the shallow nature of his questions and his surprise at Jesus’ answers. It has been suggested by a number of commentators that Nicodemus knew full well that Jesus had not been referring to a second physical birth and that his response was sarcastic in nature and meant only to get at “the heart of the matter,” which is just nonsense if I’ve ever heard it. For this very reason I’ve had to ask myself why on earth it’s such a strenuous thing for the majority of scholars to imagine that such a renowned, well-read and educated fellow as Nicodemus could really be as dimwitted as the Bible makes him out to be. Might it actually be that your typical academic scholars can’t stand for one second to have their own intelligence called into question, even by the word of God, and that by portraying Nicodemus in this instance as a stronghold of divine wisdom and spiritual discernment they’ve managed to avoid the trouble alto-

gether? After all, they can't permit the Bible to expose an educated, "Godly" fellow like Nicodemus as the lost and spiritually bankrupt man he truly was, lest they be forced to wrestle with their own spiritual abjection.

At best, this assertion, which ultimately claims that Nicodemus knew the Law better than God Himself, is based of course in pure conjecture; it's a presumption of massive proportions, since there's nothing in the Book to remotely suggest it, whereas there's plenty on the contrary. Indeed, Nicodemus should serve as a perfect example of the contemporary Bible scholar, the modern theologian or Bible college professor who's been educated in the original languages and all manner of social, historical, and religious disciplines beyond his own intelligence, but whose soul is lost and condemned all the same. They're represented just as well as any lost person by none other than our "natural" man in 1 Corinthians 2:14, because the things of the Spirit of God are "foolishness" to them; neither can they "know" nor "discern" spiritual things because they've not yet been spiritually born.

Now, the Calvinist writer R. C. Sproul on the other hand once used this same interaction in John 3 to enforce Calvin's theories of regeneration and predestination, by reasoning that for one to be born again like Jesus said, one must ultimately be "elected" by God to undergo a spiritual "metamorphosis," only after which may one be able at all to conceive of spiritual things and thus achieve the necessary faculties, whatever they may be, to place their faith in Christ's substitutionary death on the cross. The idea, as Sproul puts it, is that regeneration

must precede faith, which is also complete and utter nonsense, because it denies the very purpose and essence of faith to begin with; after all, we know on account of Hebrews 11:1 that faith is the “substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things **not seen.**” At its core this is by Sproul nothing more than an attack on the steadfast Biblical principles of the individual’s free will and the justification of souls by God’s grace through faith alone. Without fail you can rely on anyone who reckons they’ve surpassed the Book itself in terms of relevance or intelligence to make a God-forsaken mess of things.

You see, if we’re unable to believe that every word in a King James Bible was in fact given by inspiration and by itself altogether true and consistent with the character of God, we’re left with nothing really to believe in at all that’s not already been proven faulty by the same King James Bible, and so, notwithstanding the vast measure of opposing discourse that’s available to date concerning Nicodemus, it’s by the consummate example demonstrated in his life according to Scripture that we’ll continue deeper in our study on the Biblical significance of liberty.

3. Nicodemus & the Law of Liberty

The man Nicodemus is only written about on three occasions in one book of the Bible, namely in chapters 3, 7 and 19 of the Gospel of John. In the first instance, as we saw before, he is described as a “man of the Pharisees” and a “ruler of the Jews” who comes to meet with Jesus “by night,” that is, under cover of darkness, evidently so as not to be seen. This was clearly a secret meeting, at least so far as Nicodemus was concerned. The inference we ought to make here is that for him to speak with Jesus under any circumstance other than in private would have presented considerable risk to his reputation among his fellows as a Pharisee and member of the Sanhedrin, and as a political and religious authority among the Jews. Thus, with Nicodemus, the Bible describes a fellow deeply involved religiously and politically, who would have studied exhaustively and had a vast and comprehensive knowledge of the Old Testament. Once again, for all his dedication and wisdom, the Scripture shows us that deep down Nicodemus was in the midst of a personal crisis. In that he sought to meet with Jesus behind

closed doors, it's unmistakable that Nicodemus was in some way dissatisfied in his life, and believed so much as to risk his reputation on it that Jesus possessed some new truth or secret knowledge beyond the scope of anything he'd previously found in all his years memorizing, teaching and interpreting the Scriptures. His first recorded words in this light seem aimed at prying such information out of Jesus, at soliciting Him for new insights concerning the "deeper things" of God.

For our purposes it's important we see most of all that Nicodemus was a slave in every practical sense; for it ought to be a given that no man's truly at liberty who ventures out at night so as to act without fear of being discovered. While Nicodemus no doubt enjoyed certain of the benefits his position would have warranted him, we have every reason to believe his natural right to liberty, that is, his inherent free will, was under continual fire. While at that time Israel found itself under the jurisdiction of the Roman Empire, we may rest assured of the fact that Nicodemus was himself personally under subjection, but to no individual per se, nor to any particular state, nation or government, nor yet for that matter, to God; indeed, as a Rabbinic Jew, above all Nicodemus' bondage was to the Law.

A translation from the Hebrew *Halakha* which literally means "a walk," to this day the Law in Rabbinic Judaism is the basis for all religious and political practice, between which there's hardly any clear distinction. Similar in essence to Islamic Sharia law, Jain and Hindu laws, Buddhist Patimokkha, the Wiccan Rede, as well as the canon laws of the Anglican Com-

munion, Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and Roman Catholicism, Jewish Law represents an intensive “code of conduct,” a compendium of statutes, regulations and prescriptions whereby supposedly one may live “righteously” or in such a way that might please God. The main problem here is the same problem with almost every monotheistic belief system known to man: it’s based entirely on the premise that we are capable in and of ourselves to find favor in the eyes our Creator; it’s based without any Scriptural affirmation whatsoever on the worn-out notion that it’s possible for you and I through our best personal efforts to attain the grace of God. Then again, it’s Judaism, along with all the usual suspects of religious monotheism, that reject the full and undiminished word of God, in favor of nothing more than a glorified excerpt, that is, in this case, the Torah, or, the first five books of your Old Testament, which are said to make up the foundation for every legal custom and cultural tradition observed in the Jewish faith.

You’ll remember that liberty in the Bible is first introduced and exemplified in conjunction with the Law, in the legislative book of Leviticus no less, first as a part of God’s ultimate desire for the Hebrew people so long as they honored Him with their lives, and second, as each soul’s unique volition either to do so or not. This being renewed in our minds, it would seem Israel must have experienced a change of heart at some point between the time of Moses and that of Nicodemus. The Jews in the New Testament, particularly in the gospels, are a far cry from the defiant, idolatrous people we recall from the Old Testament. We’ve got to assume the period of about 400 years that took place

between the Old and New Testaments did quite a number on the Jews, for whereas there exist no Scriptural accounts after the time of Malachi the prophet (c. 395 B.C.) up to the start of John the Baptist's ministry early in the first century A.D., historical accounts reveal it was a season of progressive transformation for Israel. Now, this is a whole different study altogether, so for the sake of time I'll give just a few examples here as to what I mean. First of all, reliable scholarship suggests that the canonization of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible didn't begin until around 200 B.C., and the Hagiographa not until 100 A.D., while the Torah, or Pentateuch, which consists of the five books of the Law, had been settled as much as 500 years earlier, somewhere in the neighborhood of 400 B.C. I think it is hardly coincidental the Torah was formally dedicated at approximately the same time as Malachi finished prophesying to the people of Israel and the 400 "silent years" began. Surely living still with a great deal of the cultural effects of their captivity to the Babylonian Empire which lasted throughout the early 6th Century B.C., I reckon along with the building of the Second Temple in Jerusalem around 516 B.C. it would have served Israel as an indication of their profound need for spiritual revival to witness the Law of Moses officially granted Scriptural authority. Indeed, at first it would have inspired Israel once more to seek intently after God and live according to the articles of faith set forth in Mosaic Law, in order to avoid ever again incurring the consequences for their idolatry and rebellion, as marked by their preceding centuries' worth of abuse and slavery, debasement and oppression at the hands of foreign powers (Psalms 106:34-41). Evidently, however, Israel's spirit of revival was

short-lived and quickly overridden with one of codified religiosity, pedantic mysticism and superstition. Ultimately, we see that Israel went simply from one extreme to another, so to speak, from unabashed occultism, ritualism, devil worship and human sacrifice (Judges 2:13, 1 Kings 11:7, 2 Kings 16:3, Jeremiah 32:35) to Scriptural revisionism, legalism, self-obsession and self-reliance (Matthew 23, Luke 20:46-47), and in so doing they missed the point completely (John 10:22-31). Some time during the intertestamental period the Jews “found religion,” and yet, with the gospels as proof of the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, as evidence of God’s intent from the Bible’s first direct reference to Jesus Christ all the way back in Genesis 3:15, it made no difference. Put simply, as a nation, throughout history Israel has preferred spiritual bondage always over liberty, first paganism and baalism, then orthodoxism and regulationism, over the explicit promises of God, the result of which history shows is a collective loss of free will, a physical bondage, beginning with the conquest of Judah by Babylon in 586 B.C., and continuing to this day with the interminable acts of terrorism perpetrated against the modern state of Israel by the Mohammedans in the Middle East, as well as with the indiscreet political hostility towards Israel that’s come from the anti-Semites in the UN since as early as the late 1960s.

Much of the trouble the Israelites had throughout the Old Testament was to do with their proclivity for adopting certain aspects of their foreign occupiers’ religions and cultures. 1 Samuel 8:4-5 shows early on how they desired to be on par with other nations politically, in spite of their calling to be a people set apart from the rest of the world

(Deuteronomy 7:6-10). The intertestamental period yielded no exception. Following the sudden death of the murdering psychopath Alexander III in the year 323 B.C. and the ensuing struggle for control of the empire among a number of his generals, by and large the region was divided into three primary successor kingdoms, the Ptolemaic, Seleucid, and Antigonid empires, which collectively would dominate most of the Mediterranean and Palestine for the next 250 years. This is what has become known as the Hellenistic Age, during which the land of Israel, not to mention the better part of the known world at that time, was immersed in the ways and customs of the pagan Greek. Hellenistic influence on the Jew in particular was manifest by its furtherance of the corruption of his character, its infection of his religious identity with the trappings of humanism, hedonism, esotericism, Stoicism, Platonism, Epicureanism, and various other schools of thought, none of which were in any way compatible with the original, God-ordained principles of Old Testament “Judaism” as prescribed in the Law of Moses.

What seems likely to have come as a direct response to Hellenism’s profound impact on Judaism in general was the rise of sectarianism, that is, the development of certain political and religious factions among the Jewish people. There were some, like Nicodemus, who, in an effort to preserve their cultural and religious identities in the face of rampant Hellenization, applied themselves to coming up with more conducive methods for ensuring a more stringent adherence to the law. There were others among the well-to-do and well-connected, who, in order to maintain their position

in the eyes of the Greek as well as their affluent fellow Jew, embraced and even went so far as to incorporate into Judaism numerous elements of Grecian belief systems and philosophies. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter is that, rather than once and for all conforming their manner of thinking to the word of God, Rabbinic and Hellenistic Jews alike sought ways they might conform the word of God to suit their manner of thinking. You see, whether or not we like to admit it, even today the vast majority of Christians are engaged in the same sin, that of interpreting the Bible according to their own convenience or self-determined worldview; howbeit we've still the audacity to wonder why more than half of all professing Christians appear to lack so desperately anything at all resembling a spirit of liberty. In much the same ways as Israel has tried ever since the construction of the Second Temple to be somehow reconciled to God independent of Jesus Christ, far too many saved men and women presently go about their lives never once considering the word of God their final authority; and yet somehow they're baffled as to why the world sees within the Church no spirit of liberty, but, on the contrary, spirits of dogmatism and insincerity. My point for the saved individual in particular is this, that to ignore or minimize the clear emphasis on liberty in your Bible for the sake of denominational principles, extra-Biblical doctrine, or for nothing more than your own personal code of "ethics," is to reject, if not to redefine God's holy, perfect character in correspondence with our wholly imperfect nature.

To once again envision the Pharisee Nicodemus as he is first mentioned in the Gospel of John, I think we ought to be

able now more than ever to appreciate his state of mind and what compelled him that night to go out in search of Jesus. As a Rabbinic Jew in the midst of an increasingly secular, Greco-Roman Palestine, he and his comrades would have been most likely viewed by their Greek-speaking Jewish contemporaries as a bunch of “sticks in the mud,” as an unsophisticated lot of rigid, uncompromising “fundamentalists,” whose interpretations of Scripture and ideas as to its proper application in the life of the individual were antiquated, extraneous, if not for the most part irrelevant in the modernized, free-thinking society of first-century Judea.

There’s a certain parallel to be drawn between the social, religious and philosophical divisions among the Jewish people then and those becoming more and more prevalent as of today within our own communities and the American culture overall. In spite of the great many obvious differences between Roman Palestine in the early first century A.D. and the United States today, there still remains a definite correlation at least with regard to each society’s increasing indifference towards the gradual usurpation of the individual’s liberty by means of both secular and religious forms of totalitarianism, which is now just as it was then the inescapable result of prevailing political and religious establishments unwilling to permit the word of God its due position of influence, that is, to accept the word of God as their own final authority. It’s as true now as it was in those days that nearly every government official and religious leader shares in the exact same spirit of pride and self-aggrandizement as we’re told Lucifer had in Isaiah 14:12-14. Let’s not fail here to see verse 15 while we’re at it,

which makes clear the consequence for any such glorification that ventures to establish the self above or at variance with the mind of God. There will be more souls at the Day of Judgement on their way to a lake of fire because of pride than for any other reason you or I can think of; more men and women than I care to imagine will spend eternity separated from their Creator simply because they assumed they knew better than God.

At first, Nicodemus reckoned he knew better than Jesus Christ, when in reality all he knew anything about were the useless dogmas of a corrupted iteration of the Law of Moses, the original, divinely-inspired articles of the Hebrew faith diluted, revised and misconstrued over centuries in order to reflect the vast achievements, wisdom and spiritual acumen of mankind. Since the beginning of the Second Temple Period even until now, the focus of Judaism altogether has been squarely centered on the individual's own supposed capacity to gratify the speculative desires of their Creator, as opposed to the fact that every one of us living in this present time is by his or her very nature positively impotent and helpless in the pursuit to effectively please God, except our faith be placed exclusively on the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. Though seated face to face with the Savior of the world, the coming of whom the Scriptures had predicted upwards of 300 times, in that moment we're to understand this "man of God" was clueless as to the magnitude of his situation. He had not the faintest idea he was looking the embodiment of liberty itself square in the eye. Nevertheless, if we're to learn anything at this point concerning the person of Nicodemus, it should be that quite inadvertently he'd

arrived at the single most important moment of his life, where his lifelong dependence on the protocols of ritualism and religious duty would have seemed suddenly and profoundly at odds with the revolutionary character of Jesus, whose entire life's work had been summarized 700 or so years earlier, in Isaiah 61:1-3:

“1 The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; 2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; 3 To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified,” (Luke 4:17-19).¹

1 It's worth noting the similarities and differences between Isaiah 61:1 and Luke 4:18. Jesus Christ in the latter verse is quoting Isaiah, but you'll see that he changes up the wording, and he does so on purpose. Where Isaiah writes, “to proclaim liberty unto the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound,” Jesus says, “to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.” Jesus was affirming in his “misquotation” of Isaiah 61 that the body is without question a prison for the soul. By replacing the words “them that are bound” with “them that are bruised” the Lord Jesus Christ reveals beyond a shadow of doubt that without Him the soul of a sinner is bound in literal fact to the inside of his body. In particular His use of the word “bruised” is not to be overlooked. Bruising is the result of broken blood vessels under the skin. The prison of Isaiah 61:1 is synonymous with the human body, which has flesh and blood and is therefore naturally disposed to bruising.

You'll notice at the end of the last verse the culminating purpose of Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection: the glorification of the Father. Everything Jesus accomplished directly or indirectly from the moment of His physical birth in Bethlehem to that of His ascension was done above all to glorify His Father. Even though it's rarely preached in churches, and even though the unsaved world is completely oblivious to it, the fact is the intended purpose of man is identical to that of the Son of man, Jesus Christ. It is to bring honor and glory to God. Any purpose a fellow discovers for himself in life beyond that is purely supplemental and of no real consequence, when all is said and done. The only question is whether or not we will glorify Him as a matter of our existence, completely in spite of who we are independent of Him, and merely as evidence of His workmanship, or, as a matter of choice, which He desires most of all, through a personal walk and continual fellowship with His Son, our Mediator, the God-man Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 2:5). Either way, He'll be glorified. Even the likes of such Christ-denying atheists as Dawkins and Hitchens bring honor and glory to their Creator notwithstanding their best efforts to do just the opposite; for it's neither their speech nor actions, but their substance as living things—particularly the liberty of their flesh that *permits* them to speak or act however they will—that glorifies God, in as much as it affirms His genius and preeminence as the Author of all things and reveals His heart's utmost longing for the souls of men to be reconciled to Him, for the souls of men to walk at liberty, resting ever assured in the atoning blood of Calvary. Seeing then as God's glorified with or without our contribution or consent, with or without our faith, with or without any desire in our hearts

to serve Him, it's not His glory, but our spiritual liberty that's at stake. We have to acquiesce eventually to the fact that personal freedom in a free society is never by any means the effect of an absence of law and order, as the radical Marxist and paradoxical "Christian" anarchist movements would have us to believe; but, on the contrary, it's only ever an outcome of the implementation and continuous observance of law that is inherently restrained, modest and equitable. The United States has only been the freest society in the world for the last two and a half centuries because it sprung essentially out of the notion that so long as sinful men governed sinful men the inhibition of the individual's free will was destined from the outset, unless every enactment of law was written cautiously and with specific intent to frustrate the transgressive nature of the man both in and outside of government, so far as it put in jeopardy the free will of others. The founders of this nation for the most part I believe had a grasp on one thing at the very least, which is more than I can say for the sordid cast of characters, more or less beginning in 1933 with the progressive statist and Roman Catholic FDR, who've for the last century either neglected or mocked the principles and convictions of our predecessors almost always in favor of less liberty for the individual and more focalized government power. Indeed, our forebears knew well that it's a fallen, sinful state into which every man is born and from which originates his tendencies toward egotism, dishonesty, perverse behaviors and thoughts, intemperance, violence and hatred. Moreover they knew from personal experience that obtaining public office had never once absolved anyone of their human nature or its weakness in the face of temptation.

In the Old Testament God's intended purpose for any commandment or law was the sanctification of His people; it was expressly to have Israel be set apart from the rest of the world in every manner, so as to be representative and reflective of His singularity in power and righteousness. Nonetheless, from what we may glean of Scripture altogether pertaining to God's character, it would seem the functions of the Law itself, the actual physical works essential to its observance, to Him were of little significance, unless they fulfilled this initial desire of His to draw out of the main of His rebellious creation a peculiar people that would, by choosing to live in a peculiar way, bring the utmost honor and glory to Him. Of course we know that's not how it happened. On account of Israel's chronic problem with submission, an inherited symptom of the conglomeration of sin and free will, the peculiar law of Moses did not bring about a peculiar people at all; instead, as we find in the gospels, it brought about a particularly religious people, and I personally can think of nothing more typical of the world as a whole than religion, the traits of which I've noticed in every philosophy, ideology, worldview and culture that's ever existed. In practice I believe even antitheism betrays just as religious a frame of mind as Orthodox Judaism, Sunni Islam, or Roman Catholicism. Religious practice, after all, has never in any real sense entailed an acknowledgement of who God is; rather it has always been fixated on the question of who we are or must become. Antitheism is no different, aside from the fact it unapologetically replaces the role of God as one's source for all moral accountability completely with one's own self. Still, if only for this reason, it's perhaps the most intellectually honest of all the world's religions, which only

profess to esteem their numerous portrayals of the divine in a position of ultimate sovereignty. To thoroughly examine the nature of any religion, in fact, is to find that its god, its purported object of worship, is always treated as insignificant or nonessential when compared with the follower's personal capacity for righteousness. As far as religion is concerned, the higher power has and will forever be secondary. Even in religious "Christianity," the nature of God himself has always played second fiddle to a congregation's own perspectives on spirituality and virtue. In and of itself, then, religion is the business of self-worship, in that it sooner brings glory to the individual than to his Creator. By definition, to practice religion is to practice idolatry. Religion is the most regularly committed form of idolatry in the world today, with more than 7 billion guilty culprits.

What little bit the word appears in the Bible, it's never mentioned in a positive light, but in a manner alluding to the tendency of the thing to deceive people's hearts and lead them away from the truth and foundation of the word of God (James 1:26-27). In this present day and age, religion is nothing more than man's failed attempt to accomplish what God has already accomplished.

With that in mind it's easy to see how the Jews during the Second Temple Period simply traded one form of idolatry for another, how they forewent their barbaric Old Testament worship of Baal, Molech, Ashtaroth, Dagon, Chemosh and other deities of ancient Western Asia (Judges 10:6) in favor of a seemingly more benign worship of the self. It's implied that Nicodemus knew the Scriptures like the back of his hand,

and that he was a good, upright, and virtuous man according to the standards of society in that particular place and time. He was deeply religious and highly regarded by Jews in and around Jerusalem. All the same, in essence really no different from those of his ancestors who engaged in child sacrifice, ritual sex, divination and occultism, Nicodemus was an idolater through and through; he was an unsaved, self-dependent, spiritually-inanimate soul destined for an eternity in a lake of fire. Now, whereas all this defines Nicodemus perfectly as he's found in John 3, it's somehow less suitable when he turns up the second time in John 7:

“45 Then came the officers to the chief priests and Pharisees; and they said unto them, Why have ye not brought him? 46 The officers answered, Never man spake like this man. 47 Then answered them the Pharisees, Are ye also deceived? 48 Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? 49 But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed. 50 Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) 51 Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? 52 They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.”

The context here is that the Jewish leadership had already purposed in their hearts to do away with Jesus and had appointed some men to take Him into custody when He arrived from Galilee in Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:10-13). When the time came, however,

these officers weren't up to task. As soon as Jesus began teaching in the temple He singled them out of the crowd in such a manner as only they could appreciate (John 7:19-20). These unnamed agents of the Sanhedrin under orders to quietly apprehend Jesus were as of that moment completely at a loss, for it was clear to them that He had known their intentions even prior to His coming to Jerusalem; He had called their bluff; moreover it was clear He knew the Law just as well as any of the Jewish leaders who, as of then, wanted nothing less than His extermination (John 7:15). The second mention of Nicodemus in the Bible thus begins with these officers returning empty-handed, and with the Sadducees and Pharisees of the council belittling them for being too easily affected by the words of Jesus. Of all people, it was Nicodemus alone who in verse 51 spoke up in defense of both Jesus and anyone of a similar mind who'd not yet been entirely convinced the Man from Galilee was not the Son of God.

This is significant particularly when we realize just how necessary Nicodemus' free will must have been for him to express a point of view so irreconcilable with that of his associates, to speak truth where truth was unwelcome. It's interesting to note that Nicodemus in defense of Jesus proposed to his colleagues in the Sanhedrin only that they ought to keep and abide by the Law (Leviticus 19:15; Deuteronomy 1:16-17, 16:18). This points once again to the outstanding fact that law and liberty are in no way mutually exclusive according to God. Jesus said Himself in Matthew 5:17 He didn't come to subvert the law or to sabotage Old Testament prophecy, but to see to it that both were fulfilled.

You see, when pastors and Bible teachers across the country try so desperately these days to qualify the doctrines of Jesus Christ by affiliating His person with every left-wing political movement under the sun, they're attempting to sell folks a version of Christ that never existed. In doing so they've proved they have a quite narrow view when it comes to the definition of the word "revolutionary." When I say Jesus was a revolutionary character, I don't mean it in the sense they do. I assure you He was not the world's first socialist, anarchist, feminist, civil rights activist, or any other such nonsense. He was no "right-winger" either, but let me be clear: Jesus was revolutionary in the truest sense of the word. He was revolutionary in a manner that has and will never be replicated, in that He found himself by nature completely at odds with any perspective or frame of mind that was not aligned with the will of His Father. Jesus was indifferent to every one of mankind's self-conceited ideologies and philosophies. His every thought, word and action on this earth was committed fully to the revelation of two of the Lord God's most definitive traits: a righteous contempt for sin and an enduring love for souls.

In His day Jesus ran afoul of the Sadducees and Pharisees alike. If His earthly ministry as recorded in the gospels took place in America today I have no doubts He'd be despised and vilified just as much by national news agencies, political and social commentators and left-wing activist groups as He would by all manner of religious institutions ranging from the Roman Catholic Church to the Southern Baptist Convention. It was this genuinely revolutionary character that made Jesus Christ the single most unorthodox, non-

conforming individual in all of human history. For that reason alone it can't be ignored by any honest person that Christ Himself was the ultimate personification of liberty, which is no wonder at all if we simply take the Bible at its word. Together, John 1:1-14 and 1 John 5:7-8 unanimously affirm that Christ was God in human flesh; 2 Corinthians 3:17 then tells us definitively that wherever the Spirit of the Lord is there will also be liberty. The two are intrinsically connected; therefore, inasmuch as Jesus was anointed by the Holy Spirit according to Luke 4:18, He possessed an unequivocal spirit of liberty. To be sure, it was his comprehension of this liberty that surrounded everything Jesus said and did that by comparison made Nicodemus wholly aware of its absence in his own life. Out of a desire for the same outstanding liberty manifest in the character of Jesus, Nicodemus resorted to the only thing he personally had wherewith to acquire it himself, which was the lesser liberty of his flesh, his innate, God-given freedom of choice, initially to voice an opinion contrary to the world's opinion, and ultimately either to accept or deny the reality of who Jesus was.

The last place Nicodemus appears in Scripture is in John 19, directly following the crucifixion, where we're shown certain evidence of the application of his free will to confess the true identity of Jesus. John 19:38-42 says:

“38 And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came

therefore, and took the body of Jesus. 39 And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight. 40 Then took they the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. 41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. 42 There laid they Jesus therefore because of the Jews' preparation day; for the sepulchre was nigh at hand."

It's a shame Nicodemus is almost exclusively talked about in the context of his first appearance in the Bible. What scholarship there is tends to focus on his dialogue with Jesus in John 3 concerning physical and spiritual birth, while the significance of the last passage in John 19 remains comparatively overlooked. Why is it that more attention overall has been given to Nicodemus as he first appears than as he's described after the death of Christ? Why do you suppose the majority of Bible scholars and expositors feel the need to spend more time trying to rationalize the religious intellectualism and scriptural acuity of Nicodemus in John 3 than they do to talk about the sort of man he'd become by the end of John 19? I for one believe wholeheartedly it's for much the same reason that nearly every modern Bible translator beginning with Brooke F. Westcott and Fenton J. A. Hort has distorted, confused, or completely omitted the one and only method by which a soul may find itself truly at liberty (for just one out of hundreds of examples of this, compare Acts 8:37 in your Authorized Version with the same verse

in the ESV or NIV). It's for the reason that in John 19 Nicodemus is identified no longer as a self-worshipping religionist, but as a man saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. It's because Nicodemus went from being a spiritually-dormant, self-dependent, religious hypocrite to a free man entirely as a result of his confidence in the promise of God's Son (John 3:16-18).

There's a line of reasoning whereby we can wind up playing devil's advocate, insisting we have no way of knowing for sure whether or not Nicodemus was in Christ, since John's gospel never explicitly indicates he made an actual profession of faith in accordance with Romans 10:8-10. While that's no doubt the case, we have to be careful we don't overlook how the Bible says an individual ought to live that's truly free. 1 John 2:3-6 says:

“3 And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.”

When we compare Scripture with Scripture, the passage above with Ephesians 2:8-9 for instance, we see that spiritual liberty is not awarded anyone because of any good they've supposedly done; instead, it ought to be the good we do that serves as evidence of our gratitude for the liberty we have

because of Jesus Christ. It's what Paul calls our "reasonable service" in Romans 12:1. There can be only one possible source of inspiration for the ministry of every true Christian, and that's a heart overflowing with gratitude on account of the grace of God perfected in the death, burial, and resurrection of His Son. The point is, whether he professed his faith aloud or in private, Nicodemus gave undeniable evidence of his newfound liberty by way of an act of service to his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The reality of his faith was unmistakable on account of the desire he had above all else to glorify God. Evidently, Nicodemus latched onto something most Christians today don't seem to understand, which is the fact that God is not glorified at all by any sort of church ordinance, religious practice, or moral code. If we look to the word of God for truth, we'd have to be blind not to see that God is pleased and glorified by one thing and one thing only, and that's his Son Jesus Christ. You see, knowing this as a matter of his new spiritual nature (2 Corinthians 5:17), Nicodemus anointed the body of Jesus the Bible says with approximately 100 pounds of myrrh and aloe; that's a considerable amount by any standard, and it's imperative we grasp the fact he did so in no way to be accepted by God in and of himself, as is our tendency to believe, but to express to the fullest extent he could a heart of gratefulness unto the Lord. Nicodemus fully realized the magnitude of what Christ had done on behalf of his soul at Calvary. If ever the world should wonder why those of us who claim to be followers of Jesus Christ so anemically reflect the principles of our faith, it is because we've let slip from memory the miraculous reality of our salvation and the gravity of the sacrifice whereby we were saved.

It's for this reason in particular I find the example we have in Nicodemus so informative to my overarching point, which is that God values liberty to a degree you and I can't sufficiently comprehend. At face value the very idea seems completely antithetical to the world's general perception of the Creator of the universe, which refers to Him often using names and titles He never anywhere attributed to Himself and imagines Him as nothing more than a simplistic, two-dimensional presence that punishes all evil and rewards all good. This is typically the fellow's opinion of God who's never studied or even read the Bible. It's almost always how the unsaved religious individual views his Creator. The reason is that from day one the Lord has been represented by his enemies as an abstract, impersonal and nondiscriminating oppressor. To anyone who's aware of this fact the foothold achieved in recent years in western society by the religion of atheism ought to come as no surprise; for if we're being honest, who in their right mind would place an ounce of confidence in a power so apparently devoid of intricacy or appreciable substance? Indeed, if God were truly the god the world at large presumes He is, I'm afraid I would sooner be an atheist shamelessly engaged in acts of self-worship myself than believe for one moment in the absolute impossibility of a god less complex than the sum of all its creation. Glory be to God, the problem facing atheism, along with the rest of the religious world, is a certain Book that provides overwhelmingly definitive evidence to the contrary, not only to the existence of God, but to the immeasurable depth and brilliance of His true person. Even from a secular standpoint, there's not one diety or spirit admired in the traditions of Sumerian, Babylonian, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Celtic,

Norse, Hindu, Buddhist, Shinto, American Indian or any other world mythology that's ever held a candle to the God of the Bible in terms of the sheer complexity of His personality and the extent of His overall influence on mankind throughout history.

By the time you get to John 19, Nicodemus has been born again. You can be sure of it. Not as a Jew any longer, but as a new creature, we find him in the midst of an act of true worship, readily giving of his own self, time, and substance for the honor and glory of Jesus Christ. Paul writes in Romans 10:1-4:

“1 Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. 2 For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. 3 For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. 4 For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.”

The same as all unsaved religionists, Nicodemus had always had a zeal for God, but it never was according to knowledge, until now. He had been ignorant of God's righteousness, for he had gone about his entire life trying to establish his own, as if that should have accomplished anything. At long last, however, in John 19 we find in Nicodemus a man who has submitted himself unto the the righteousness of God, which is Jesus Christ. We find in him also a man redeemed from

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the curse of the Law, because of Jesus Christ, who is the end of the Law for righteousness, the Scripture plainly says, to all who believe.

4. On Lucifer, Liberty, & Purpose

What I'll touch on next is just one of a number of Biblical truths that religious liberals and lukewarm Christians don't like hearing. It bothers them to no end when someone like me says it, but when they come across the same thing in the Scriptures they just decide it doesn't really mean what it says. Naturally they're offended because the Bible is an offensive book, because it sheds an expository light on the ugliness of sin, because it works tirelessly in cooperation with the Holy Spirit to convict the soul that's drifted or lived their entire life apart from God. No one particularly likes having the darkness of their heart shown to them, simply because it might necessitate within them some kind of change, a repentant heart, or a renewing of their mind as Paul defines in Romans 12:2.

The word of God is clear in its identification of the Lord's primary enemy. Job 1:6 reads: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them."

The Hebrew word *Satan* translates literally to “adversary” or “opponent.” The main opponent of God has been the same individual for more than 6,000 years. Next to Jesus Christ Himself, Satan is the most prominent character in all of Scripture. He’s called Satan 49 times throughout the Old and New Testaments, the devil approximately 30 times, Belial 16 times, Beelzebub 7 times, and has an affinity for avian, amphibious and reptilian animals (Genesis 3:1; Isaiah 14:29, 27:1; Revelation 12:9). Most Christians I’m sure have little to no problem with any of this. You see, for some folks the trouble arises only when the Bible refers to Satan as the “prince” (John 12:31, 14:30, 16:11) or the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). They’ll say something to the effect that it’s heretical even to suggest the greater power in our world is not God in fact, but His adversary. The real cause of their trouble with these verses, however, has nothing to do with taking a stand against supposed heresies or false doctrine; after all, if it’s in the Bible it’s not heresy, and if it’s heresy it’s not in the Bible. The fact of the matter is the modern Christian is engaged more with the world than he is with God’s word; he’s more concerned with the volatile and vainglorious affairs of this world than he is with the mind of God. When Scripture calls Satan the god of this world, it’s no marvel the religious Christian can’t swallow a pill of that size, for it immediately betrays his position as a friend of the world and an enemy of God. No sooner do folks think they’ve figured out the proper way of doing things than the Bible proves them wrong, and what’s happened is that the apostates of progressive Christianity have confused the traits of God Almighty with those of the god of this world. They’ve all been taken for a ride; they’ve been defrauded and fooled

right along with the rest of the world into inadvertently affirming a kind of transmutation of the roles of God and Satan.¹ If anyone doesn't believe it, there's likely a King James Bible not too far away with all the proof you'll need. The first lie ever told was conceived by none other than Lucifer, the progenitor of pride himself, when he appeared in the Garden of Eden immediately following his expulsion from Heaven sometime between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2, and it's important to note this lie was not comprised of falsehood altogether, but of a little falsehood in combination with an abundance of truth. The evangelist Dr. Bob Jones Sr. had a saying: "Every bad thing on earth is a good thing twisted." You see, if we'll only compare the commandment God gave Adam in Genesis 2:16-17 to abstain from the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil with the words of the Serpent in Genesis 3:4-5, we'll achieve a better understanding as to the predominant manner in which Satan has worked all along to obstruct and contradict the words of God. Verse 5 of Genesis 3 shows that his main objective was not to cause the woman to sin so much as it was to instill in her a sense of confusion, to stir up distrust and uncertainty regarding the nature and motivations of her Creator; sin, which is the natural tendency of man ever since, came about simply as a result of his calling into question the grace, authority, and trustworthiness of God.

¹ Satan has been trying to steal Christ's identity for more than six millenia. If you've not studied much on the subject of modern English Bible versions and translations, you might be surprised to learn that no modern version published since the turn of the 20th century contains the original name of Satan. In fact, the NIV, ESV, CEV, ISV, and even the Southern Baptist Convention's new CSB replace the word "Lucifer" in Isaiah 14:12 with titles reserved for Jesus Christ (Revelation 22:16; 2 Peter 1:19). It would appear that at least in all the modern versions Satan has already assumed Christ's identity.

The foremost device wherewith Satan strives to alienate the saved and lost of the world alike from their Creator is the idea of relative truth. More young folks than ever now subscribe to some form of cognitive or moral relativism. Curiously, they've taken it for gospel there's no such thing as absolute truth. Any time God defines or distinguishes one thing from another in His word, you can guarantee the old Serpent's working desperately to confuse or do away with its original meaning or individual purpose. Take for instance the clear and precise manner in which the Bible defines man (Genesis 1:26, 2:7) and his corrupt nature (Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:17-21), or differentiates between the sexes (Genesis 3:16-20), between the brown, black and white races (Genesis 9:25-27), and between youth and adulthood (Proverbs 22:6, 15; 1 Peter 5:1-14); there's not a single one of these that Satan's left alone. Just as he did with the infamous cities of Sodom and Gomorrah in the 20th Century B.C., with Ancient Greece, Rome, and pre-reformation Europe, he persists in the modern era convincing societies that mankind is basically good, that men ought to behave more like women and women like men, that children ought to behave like adults and adults like children, and that no differences exist between the races of the world. Insofar as the Lord has always championed and purposed for His honor and glory the differences that abound as an integral feature of His creation, naturally the devil has always been vehemently opposed to them. In other words, while the God of the Bible is a proven advocate for the soul of the individual, ever in contrast Satan speaks through the agency of a revolving cast of so-called scholars and intellectuals, celebrities, religious leaders and government officials in vague albeit alluring terms, continually advocating for the

rights of “the people,” for the common and collective “good,” for the adequation of the “world family,” the “Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man.” Because of this, neither the development nor the pervasiveness of such philosophies as Marxism and anarchism ought ever to be considered coincidental. Understand, however, this is not at all to try and reconcile or conflate a Biblical position with any political theory in particular; rather, my intent here is to show how the things God loves are the very things Satan can’t abide. To that end, it’s either a delusional or dishonest person who claims there’s any sincere, unequivocal aspiration for liberty to be drawn from among the doctrines of Hegel, Marx, Feuerbach, Bakunin and others, for theirs were aspirations focused solely on the advancement of the cult of modern humanism along with its ideals of social uniformity, collectivism, utopianism, and, ultimately, statism. You see, liberty in the hands of Christ-denying “rationalists” like Spinoza, Kant, or Marx himself, becomes dismembered and reimagined in the contingent notions of “positive” and “negative” liberty, which I believe has greatly contributed to one of the most subtly destructive currents of thought to have emerged within the last 500 years. In reference to the concepts of positive and negative liberty, the philosopher Thomas Hobbes suggested in his 1651 book *Leviathan* that a free man is “he that in those things which by his strength and will he is able to do is not hindered to do what he hath the will to do.” In other words, negative liberty is thought to be a freedom from external forces or coercion (the flesh is external in its relation to the soul), whereas positive liberty is defined as the individual’s possession of the means and resources necessary to effectively act upon his free will. You’ll notice

that this so-called negative liberty is reminiscent of our basic understanding of the real thing, while positive liberty sounds nothing like liberty whatsoever; that's because it's not. The promise of liberty in and of itself can include no guarantee it will not at various times be subject to risk or endangerment, but the freedom only of choosing in such circumstances either to defend or surrender it. To put it another way, any promise of liberty that says you'll not at any point have to defend it is no promise of liberty at all. Nevertheless, it's become generally accepted in western society, particularly in this country, that liberty is not in reality liberty except it be the responsibility of the state to furnish and preserve for the people however it sees fit. This is in practice a sort of state-prescribed "liberty," which is by nature synonymous with tyranny. A scam is what it is, another corruption of the truth that's found its way into the course of contemporary thought, not by accident, mind you, but by the careful, measured and precise calculation of the god of this world.

If there's anyone Satan most often utilizes in his desperate campaign to undermine the sovereignty of God, it's none other than the scholarly, religious intellectual who rejects at least one of three things: the inerrancy and perfection of the preserved words of God, the deity of Christ, or the existence of God altogether. After all, so long as the majority of today's famous thinkers, religious writers, Hollywood stars and media propagandists have already convinced themselves the Bible isn't pertinent to every aspect of human life, that Christ never actually became sin on the cross and rose from the dead on their behalf, or that God has never existed as

anything more than an abstract invention of the human mind, what's to prevent the same ideas being mistaken for truth by the rest of the world? Of all such agents of deception, the Bible says in 2 Peter 2:17-19:

“17 For these are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. 18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through much lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.”

As a master fabricator whose greatest ambition is to create and maintain a rift between mankind and his Creator, Satan not only avails himself to the intellects of sinful men in order to obscure the true meaning of liberty, but produces at the same time a counterfeit of the genuine article, a ploy that's clearly on display in Genesis 3, where he suggests to the woman in the garden that her Creator cannot be implicitly trusted while simultaneously promising her liberty (Genesis 3:5) as an outcome of transgressing the will of her Creator. You'll notice Eve already had perfect liberty in the Lord, and Satan was able just the same to convince her there was greater freedom outside of that which God had already provided.

Throughout history the old Serpent's devices have remained the same. They're the same today as they were in the garden, and they've culminated in the single most effective hoax

ever carried off on the world's population. The success of a good hoax is determined by the extent to which folks buy into it, and it has been the unfortunate reality that more people than not live under the false assumption that liberty begins and ends with the unhindered operation of their will, with "doing as they please" (Proverbs 21:2). Moreover, it is nothing more than people "doing as they please" that defines "living in sin," for sin must be first understood not so much as an act one commits, but more as one's natural state of being, the condition of total estrangement from God, which is our primordial condition. The lost man sins not in every instance because he chooses to do so (Numbers 15:27), but because his nature on its own is so corrupt and utterly beholden to sin that irrespective of whether his intentions are evil or good, the imaginations of his mind and the actions of his flesh, as extensions of his nature, will in and of themselves be sinful (Ecclesiastes 9:3; Titus 1:15-16; Romans 3:10). This is what John Calvin called man's "total depravity." The main problem with Calvin's philosophy was that he believed the depravity of man extended so far as to make one incapable of faith, which, of course, is ridiculous. Though not to the detriment of his own will as Calvin taught, man is deprived without a doubt. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that Christ was made "to be sin for us." Therefore, if sin were nothing more than a cruel word or callous act, what need would the Savior have had to "become" sin? Furthermore, if in order to recognize sin our instinct is to discern between the "good" and "bad," moral and immoral, pleasant and unpleasant, kind and unkind, humane and inhumane, under the slightest scrutiny we're bound to find ourselves in quite a mess of subjectivity, for

it's no mystery at all that what one fellow considers good or desirable, another considers bad or undesirable. The only way this seeming paradox can be broken is by careful and diligent study of the word of God; a subscription to the doctrines of cultural relativism or any other such nonsense will get you nowhere.

It's a grave disservice religious liberals in apostate churches unknowingly under Satan's control have done the world by propagating the idea that man is basically good and that sin exists on a spectrum of lesser and greater immorality. You see, God is not moral, He is sinless. Fallen man, on the other hand, who most the time thinks himself to be moral, is certifiably "dead in trespasses and sins." Satan would have it no other way. If he who the Bible calls the "prince of the power of the air" were suddenly given free reign and the individual had no say or opportunity in the matter, he'd see to it immediately that every soul presently lost remained lost and completely estranged from their Creator forever. What's more troubling is that, granted the power, he'd see to it that every last man or woman who'd ever believed on the name and shed of blood of Christ would no longer have any desire to know the Lord personally by studying His word, but would have instead a weak and lackadaisical sort of faith, a counterfeit spirituality entrenched in useless moral and religious practice; he'd see to it they got caught right back up in the passions and interests of this world, which are identical to his passions and interests; he'd see to it they never served the Lord, for he'd have made sure to begin with they were never adequately grateful or even able to fully grasp the absolute magnificence of what Christ had

done for them. It wouldn't be a stretch for us to say this is in many respects true of the world as it stands, and it ought to frighten the saved and unsaved of us alike that while the extent of Satan's influence may not as of yet supersede the free will of man, so long as "free" people continue out of pride first of all denying their transgressive nature, out of a spirit of self-worship secondly dismissing their need altogether for a savior, and out of sheer arrogance lastly rejecting the promises expressly written for them in God's word, the above scenario will become only that much truer to reality, in which case there'll be fewer and fewer souls redeemed, much as there'll be fewer and fewer believers who in abounding gratitude look not of themselves to please or satisfy a vengeful God, but to simply be about their Master's business, to be daily seeking His will, to be sworn with joyful hearts to the continual pursuance of their reasonable service.

We touched earlier on the fact that man's quintessential purpose is only realized in the glorification of his Creator. Let me emphasize here that there is no other task or activity for which we are better prepared. I imagine there are few of us who'd claim to be "perfectly" suited for anything, and yet, putting all false humility aside, there is one thing for which we're all equally and perfectly suited, and that is the reverential adoration of the Creator of all things. Mankind was especially designed by God with all the traits and attributes necessary to glorify Him in the most exceptional manner, and there's not one individual or group of people exempt from that reality. Moreover, with careful study of Scripture we must not overlook its remarkable implication

as to what specifically motivated the Lord in the first place to create man in His own trifold image (Genesis 1:26). The narrative we find in Ezekiel 28 brings further clarity to the personage of Lucifer as introduced in Isaiah 14. Using as a proxy of sorts the king of Tyrus, like Isaiah did the king of Babylon, Ezekiel continued under direct inspiration from the Holy Spirit in speaking definitively as to the origin, personality, and eventual disgrace of the “anointed cherub.” It’s possible Isaiah and Ezekiel were addressing two different men who were both at different times under possession or direct influence of Satan himself. In any event, the Lord has a way of personally addressing Satan by way of people who’ve embraced certain of his traits, as in the case of Simon Peter in Matthew 16:23. Obviously both Isaiah 14:12-16 and Ezekiel 28:1-19 are explicit and overt references to the supernatural archenemy of God, because there never existed any human ruler of Babylon or Tyre at any point in history that could match either description literally or figuratively. It helps, too, that both cities throughout Scripture, though Babylon especially, are connected with idol worship, adultery, sex perversion and antisemitism.²

From Ezekiel’s account we’re to gather several fundamentals regarding the person of Lucifer prior to his expulsion. Verse 12 says he was “full of wisdom” and “perfect in beauty.” I’ve known in my life a fair number of intelligent and attractive people, and I can say for a certainty that not one of them was actually “full” of wisdom or “perfect” in beauty. It’s clear from the outset that Ezekiel wasn’t speaking to a man. Verse 13 continues with a physical description and informs us as to

² It’s worth noting these have also been four of the main sources of scandal within the Roman Catholic Church for centuries.

the created status of Lucifer. This is described here a physical body like you and I can't accurately fathom. It is both a material and spiritual conception of God adorned with not merely one, two or three, but “**every** precious stone;” moreover the verse reads on, “the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared **in** thee in the day that thou wast created.” This is a body innately composed of musical instruments resembling tambourines and flutes. No matter the advancements to come in special effects technology, no Hollywood filmmaker will ever be able to replicate such a thing on screen. What we have outlined for us in verses 12 and 13 alone should be obvious. You see, in essence the Lord is describing to us His original “worship machine.”³

The Hebrew root word *Halal*, from which the Latin word “Lucifer” is derived, means “to shine,” or, “shining one,” and interestingly, in some cases, “to praise” or “to boast” or “be boastful.” It's also the same primitive root from which we wind up with *hallelujah*, that is, “God be praised.” The Latin was developed from the words *lux* (light) and *ferre* (to bring), thus rendering the meaning of Lucifer literally “bearer of light.” Verses 14 and 15 continue:

“14 Thou art the anointed cherub that covereth;
and I have set thee so: thou wast upon the holy
mountain of God; thou hast walked up and down
in the midst of the stones of fire. 15 Thou wast

³ This plainly shows the Lord's valuation of praise, especially in the forms of “psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (Ephesians 5:19). Since the time of King David more music has been written about the Lord God of Israel than Baal, Allah, Shiva and the Virgin Mary put together. Fanny Crosby alone is credited with writings upwards of 8,000 hymns and gospel songs.

perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee.”

This presents at least another two important details; first, Lucifer is referred to by the Holy Spirit as “the anointed cherub that covereth.” If we’ll allow the Bible to be self-interpreting and look up the initial appearances of a cherub in Scripture, we’ll discover the Lord hereby has provided a clear and concise description as to the precise form and original function of Lucifer. First, in Genesis 3:24, after man was driven out of Eden the Bible says cherubims were placed at the east of the garden. Next, in Exodus 25:17-22, we read God’s instructions to Moses for the composition of the Ark of the Covenant:

“17 And thou shalt make a mercy seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. 18 And thou shalt make two cherubims of gold, of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy seat. 19 And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end: even of the mercy seat shall ye make the cherubims on the two ends thereof. 20 And the cherubims shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to another; toward the mercy seat shall the faces of the cherubims be. 21 And thou shalt put the mercy seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. 22 And there I will meet with

thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”

Here we have provided the definition for an animate *heavenly* being within the context of an inanimate *earthly* object. God’s instructions were to fashion out of gold a pair of sculptures resembling cherubim, one on either side of the Mercy Seat.⁴ These cherubim were to serve as a “covering” for the place where God said He would appear to meet and commune with His people. Here once again the Lord was alluding to a heavenly reality by way of an earthly reality; He was referring specifically to a celestial throne by virtue of a terrestrial one. The cherub continues throughout the Old Testament to be uniquely connected with God’s glory. For instance, Exodus 26 contains design specifications for the ten “curtains” of the tabernacle and the “vail” of the Ark of the Covenant which indicated among other things that each of them would have woven into it “cherubims of cunning work.” We’re told as well the doors and walls of Solomon’s Temple 400 years later were inscribed with “carved figures of cherubims” (1 Kings 6:29, 32). Several verses refer to the God of Israel “sitting” or “dwelling between the cherubims”

⁴ Notice that God expected His people to produce an accurate representation of a cherub without having any explanation as to what one looked like. They needed no help envisioning such a thing in my view because their predecessors had seen it in the flesh with their own eyes (Genesis 6:2; Job 1:7). Such an encounter would have been the seminal event from which originated most if not all deities worshipped all through the ancient world since the first record of idolatry in Genesis 31:19.

(Psalms 80:1, 99:1; Isaiah 37:16). We know because of John 1:18 that God has not been *seen* at any point in human history. This fact is reconciled with all the recorded instances in the Old Testament where God personally interacted with man, in that He only ever appeared to them in the *flesh* (Genesis 18:1-3, 32:24) or in *glory* (Exodus 24:16-17; Numbers 20:6). The point is, whenever the Lord appeared in glory to mankind, it was almost always with a covering of some kind, a cloud, a veil, or a cherub. Most Christians assume these various mantles and obscurations from which the glory of the Lord called on Israel were more or less a practical measure so as to avoid any long-lasting harm that would have no doubt resulted from a “direct exposure.” They’re not wrong necessarily; in fullness God’s glory would certainly obligate a proportional response (Exodus 33:20), but herein lies the problem: if the glory of God could become sufficiently innocuous or inoffensive to the human senses by His simply stowing it away behind a curtain, in a cloud, or between a pair of golden cherubim, are we not suggesting the Lord lacks the facilities on His own to determine the impact His glory has here on Earth? Have we not then in a way sold short the scope of God’s power? You see, the fact is, in light of God’s infinite ability (Romans 11:33-36) neither the cloud nor the veil nor the golden cherubim nor the temple itself were needful at all apart from God’s desire to have such a place among His people as would be fitting of His glory in *their* sight. In other words, no physical covering in the Old Testament was ever intended as a means of softening or dampening the intensity or effectiveness of the glory of the Lord, but as a means of declaring it in such a manner as the human sensory faculty could apprehend. Better still,

no covering inhibited God's glory so much as it spoke to His glory, much in the way that a soldier's uniform always precedes the man wearing it. The typical Fundamentalist's view is that Lucifer served as a "guardian" or "protector" of the Throne of God. The only trouble is, what need for guardianship or protection could God legitimately have in light of His infinite habilitation? The problem comes I reckon from a somewhat careless interpretation of the word *covering*; whereas some attribute to it a meaning similar to that of *screen* or *shield*, I prefer to think of a covering in this case more in connection with the first impression gathered from an outward appearance, as an article not seclusive in fact but reflective of the person of God. From an earthly perspective then Lucifer's initial role might have resembled something similar to that of an ambassador. He was of sorts an emissary specially trusted with and perfectly suited for the task of "transmitting" throughout the Heavens the imminent presence of God (1 Peter 2:9).

Now, what's my point with all this? You may be wondering what any of it has at all to do with the subject of this book. Indeed, you may be wondering why I've strayed so far off course, but stick with me just a few pages more and perhaps you'll see I haven't strayed so far as you think. For if we'll equate everything we've covered in the last few paragraphs with what the Bible has told us of Lucifer already, we'll come to a realization that's critical for anyone, saved or not, a realization that definitively answers a question secular science time and again has tried but continuously fails to answer. One of the last things you'll notice in Ezekiel 28:1-19 is the advertence in verse 15 to Lucifer's initial perfection. It says he

was perfect in his ways from the day he was created, until iniquity was found in him. Verses 16 and 17 then parallel Isaiah 14:11-12, describing the “anointed cherub’s” deposition from the “mountain of God.” The trick here is to assign the events of these passages each to their proper place in history. The consequence if we fail to do so could only be worse than what would undoubtedly happen if one day we up and decided the American Revolution was fought prior to the First Great Awakening or the abolition of slavery still had yet to take place. In either case the outcome would be an ever-increasing number of people with an entirely incorrect view of history. We are well on our way as it is, are we not? The Bible is both a prophetic and historical book; it speaks to literal events in the past, present, and future. It’s therefore important to note that Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28 deal with *two* separate instances of literal displacement, one that happened in the distant past, and another that will occur in the not-so-distant future. Isaiah 14:12 and Ezekiel 28:16 both refer to the same *historical* event, that is, the original displacement of Lucifer from his first estate in the Third Heaven (God’s domain) to his current estate in the Second Heaven (this ranges from the Karman Line to the farthest extent of intergalactic space) which transpired between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2. Isaiah 14:15 and Ezekiel 28:17-18, on the other hand, foretell of a wholly different incident, the same that’s prophesied also in Revelation 20:1-3, in which the “prince of the powers of the air” will be cast even lower still, from the first heaven (within the Earth’s atmosphere) to the sides of the bottomless pit.⁵

5 Naturally, the theory of a flat earth Biblically holds about as much water as a spaghetti strainer (Isaiah 40:22; Ephesians 4:9).

Keep in mind my goal with all this is not to confuse matters, but to bring further Scriptural context to one of the most significant and misunderstood acts of God in the Bible. What possibly gave cause for the Creator to create in the first place? More to the point, what compelled Him in particular towards the unique formulation of an organism called Adam? Within contemporary science this is the essential question of life; removing God and His word entirely from the picture, it's posed usually one of two ways: "What is the meaning of life?" or simply, "Why are we here?"

The darling of modern science and the real father of eugenics Charles Darwin's theories on the origins of life to this day are presented as verifiable truth in every one of America's public schools, despite a continual outpouring of independent research conducted within the last fifty years that supplies, as if any were needed, all evidence to the contrary. Darwinism has been shot full of holes, and with new ones showing up all the time the secular scientific community has adopted a strange habit of simply stuffing every hole as it appears with some new theory or speculation. They'll try to make nicely fit the most absurd and farfetched ideas you've ever heard of, but refuse to look to the word of God, which had the answer long before Lamarck, Darwin or Wallace even thought to ask the question.

I'm afraid the main of modern Christian thought fares only a little better when it comes to providing an adequate answer. I don't mean it's fundamentally wrong by any means. In fact the opposite is true, and I should clarify that it's only short-

coming is a lack of depth and sincerity on the subject. For fear of looking foolish to the secular world, contemporary Christianity avoids the root of the question altogether, and thus conflates the foremost purpose of mankind with the designated purpose of the New Testament Church. The prevailing voices of mainstream Christianity have a way of oversimplifying matters by suggesting everyone exists for no reason other than to share with his fellow man the love and “good news” of Jesus. It’s a lovely sentiment, no doubt, but it fails royally when it comes time for any serious analysis.⁶ Obviously Adam’s purpose was never to share any gospel, since of course there was no gospel for him to share. His purpose could not possibly have been to “love his fellow man,” since he had no fellow man to love. After all, until God blessed him with a wife in Genesis 2:18, the “first Adam” existed for a time as the sole representative of his kind. The average Christian only knows the answer to the question as it relates to a saved person in this present day and age, but if it’s an unsaved individual who posed the question, the answer is totally inadequate. The question the lost world wants answered is not *what* the Lord desires of His Church today, but *why* the Lord envisioned Adam in the first place. It’s no wonder to me that atheism and secularism have gained the foothold they have in the world, because the legitimate and sincere questions folks ask of Christians everyday aren’t being answered consistently from the position that the Bible has all and absolute authority.

⁶ More and more pastors in America today are giving up on real, effective evangelism either because they’re afraid the average person doesn’t want to hear the unvarnished truth or they themselves don’t know the unvarnished truth to begin with. Slowly but surely its growing tendency towards ecumenicalism is proving to be the final nail in the coffin of true Biblical Christianity.

Acknowledging the proper chronology of events is of the utmost importance here, just as it is everywhere else in Scripture. You see, it's no coincidence God made man in His image within a relatively short period of time after Lucifer's expulsion from Heaven.⁷

While the Bible does not state as much word-for-word, its implications are unavoidable as to what actually inspired the Lord to envision so unique a form of life as Adam. When a person only accepts as true what the Bible says verbatim and refuses to "read between the lines," that is, to compare Scripture with Scripture, they're not "rightly dividing the word;" they might as well be reading their local newspaper. The fact of the matter is the Lord envisioned Adam to succeed in the calling where Lucifer had failed. The Adamic race, that is, under sin, all of humanity, exists as God's eternal admonition of the first one who ever thought himself to be equal with or greater than his Creator.⁸

7 John's gospel confirms that as one of the three members of the Godhead Jesus Christ has existed since before the foundation of the world and had firsthand involvement in the creation of the universe (John 1:1-3, 14). Therefore, when in Luke 10:18 Jesus told seventy of his disciples He had "beheld Satan as lightning fall from Heaven," it's plain as day that He was giving an eyewitness account of something He had seen occur between the third and second heavens more than 4,000 years earlier. 2 Peter 3:8 clears the air: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

8 The Bible's not explicit one way or the other, so these are only a man's words and a man's opinion, but my assumption is that one of the ways Lucifer ventured to exalt himself "above the stars of God" was by trying his own hand at a skill unique and peculiar to the Lord. In Genesis 1:1 God defines Himself as the first and ultimate Creator. In order to be "like God" certainly Lucifer had to *create* something, and it's my view that he did, except nothing good in the sense God meant it when He called His own

The primeval purpose of mankind was unequivocally the same purpose for which the Lord originally conceived Lucifer. You see, the Lord God forming Adam's body "of the dust of the ground" was by no means inconsequential or a mere outgrowth of necessity, for God could have as easily composed the human vessel from any other substance known or unknown to modern man; surely it was an intentional and incisive guarantee addressed to the newly-entitled "prince of the powers of the air" that in the end a little "dirt" would wind up speaking more to God's glory than he ever did.

Now all of this I believe especially concerns our discussion on spiritual liberty, for in the case of our free will, which we've identified as the lesser liberty of our flesh, without a cause of some kind acting to substantiate it the will ceases to be free and becomes a slave to idleness. An idle will is not a free will. A "free" man who lacks a cause exceeding his own immediate interests naturally is resigned to the bonds of idleness as well as self-indulgence, and therefore is not free at all. This is a principle I reckon any "moral" person ought to be able to understand, since, in theory, it forms the basis for every secular humanitarian effort and altruistic work performed in the world today. Christ-rejecting humanists even acknowledge that there is to gain from self-abnegation a sense of liberation from one's "baser" tendencies.⁹

creation "good." Lucifer's would have been an unholy creation. With regard to what I think might have occurred during the period of time between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 I'll write more another time.

⁹ Wherever modern, "educated" men stumble across plain and irrefutable evidence of God, they will always attribute it to something else entirely.

Simply put, one's will is not free except it has a responsibility to someone or something apart from itself, that is, except it has a reason to exist beyond self-gratification or self-preservation. For instance, the notion of liberty as immortalized in the early American spirit, as proclaimed in countless writings and documents even well before the nation's founding, was concerned with matters much greater than the investments and motives of one or two individuals. It was concerned with the simple premise that any man who's free in every manner to speak, worship, assemble, defend and provide for the *needs* of his own person and family is a man both well-prepared and especially suited for the good work of preserving the same freedoms in the lives of others.

For the will to be free first it must have an identifiable and legitimate purpose that warrants the exercise of its liberty. Spiritual liberty is no different. In the same way the Lord continues to use the events and situations of the Old Testament as a sort of blueprint for emboldening and affirming the truth and validity of the gospels; indeed, in the very same way our impermanent physical reality exists as little more than a reflection of a more vivid and infinite spiritual reality, so is the liberty of our flesh merely a two-dimensional picture of a greater, three-dimensional phenomenon, which is our spiritual liberty. With the unhindered will the Lord implanted into the human consciousness not genuine liberty, but a type of it, so as to instill in the heart of even the strongest and freest-willed of us the notion there may be a greater, more perfect sort of liberty in store. Perhaps you'll recall the age-old comparison we mentioned earlier of the

body to a prison for the soul. Interestingly enough, it's an analogy that holds true even today in western society, in the most autonomous nations on earth. You see, even in the United States, where the will of a citizen is for now at least verifiably freer than it could be anyplace else in the world, there persists in the hearts of the vast majority a sense of personal constraint. Every living person at least once in their life has felt or will feel existentially imprisoned, that is, personally and overwhelmingly indentured to the realities of their wholly carnal existence. This is by design. Make no mistake about that. It is no accident that our free will only looks and smells like liberty; it is undoubtedly so that men and women who seemingly need for nothing might come to recognize and yearn for the one thing they're missing.

Now, inasmuch as the liberty of our flesh relies on our having a greater purpose in the worldly sense, it only follows that our spiritual liberty must as well, but in an eternal sense, and wouldn't it seem a real "question for the ages" what so grand a purpose that could be, that is, if the Bible did not already give us the answer?¹⁰

For the saved and unsaved of you alike who've never personally encountered the liberty that's to be had abundantly in Christ the first question you must ask yourselves is this: how can we very well expect to be at liberty spiritually so long as we forsake or disavow the spiritual purpose the Lord had in mind for us from the beginning? The ultimate pleasure for every living thing I truly believe can only ever be found in

10 If you believe and study the Bible, it's a simple fact you will have less uncertainty and fewer questions in life. Either you'll already have the answers or you'll know just where to find them.

the fulfillment of its purpose, and whatever pleasures one may experience in life therefore, with no regard for his eternal destination or spiritual objective, will in all cases pale utterly in comparison. Psalm 96:1-3 says:

“1 O sing unto the Lord a new song; sing unto the Lord, all the earth. 2 Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. 3 Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.”

This is not the ancient equivalent of a modern worship song. These are not merely a few poetic words written to be accompanied by music; rather, along with countless other passages throughout Scripture, in quite literal terms they constitute a job description, a summarization of the responsibilities inherent to the predetermined nature of our existence. They are a definitive elucidation of the role of man as determined by God in the absence of Lucifer all the way back in Genesis 1:26.

Even a cursory study into such words as pertain directly to the essential function of Lucifer prior to Genesis 1:1 unequivocally confirms the same words apply equally as much to the intended function of mankind collectively.

1 Chronicles 16:23-26:

“23 **Sing** unto the LORD, all the earth; **shew forth** from day to day his salvation. 24 **Declare** his glory among the heathen; his marvellous works

among all nations. 25 For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised: he also is to be feared above all gods. 26 For all the gods of the people are idols: but the LORD made the heavens.”

Isaiah 42:10-12:

“10 **Sing** unto the LORD a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. 11 Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. 12 Let them **give glory** unto the LORD, and **declare** his praise in the islands.”

In reference to Exodus 33:19, Paul writes in Romans 9:17:

“For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might **shew** my power in thee, and **that my name might be declared throughout all the earth.**”

Romans 9:22-24:

“22 What if God, willing to **shew his wrath**, and to **make his power known**, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: 23 And that he might **make known** the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore

prepared unto glory, 24 Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?”

The apostle Simon Peter, speaking to both Jew and Gentile believers (the Church) in and around modern day Turkey, writes in 1 Peter 2:9:

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should **shew forth** the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light;”

Galatians 1:15-16:

“15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, 16 To **reveal his Son** in me, that I might **preach him** among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.”¹¹

You’ll notice there’s a definite pattern that emerges as you read each of these passages, which are altogether just a few of the places in Scripture where the Lord has indicated the fundamental purpose He attributed originally to Lucifer and then, by virtue of Adam, to every living soul of man on earth. The well-meaning atheist is not exempt or absolved from his purpose, nor is the “rational” agnostic for that matter. The relevance of mankind in the eyes of God changes

¹¹ Some additional passages in the same vein include Psalms 22:22, 66:16, 73:28, 107:22, 118:17; 1 John 1:1-5 (*Declare*), Isaiah 24:15; Romans 15:5-6; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 4:16 (*Glorify*), Ephesians 6:19-20 (*Ambassador*), Isaiah 25:1 (*Exalt*), 1 Samuel 15:25; 1 Chronicles 16:29; Revelation 10:11 (*Worship*).

not in the slightest whether someone identifies themselves as a Jew or Muslim, a Roman Catholic or Bible-believer. It hinges not the least on any one of the sundry identities we assume for ourselves in this lifetime, but on that which the Lord assumed on our behalf in Adam. According to the all-knowing, all-powerful Creator of the universe, our relevance is solely determined by His view of us, as opposed to our own view of ourselves, which is a wholly distorted and inadequate view in any case.

5. Imminent Glorification

There's an adage among Bible-believers that says that the only two things in this world that will last forever are the souls of men and the word of God, and whether or not someone acknowledges it the truth of that statement remains intact. Similarly, whether we forsake the "pride of life" and come to the realization in this lifetime or not, as far as the Lord is concerned you and I exist on this earth specially designed and uniquely suited, so that one way or another, and most often completely in spite of ourselves, we'll see to the effectuation of *His* purposes. An accurate estimation of our own worth in any real or lasting sense always begins with an understanding of who or what precisely God intended us to be; it starts with a recognition of our ultimate reason for living solely in light of the revelation of Scripture. This fundamental operation we'll conduct either one of two ways: willingly or unwillingly, voluntarily or involuntarily, with or without our knowledge or consent.

I'm reiterating here a point I raised earlier only because it's so essential to one of the objectives I've had all along, that whoever reads this book will obtain at least a basic understanding of this principle I call *imminent glorification*, which is hardly the result of any mental or spiritual acumen on my part, but the outcome of my simply reading the Scriptures. Anyone can read their Bible; the sad fact of the matter is that most folks don't. You see, imminent glorification is nothing more than the Biblically-founded idea that God's glorification is at all times and in all situations inevitable; in other words, it occurs completely in spite of what you or I may believe, do or say from one moment to the next. It states that in and of ourselves you and I have absolutely no bearing on the extent to which the Lord is glorified. He is and will always be glorified whether you've made the decision to follow Him or not. You might consider this the "outer limit" or the "boundary" of the liberty of our flesh, in that, while my will indeed is free to live in any way or believe in anything I please, it cannot affect the glory that's received of God. There are for this two concurrent explanations to be found in Scripture. The first is in connection of course with the *created* nature of all things, including mankind.¹

¹ There is a growing movement within modern Christianity known as Old Earth Creationism, which denies history and espouses non-literal interpretations of the Genesis account of creation in an effort to reconcile "faith" with contemporary science. Not surprisingly it's a movement made up of many of the same folks today who reject the King James Bible as the sole preserved, inspired and inerrant word of God in the English language. People of this mind have been used by Satan himself since the time of the early Church to cast doubt on the perfection and eternal relevance of God's word. When God said His word is truth (John 17:17) and promised to preserve it (Psalms 12:6-7), certainly he didn't mean all 200 and some versions of it! They can't all be true, seeing as they're all different, now can they? You see, of all people Satan knows that if a man begins to think the creation of

John 1:1-3 affirms the Genesis account of creation by the *Word*:

“1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.”

The Bible says in Job 12:7-10:

“7 But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: 8 Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. 9 Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this? 10 In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.”

From these two passages the one thing we ought to take away is the fact that anything created by God in one respect already brings honor and glory to Him; it bears witness to Him as its Creator simply by virtue of its created nature. A sportscar, for example, bears witness, and therefore some element of glory, to an automaker; a bouquet of flowers bears witness to a florist, a diamond ring to a jeweler, a piece of music to a composer, and so forth.

his physical reality did not occur the way the Bible explicitly says it did, the truth surrounding it will become instantly relative and he'll soon lose any assurance he might've had concerning his place and purpose in the universe. Moreover, Satan knows that if the Bible can't be trusted with an accurate account of creation, which serves as the basis for all else, it can't be trusted at all.

The second explanation in scripture for the principle of imminent glorification comes directly from the mouth of Jesus in John 17, verses 1-6:

“1 These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; **glorify** thy Son, that thy Son also may **glorify** thee: 2 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. 3 And this is life eternal, that they might **know thee** the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. 4 I have **glorified** thee on the earth: I have **finished the work** which thou gavest me to do. 5 And now, O Father, **glorify thou me** with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. 6 I have **manifested thy name** unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word.”

Here it's made abundantly clear for us that above all the Lord is glorified in and because of Jesus Christ. You and I have nothing to do with that arrangement, unless we, as disciples of Jesus Christ, will “keep God's word,” for He, possessing in full the natures of both God and man, in the course of His brief life and ministry on earth, not only lived in accordance to the Law to the extent no other man with any consistency ever could, but consummately fulfilled on His own the elemental purpose of every man by virtue of His *willful* and *continual* magnification of God the Father.

Call it whatever you will, but it's precisely this principle of imminent glorification that I believe is so desperately lacking in modern Evangelicalism, for in their endeavor to win souls, too many Christians today seem they would just as soon not allude in their testimonies to the fact that, in spite of all their best efforts and intentions, the Lord even now is satisfied with the glory He received because of the finished work of Christ. It is not preached in churches today near enough the fact that nothing a person does or says will please or glorify God, except it be the result of the work of Christ in them.

To that particular end I believe it is imperative to the work of the Church, which ought not to be a reflection of the Church itself, but of the perfect work of the Holy Spirit within each of the members of the Church, that it comes to the task of evangelism well prepared in the truth of God's word and with an earnestness to not only see lost souls rescued from an eternity in the lake of fire, physically and spiritually separated from God, but to see men and women here and now with a kind of liberty apparent in their lives that's unlike any other, because of Christ; to see men and women who desire to know intimately the character and will of their Creator and Savior; men and women who pray, read and diligently study their Bibles; men and women whose affections from day to day rest more on things above than on things of this world; men and women whose desire most of all is to be readied with all truth and equipped with all grace for the carrying out of their reasonable service to the Lord.

Easy-believism, so to speak, only works then if an evangelist has no greater hope for someone than that of their soul's preservation from Hell after death, which, for the would-be evangelist, points either to a deficiency in their own personal understanding of basic Bible doctrines or, what's worse, an unwillingness on their part to communicate the totality of the Gospel. Eternal life no more than scratches the surface of all that God promises in His word to the believer who dedicates every aspect of his life to the purpose of Christ. There is just as much in this life the Bible promises to the disciple as it gives him to look forward to in the next. It simply cannot be overstated that Christ's work, His ministry, death, burial and resurrection, was aimed at the complete and utter reconciliation of man unto God, so that spiritually, albeit still having the burden of his flesh to bear a while longer, the true man or woman of faith can rest assured they are seated even this very moment in Heavenly places according to Ephesians 2:6, because they are *in* Christ. Moreover, because the true man or woman of faith loves God's word, they will always recognize its *inspired* nature; they will submit to it and allow it to *reprove, correct, and instruct* them in righteousness, so that they may be thoroughly furnished unto *all good works* (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Good works, in this case, refer to nothing a person is capable of on their own, since everyone knows that unbelieving, unsaved people do "good" things all the time, that the lost of the world engage in humanitarian efforts and acts of philanthropy almost as much as the Church, and yet they're no more "born of the Spirit" than your neighbor's cat. You see, something good, from God's perspective, is something sinless. A good work there-

fore in God's eyes is not a thing done that's moral in any way, shape, or form; on the contrary, it's a thing done that's righteous, which neither you nor I have any hope of ever accomplishing in our flesh. If anyone truly does good, it is completely as a result of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within them (1 Corinthians 3:16). Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones once said, "The Christian is not a good man. He is a vile wretch who has been saved by the grace of God."

I'll only add that it's this very idea, which was to be found all through Scripture well before Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones ever got a hold of it, that is so shamefully omitted from the "vision statements" of local assemblies all over the country. The "outreach" and missionary works of churches today, rather than those of the Body of Christ as instituted by God in the Scriptures, more often resemble the works of such secular organizations as the American Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, the International Rescue Committee, the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, which all attempt to alleviate man's physical predicaments without once considering his spiritual predicament. Along with a great many other agencies and groups and far too many churches, these are always looking to correct everything wrong with humanity without ever realizing what in fact humanity is in the first place. It simply can't be done. The only real problem with humanity is sin, the mortality rate of which is 100%. Sin has just as much an effect on a person physiologically as it does spiritually, for it is the sole cause of every ailment known to man. You can be sure that every war, every genocide, every economic failure,

every environmental catastrophe, every earthquake, flood, tornado and hurricane, every cancer, every airborne, foodborne, waterborne and bloodborne pathogen, every viral, bacterial, fungal and parasitic infection, every skin condition and every mental disorder is either directly or indirectly a consequence of Adam's sin, your sin, and mine. The apostle Paul, one of the greatest Christians who ever lived, in Romans 6:20-23 wrote to the believers in Rome:

“20 For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. 21 What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. 22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. 23 For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In 1 Corinthians 7:22, to the backslidden assembly of the church in Corinth he put it another way: “For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant.”

The point Paul was making in both cases remains as relevant today as it was some 2,000 years ago. He was speaking directly to the fact that, since the fall of man as recorded in Genesis 3 to now, at the moment of conception every person ever born “of water” inherited from their parents, like any hereditary blood disease, the sin condition, which may best be understood as the institutional servitude of

every soul born after the likeness and in the image, not of God, but of Adam (Genesis 5:3).²

² In consideration of a number of statements in the Bible I do believe the sin condition, or, sin nature, is in fact inherent in our blood specifically, as opposed to other elements of our flesh, such as the skin, muscle or bone. Remove a fellow's blood, and I suspect you will have removed his capacity for sin. According to 1 Corinthians 15:50, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. More than likely that's because the body is always corrupted by the blood within it. More on the significance of blood in the Bible I'll write another time.

6. God's Providence in Matters of Race & Culture

It's a known fact that hundreds of thousands of children were born into slavery in the United States between 1619 and 1865. No single event since America's founding to this day causes more uneasiness, anger, strife or contention than that of this enslavement of millions of people over the course of some 245 years. Most Americans today consider it one of the greatest moral catastrophes in the history of our nation, just as they should; still, how do you suppose it is that this modern, "civilized" world of ours can so quickly recognize and condemn the enslavement of millions of people that occurred over 2 centuries ago, while at the same time completely fail to acknowledge the enslavement of billions of people alive this very day? Where is there to be found any protest against the "injustice" and "systematic oppression" suffered every day by the soul in bondage to sin? Where is the talk of "reparations" for the posterity of those who've died in their sin? Better still, where's the talk of "abolition" for those toiling ever in the fields of self-reliance and religion, for those unwitting or unconvinced as to the

active grace of God, for those who've never had any sense of genuine liberty in their lives and only that of the unrestricted operation of their own will, and for those who've never so much as considered the singular purpose for which the Lord envisioned them 6,000 years ago?¹

When we read the Bible understanding fully that everything in it is factual and historically accurate, the various perplexities and questions that surround human existence—for which more useless fields of study have been dreamt up than I care to name—are either solved or shown to be far less important than perhaps we once imagined. It's no coincidence that slavery in the traditional sense preceded every historical record except that found in the Hebrew Bible, and remains to this day one of the oldest and gravest indicators of our fallen Adamic nature. It's no coincidence

1 Concerning the nature of God's grace, John Calvin got it all wrong. There can be no such thing as *irresistible* grace, for the simple fact that folks resist the grace of God all the time. Titus 2:11 states, "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to **all** men." The unsaved of the world experience grace every day, though on account of pride, which is a primary symptom of their sin condition, they don't very often see it for what it is. They call it "coincidence," "luck," or "good fortune," when in reality it's God's grace very much at work in their lives. You see, while God has absolute foreknowledge of every situation that has or will occur in all of time and space, He never predestined any sinner to be saved, but saved believers to be one day physically "conformed to the image of His Son" (Romans 8:29). If God were to predestine one soul to be saved over another, would not Israel have received Christ at His first coming? The logic of all 5-point Calvinists quickly falls to pieces with a reading of any of the following verses: Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Joshua 24:14-15; Proverbs 16:9; Mark 8:34; John 7:17; Romans 10:9-10. If we believe the Bible there can be no question that God prepared for us in Christ a direct access to liberty both in this life and in that which is to come; the beauty is that all anyone ever needs to gain this access are the words of God and their free will.

the concept of slavery itself, the idea that one individual may claim another as his property and coerce him into service, never once entered into the equation until sin found its hold in the heart of man.

The word *servant* first appears in your Authorized Version in Genesis 9:25, less than 2,000 years after the loss of man's Godly image in Genesis 5, and likely no more than 70 years after the Lord's establishment of His covenant with Noah in Genesis 9:8-17. Genesis 9:25 deals with a curse Noah placed on his grandson, Canaan, because of a sin committed by his youngest son, Ham.²

For our immediate purpose the details regarding Ham's sin are neither here nor there. What's important for now is the context in which the notion of servitude or slavery first arises in the Scriptures. After all, if we're to have any sort of Bible-based comprehension of liberty, should we not look into what God's word says regarding the antithesis, or inverse, of liberty?

What I'm about to share with you from God's word has been perverted by some in the past, including the founder of Mormonism Joseph Smith, to serve as a justification for

² Ham's sin is up for debate. The Bible is clear, however, that it was a sin sexual in nature. The only two possibilities are that it either involved an act of sodomy against his unconscious father, or, based on the wording of Leviticus 18:8 and 20:11, an incestuous liaison with his mother. I personally teach the latter, considering Noah cursed not all four of Ham's sons, but Canaan alone, who was most likely the product of such an encounter. This means that when Canaan was prophesied to become a servant of servants to his brethren in all likelihood his brethren included his brothers, Cush, Mizraim and Phut, as well as his uncles and half-brothers Shem and Japheth.

slavery in America. You'll hear no such justification from me, for not once in all of its 66 books and 1,189 chapters does the Bible ever give a warrant for sin; it anticipates our sin and it reveals our sin, but it never justifies our sin. With that said, when we talk about Shem, Ham, or Japheth, it's essential to know who in fact we're talking about. Because of Genesis 9:19 and the genealogies given in Genesis 10 there can be no doubt at all we're dealing with the progenitors of the world's three main people groups. Within a thousand years after the flood, the sons of Japheth, or Japhethites, ventured northward from Mt. Ararat, eventually coming to populate all of Europe, as well as North America during the 17th century.³

The descendants of Shem spread eastward from the Eastern Mediterranean, throughout the Orient, and into the Americas likely by way of what's known today as the Bering Strait. If out of the three there were from God's perspective a superior, "chosen" group of people, it would not be the Japhethites or the Hamites; it would be the Shemites, for the simple reason that Israel was drawn out of the lineage of Shem. If you're a born-again Christian, your Lord and Savior was a Jew. This means that in His earthly form He possessed the flesh and blood of a dark-eyed, olive-complected, raven-haired, west-Asian Shemite.

Now the youngest of the three, Ham, we're told in Genesis 10:6 fathered three sons in addition to Canaan, whose names were Cush, Mizraim and Phut. Respectively, these three became the nations of Ethiopia, Egypt, and Libya. As for

³ Before I accepted the Lord I was a Japhethite; now in Christ, praise God, there is neither Jew nor Greek (Galatians 3:28).

Canaan, it would seem there is a great deal more room for speculation, but there isn't any. In their desperate, bigoted attempt to have Canaan's curse not seem applicable to any dark-skinned people of African descent who've lived within the last 2,000 years, modern scholars claim the territory of the Canaanites collectively never spread any further south than the River of Egypt. Moreover, in an effort to do away with the curse on Canaan as early as possible, they assert that every prophecy connected with it was fulfilled when the Land of Canaan was appropriated by the Israelites around the 15th century B.C., by the Greeks in the 4th century B.C., and by the Romans in 63 B.C. They try to support all this with the logic that, since the curse only fell on Canaan and not on all four sons of Ham, it could not have any bearing on the lives of non-Semitic-speaking people outside of the Biblical land of Canaan.

Interestingly enough, their problems arise just as soon as the focus shifts from the curse on Canaan in Genesis 9:25 to Noah's predictions for the bloodlines of Shem and Japheth in verses 26-27.

Shem, the father of all Asiatics including all Jews by Isaac and all Palestinians by Ishmael, is blessed in verse 26 (notice the Lord God is only ever mentioned in connection with Shem, never with Ham or Japheth: "...Blessed be the LORD God of **Shem**..."). Then, in verse 27, Noah doesn't bless Japheth, but makes a prophetic statement that God would enlarge him anthropologically, that he would dwell in the tents of Shem, and that Canaan would become his servant.⁴

⁴ Notice the overarching theme of Genesis 9 with regard to Noah's three sons in particular: one is blessed with a reference to the Lord (Shem), one is

Contrary to what all the liberal commentators say, there has never been a society or nation at any point in history that matches this description better than the United States of America, which remains the greatest example of Japheth's "enlargement" to date. The last 400 years of American history have fulfilled Japheth's prophecy in so precise a manner that you'd have to be dumb as a doornail not to realize it.⁵ The trouble therefore with modern scholarship on the matter is that it's all derived from a wrong interpretation of the text. The curse on Canaan was simply this, that he would become a "servant of servants" to his brethren. It's my opinion after much study that Canaan was conceived as a result of a sexual union that occurred between his father and grandmother, in which case his brethren would not have been limited to Shem and Japheth, but would have included his father's other three sons, Cush, Mizraim, and Phut, as well.

It's obvious that Canaan was not only destined to be a servant to Noah's sons, his maternal half-brothers; he was destined just the same to become a servant to his father's sons, his paternal half-brothers, whose descendents, and in all probability his own, at disparate times throughout early history gravitated southward into Egypt, Libya, Ethiopia, the Sudan, and beyond.

prophesied to expand according to his namesake (Japheth), and the other is not mentioned in any capacity at all (Ham).

5 The American Indian tipis, wigwams and wickiups fit our profile of the "tents of Shem." Beyond that, when you consider the fact we've built housing in many of the exact locations where the American Indians used to "pitch their tents," you wouldn't be wrong if you said that we are dwelling in the tents of Shem even as we speak.

As though in defiance of every modern scholar who implies that no Canaanite ever settled anywhere south of the Nile river, many tribes ranging in territory from Ethiopia, the Sudan and Somalia to Niger, Nigeria, Chad and parts of the Congo have made claims themselves to Canaanite ancestry (Gamst, F. C., *The Qemant: A Pagan-Hebraic Peasantry* [1969], Akak, E. O., *The Palestine Origin of the Efiks* [1986], Johnson, S., *The History of the Yorubas* [1921]). Even the early Moslem historian Ibn 'Abd Al-Hakam wrote that Canaan was the father of the Sudan and Abyssinians (*The History of the Conquests of Egypt, North Africa, and Spain*, Yale University Press, [1922]). Now am I supposed to believe that upwards of a dozen people groups scattered across the entire African continent have all colluded together in making such a claim? Of course even to suggest it would be foolish, and, for what it's worth, I'd much sooner take the word of an "unenlightened," illiterate tribesman on the subject of his own ancestry than that of some hot-headed, Harvard-educated phony, who considers Darwin's *Descent of Man* a more trustworthy book than the Bible.

With a King James Bible as the lens through which we assess the diverse traditions and histories of the peoples of the world, what we have is the surest, most accurate portrayal of all 6,000 years of human life anyone could ever hope to find. If you've read your Bible it's no wonder at all the transatlantic slave trade commenced in the 15th century when West African societies began selling their own slaves, captives, and prisoners of war to the Portuguese. It's no wonder that as of today nearly 700,000 Sub-Saharan

Africans are forced laborers. It's no wonder at all that according to census records there are at least 43,000 slaves in the country of Niger alone. The Global Slavery Index estimates there are 7.6 victims of all manner of slavery for every 1,000 people on the continent of Africa, and for this there is no rational excuse; there's not an ounce of justification for it that one could extract from anyplace in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, the Scriptures foretold it. The word of God, as only it is apt to do, foreknew the races of mankind, their sins against one another, and their every geographical and political move throughout history, including the intraethnic slavery that continues in Africa to this day as well as the slavery of black Africans that went on in America until 1865. Of course you'll hear none of this taught in public schools in this country. You'll not hear a word about the fact that more folks per capita live under some form of slavery in Africa than on any other continent in the world, never mind that God's word predicted all of it with a single verse in Genesis 9.

Now I've once again devoted several pages to a matter which may seem at first inconsequential to the subject of this book, however nothing could be further from the truth, for the notion of servitude, being as it is naturally at variance with that of liberty in every way, I'm convinced is just as pertinent as anything to our comprehending the significance that our spiritual liberty bears in the eyes of the Lord.

When studying my Bible, I've never had any need for a dictionary, since the Book defines itself better than Webster ever could. In much the same way as God's word provides

its own twofold definition for liberty, we see now that with the curse on Canaan in Genesis 9:25 it presents a clear definition for servitude as well. Contrary to the foolishness of Origen, Ishodad of Merv, Anne Catherine Emmerich, Joseph Smith, and countless others, not once in the Bible is anyone ever cursed with black skin. Canaan's posterity was destined for physical servitude, not for blackness. Ham's other three sons we know shared equally in the fatherhood of the black races with Canaan, and not a one of them was cursed. Moreover, the genetics for black skin most likely appeared shortly after the first murder on record in Genesis 4:8 and had become prevalent in a quite considerable portion of the earth's inhabitants by the time of the flood.

As opposed once again to the teaching of Smith and his latter-day "saints," the requital that Cain endured for the killing of his brother Abel in Genesis 4:11-14 consisted not at all of a darkening of his skin. The curse of Cain, that is, his punishment in particular we read had only to do with his relationship to the earth, as a "tiller of the ground." It was only as a result of Cain's fear of retribution that God marked him genetically, and in such a way as to prevent both his murder and the outright annihilation of his bloodline. You see, blackness was never a curse, but I do believe it was the mark the Lord placed on Cain. Evidently Cain's offspring were both a cursed and protected people: cursed first of all with respect to their father's original vocation (Cain immediately gave up farming to become a city-dweller in Genesis 4:17), and protected secondly by nature of a distinguishing physical characteristic, that is, a mark in the flesh. No other explanation comes close to answering how the

African race throughout and much in spite of their long, troubled history of geographical displacement, race-mixing, slavery, and intraethnic genocide has managed to retain so strong a sense of their heritage and cultural identity no matter where in the world they are today. The same cannot be said about any other people group, save the Jews.

While you can rest assured that blackness in general never had anything to do with the curse of Canaan or even that of Cain, the first mention of slavery in your Bible is in direct reference to an individual that represented the first generation of one of the three primary divisions within the human race. Canaan almost certainly looked nothing remotely like his maternal half-brothers and he would not have shared everything in common with his paternal half-brothers either. There's no question Canaan was genetically and culturally distinct from his brethren, and likewise each of them from one another. Whereas Canaan's curse did not involve a change in the color of his skin or a variation in his genetic code (he was black-skinned in the womb), it no less concerned all the ways in which to each of his brethren he appeared abnormal, flawed or even inferior simply by reason of the anomaly that he represented to each of them (the same scenario was played out by the Nazi party in Germany, who murdered 17 million people, at least a third of which were Jews, based entirely on the supposed inferiority of those genetically and culturally dissimilar). In other words, even though the curse in and of itself had no direct affect upon his ethnicity, it was his ethnicity in particular that gave impetus to the fulfillment of the curse at the hand of sinful man throughout the next

5,000 years of history. Whether we care to accept it or not the underlying point is that servitude, or slavery, in your Bible is defined in sound connection with racial discrimination. We can bristle or take offense to it as much as we like, but we'll not make it any less true. We resemble in America today without a doubt the generation spoken of in Proverbs 30:12 who're pure in their own eyes, and yet not washed from their filthiness. As always, too many are counting on "good behavior," activism, humanitarianism, or just a good, old-fashioned, fine-tuned sense of morality to somehow justify at the end of their lives all the years they wasted running from the Lord. Our so-called morality compared with God's standard of righteousness is as perfectly useless as confessing sins to a priest. It's also important for us to remember that anything in Scripture which might offend a person's moral sensibilities is never God's doing, but the result of man's absorption and complicity in sin. You see, if nothing else the Bible serves as absolute, infallible proof that man in every way is incapable of righteousness and thus unsuited for any association with the Lord. It's also the greatest body of evidence you'll ever find that affirms beyond a shadow of doubt that God's grace at every turn since the moment of this world's corruption by sin has provided for natural-born sinners a means to be reconciled to their Creator. For one to be outraged at God because of slavery or any other such perceived injustice in this world is to make light of one's own conspiracy. Every sinner who's not been redeemed by the blood of Christ remains as much on the hook to atone for their own sins as any 18th century plantation overseer, klansman or neo-Nazi, any pimp or human trafficker, any rapist, pedophile or serial killer, and irrespective of severity,

their sins as much as yours and mine, if not for grace and shed blood, would see every one of us to the same eternity in fire. The unsaved humanist is as much to blame for slavery and as guilty of racism as the cruelest slavemaster, for the humanist's desire to somehow cure the suffering of others and repair on his own the brokenness of all mankind emanates from the same puffed-up, sin-infested place in the heart as the white supremacist's vision of "racial purity." All glory be to God for the extraordinary provision of His word, which by His grace exists even now for mankind as a sort of reflective mechanism, a spiritual mirror whereby sinners may come to the acknowledgement of the reality of their condition.⁶ All thanks be to God for the means we have therein to recognize the pandemic nature of our sin, that is, to arrive at the profound realization that our inherited condition permeates and so dominates the entirety of our lives, from our fleeting thoughts and subconscious gestures down to our most methodical behaviors and carefully-conceived worldviews that even our self-derived efforts to enact "positive change" both in ourselves and in the world, to bring about social reform and equal justice, noble as they may seem to us, except Christ alone be the reason for them, will only ever result in further social decadence and more unequal justice. Only in Christ should anyone expect to find any real or consistent equality among the races or between the sexes.⁷

6 We can sum up this idea by saying that no one knows they're ugly until they've had a look in the mirror.

7 The only *reformation* we ought to be concerned with is the reformation of the soul from a condemned, rebellious and spiritually-lifeless creature to a spiritually-minded, blood-ransomed child of God.

A prime example of this that I'll share from my own life is the fellowship my wife and I have with certain members of our local church, who by every fleshly standard could not be more different from us if they tried. Our brothers and sisters in the Lord come from every walk of life; they're men and women, young and old; they're red, yellow, black, white, big, small and everything in between; they're both rich and poor, both educated and uneducated. Naturally there are many with whom we would have nothing remotely in common were it not for Jesus Christ, for so long as Christ remains at the center of each of our lives, none of our physical, ancestral, generational or personal differences may present an obstacle to our unity as a body of believers. To those of us who stake our lives on the name and saving blood of Jesus the Bible says in Galatians 3:29 that we're all of *Abraham's seed*, meaning that spiritually the Church, that is, the cumulation of all born-again believers in the world, constitutes a new and peculiar class of people with a new and peculiar identity. At the moment I accepted Christ as my Savior some 20 years ago, though I didn't know it at the time, my identity as a young, white, American male was transcended by my identity as one of Abraham's seed. Then and there I became a spiritual Jew, according to Romans 2:28-29, which calls the born-again Christian a "true" Jew, by virtue of the operation of a spiritual circumcision that's described in Colossians 2:11: "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ:"

This “circumcision of Christ” takes place as soon as a person gets saved. It is the literal separation, the “cutting away” of your flesh (your physical body) from your soul (your spiritual body), and the first transformative work performed by the Holy Spirit within every new Christian. It’s what makes it possible for the corrupted state of the flesh to no longer have any impact as to where the soul will spend eternity. When a Christian says that Jesus set them free, whether they realize it or not, they can only be referring to the operation of spiritual circumcision, which, as we’ll see later on, is the actualization of spiritual liberty.⁸

Moreover, it’s the reason my wife and I share more in common with members of the Body of Christ than we do with certain members of our own families. The old adage “blood is thicker than water” is about as relevant to the life of a New Testament saint as the Lord’s Prayer. You see, by the grace of God and through my faith in Jesus Christ my soul, that is, my true self, has been surgically detached from the inside of my physical body, which contains my blood, and it’s my blood that sustains the life of my flesh (Leviticus 17:11). Romans 8:10 determines there can be no coexistence of the flesh and Spirit. I cannot live accord-

⁸ Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:50 that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. If there were no circumcision of Christ, no procedure to extricate your spiritual body from your physical body, you’d have no hope of getting to Heaven, because your flesh cannot exist outside the confines of the “heavens.” To pass beyond the Second Heaven and into the Third Heaven, into the dwelling place of God, your soul must be untethered from the dead-weight of your flesh and blood, which together confine you to this carnal sphere of existence and oblige you to do the works of the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21). For a deeper analysis of spiritual circumcision and its significance to spiritual liberty, see Chapter 9, *On the Realism of Spiritual Things*.

ing to my flesh and the Spirit of God simultaneously. On the contrary, as a saved individual, I may choose either to live according to the old nature of my flesh, which having been cut away now is just “dead skin,” or according to the nature of Christ, who is in me. The fact of the matter is, because my flesh is dead so is everything that pertains to my flesh: my blood, my heritage, my age, my sex, and so forth. Because my flesh and all that pertains to my flesh is dead, so is it all from an eternal perspective completely obsolete and useless to me.

Paul writes in Philippians 3:2-3:

“2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision. 3 For **we are the circumcision**, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

Part of the idea here is that, if it's true the Christian's flesh is dead, then as a matter of course one ought to have no confidence in his flesh. No true believer ought to put any stock in his identity with respect to blood, physical birth, or cultural indoctrination, for the simple reason that in eternity it will not matter in the slightest from what blood you descended, with what culture you associated, or to which philosophy you subscribed. The Bible tells us in spiritual but no uncertain terms that those of us who've accepted God's free gift of salvation are at this very moment seated together in heavenly places *in* Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-6). To acknowledge the truth of that statement one also has to acknowledge the original incapacity and present extinction of

his flesh. When the curtain falls on this world as we know it—and we must believe sincerely that it will—nothing should matter except that your soul, having become one of Abraham’s seed by virtue of a supernatural circumcision, will be at liberty to leave your flesh and blood on the tarmac, so to speak, in the twinkling of an eye, just as soon as the Master calls your name. Much like the fear of death or the mourning of the dead, everything that pertains to our carnal existence in these cursed bodies on this cursed earth, indeed, every difficult circumstance that has and ever will arise out of our humanistic preoccupations with age, sex, race, culture or philosophy, is reserved with all hope for the transformation of the hearts of sinners.

In the Gospel of Luke 9:57-60, a man shows up expressing a desire to become a disciple of Jesus:

“57 And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. 58 And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. 59 And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. 60 Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.”

In the last verse are a few of the most simple albeit misunderstood words in Scripture: “Let the dead bury their dead.” The correct interpretation is unmistakable so long as we know to

discern spiritual life from physical life, and spiritual death from physical death. Even a child knows that no corpse could actually hold a funeral service and bury another corpse in the ground; so, the only reasonable conclusion is that Jesus meant for the man to leave it to the spiritually dead to be concerned with such useless things as wakes, remembrances, eulogies, rites or funerals for the physically dead. You can always leave it to the spiritually dead to be terrified of death and obsessed with the preservation of the life of their flesh and the world system.⁹

Each and every consequence of sin's corruption on the world the Lord still turns to good account for *His* glory, by nature of *His* grace (Acts 2:22-24). It is not by any means to impose, but to inspire in the lost a heart of repentance, and in saved believers one of eternal gratitude.

To explain what I mean, I'll use a story I recall hearing from a dear friend of mine and brother in the Lord, Pastor Sam. Pastor Sam is a black man, retired now some 20 years from Trans World Airlines, where he worked for nearly 40 years as a commercial aircraft mechanic. In 1966, just 2 years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act in 1964, he was one of the first black men to be hired for such a position with the airline. On occasion I've heard Pastor Sam speak concerning his involvement in the Civil Rights Movement as a young man, and with regard to his past animosity toward caucasians and theirs toward him. More often, though, I've

⁹ The only legitimate reason for a wake, visitation or funeral to be held on account of the death of a born-again Christian is when it's used as an opportunity for the lost among the family and friends of the deceased to get saved.

heard the man recall with joy much increasing in his voice that it was the testimony and unfailing friendship of none other than a white man, a welder with whom he worked at TWA, that led him eventually to a personal faith and relationship with Jesus Christ.

The last 30 years have seen Pastor Sam and his wife Mary dedicated wholeheartedly to the ministry, serving both in their local church as well as on the mission field. Some years ago the two were sent abroad as short-term missionaries to Kenya, in East Africa. From his time there Sam remembers an interaction he had that brought him to a sobering realization concerning the will of God as it's been fulfilled through the activities of individuals, communities and nations, not to mention entire races of people, since the earliest conceptions of human civilization.

During a small group meeting not long ago Sam told us the story, how he had made the acquaintance of the doorman on duty in the lobby of their hotel in downtown Nairobi and engaged with him a short while in friendly conversation. It wasn't long before the fellow made mention of his plans to leave the city just as soon as he could in order to get back to his village outside of the city, where his father had recently passed away and been buried. No doubt Pastor Sam was taken somewhat aback when the young man informed him next of his intentions to exhume and rebury his father's body in a new grave some miles away from the village. As Sam was quick to find out, the fellow's reasoning was that so long as his father stayed buried in that particular place, certain malevolent spirits there would not permit the direct

passage of his soul into the afterlife. It was upon hearing this, the personal anecdote of a tribalistic, hyper-religious, superstitious man, that Pastor Sam realized something the folks at the UN, the ACLU and in the Congressional Black Caucus couldn't get a hold of even if their lives depended on it. All that prevented him from sharing in the man's traditional beliefs and apprehensions about life and death were a knowledge of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and 245 years of slavery. Unsettling though at first I'm sure it was, the thought occurred to him that were it not for the trade of his ancestors as slaves to the British colonies in North America some 300 years ago it would be no far stretch for him to imagine himself having in common with his new acquaintance not only black skin, but a similar cultural and religious character. Had no African ever set foot in the ports of Baltimore, Charleston, Savannah or New Orleans, there would never have occurred the great spiritual awakening that of them brought scores of thousands, bond and free alike, to a saving faith in the blood atonement. Neither the "brush arbor" nor the "negro spiritual" would have found its way into the vernacular of the American South.¹⁰

Were it not for the cruel and morally incomprehensible institution of slavery in the South, to this day the black race as a whole most surely still would be adrift in the dark, following after their old aboriginal superstitions, rituals and mythologies. All thanks be to God the boundaries of His grace have never been governed or determined by the moral convictions of man. Yet, for a moment, imagine if

¹⁰ A brush arbor, or hush harbor, in the Antebellum south was originally a secluded place, often densely forested, where born-again slaves gathered at night secretly to pray and worship the Lord.

they were; that is, envision for the sake of argument a reality in which God administers grace like you or I would, with a million conditions and strings attached.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7-9 Paul wrote:

“7 And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. 8 For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. 9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.”

God's grace is sufficient even in the midst of suffering, for God's grace is not man's grace. Paul knew it, and a great many of the slaves who suffered much in this country knew it, too. It is only because of God's grace bestowed on them in the shedding of one man's blood and in the emancipation of their souls from their bodies through their faith in that blood that a great many slaves, if only they could speak from their graves, would tell you in no uncertain terms that they possessed a kind of freedom like nothing any of their masters in the flesh could fathom.

You see, if as Christians we are to believe that one man's horrific murder by crucifixion stands as the single greatest expression of God's love and mercy toward us, why then should we not

regard our greatest afflictions, tragedies and hardships in this life as anything other than a shining opportunity for us, and for those around us who may not believe, to behold and experience firsthand the Lord's all-sufficient grace.

There is no account in Scripture more exemplary of this apparent "phenomenon" of divine grace than that of the tumultuous life of Joseph, who, like Canaan, became an object of hatred to his brethren in Genesis 37:4, a slave in Genesis 37:28, a stranger in a strange land in Genesis 39:1, one falsely accused in Genesis 39:14, and a prisoner in Genesis 39:20. It was not in spite of these trials, but because of them that Joseph could attest the same as the apostle Paul later would to the Lord's enduring faithfulness. Many of the worst things you could imagine, like Paul, Joseph endured, and yet the Bible says that God was with him. As it was with Paul, in Joseph's weakness as a child, as a slave, as a prisoner, was the strength of God made perfect. Rather than despairing for his situation, moreover Joseph, one of the only men in the Old Testament in whom the Spirit of God actually resided (Genesis 41:38), gloried in his "infirmities," so that the power of God could rest upon him to the extent he could be used by God ultimately to save millions of lives. Whatever we do, we must not overlook the correlation between God's utilization of Joseph in the Old Testament (before the Cross) and His utilization of Paul in the New Testament (after the Cross). You see, while God's purpose with Joseph was to accomplish the *physical, temporal* salvation of millions, His purpose with Paul, which carries on today with saved Bible-believers all around the world, was to see to the *spiritual, eternal* salvation of as many as would place their trust in one man's blood.

Any relatively in-depth study of Genesis 37-50 will indicate Joseph even more as an unmistakable type of Jesus Christ. There have been at least 80 and as many as 150 comparisons noted by various commentators between Joseph, who lived under what Larkin called the “Patriarchal Dispensation” during the 18th and 17th centuries B.C., and Christ, the only *begotten* Son of God, whose birth and crucifixion are generally placed around 4 B.C. and 30 A.D. respectively. The Testator Himself declared in the Gospel of John 5:39 and 46 that the Old Testament Scriptures foreshadowed His coming, and the record of Joseph’s life is no exception. A brief overview of such a study should include at least the following ways in which Joseph’s life prefigured that of Christ:

- **He was beloved of his father** (Genesis 37:3; Matthew 3:17)
- **He was sold for silver** (Genesis 37:28; Matthew 26:15)
- **He became a servant** (Genesis 39:1-2; Philippians 2:7)
- **He successfully weathered temptation** (Genesis 39:7-12; Hebrews 4:15)
- **He was numbered with transgressors** (Genesis 39:20, 40:1-3; Isaiah 53:12, Mark 15:27-28)
- **His people knew him not** (Genesis 42:8; John 14:9, 2 Corinthians 3:11)
- **He was falsely accused** (Genesis 39:16-18; Matthew 12:22-24)

- **For his abilities he credited the Lord only** (Genesis 41:16; John 5:19)
- **He began his ministry at age 30** (Genesis 41:46; Luke 3:23)
- **He took a Gentile bride** (Genesis 41:45; Ephesians 3:6)
- **He became the sole means of salvation to all people** (Genesis 41:57, 50:19-20; John 3:16; Revelation 5:9)

What would be needed in order to negate the supernatural power behind each of these “coincidences” is proof the author of Genesis came to a knowledge of certain details about Jesus’ life 1,700 years prior to His birth by means completely ordinary. Naturally, we’re left with only one reasonable conclusion, which is that all scripture was *given by inspiration* of God. Remember, no other book in the history of the world measures up to a King James Bible.

While we ought to see Joseph then as a subsidiary type of the apostle Paul, and a principal type of Jesus Christ, that isn’t all. Not only did Joseph’s ministry foreshadow Paul’s ministry, and his life the life of Jesus Christ, but also his testimony prefigured that of any black slave in the South who ever called upon the name of the Lord for salvation. Joseph’s personal testimony to the grace of God in dispersion through all his afflictions we read in Genesis 50:20: “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.”

It serves as nothing other than a confirmation of God's grace in dispersion *through* the grievances of slavery that more black folks today know the name of Christ than do not. Numbered in the thousands were the slaves who aspired to the legal status of a freed man or woman only to receive by grace through faith the far greater status of an adopted, flesh-liberated, spiritual child of God. Moreover, numbering today in the millions are the souls of their descendants who've discovered an altogether new and otherworldly identity, being lovers of the Book and partakers in the Blood, with brothers and sisters all awaiting the same Blessed Hope, which is to be absent from the body and present in Glory with the Lord.

It's an interesting thing when you get down to it that one of the most definitive and straightforward accounts in the Bible of a sinner's conversion to Biblical New Testament Christianity is found in Acts 8:26-39, where Philip wins the soul of the Ethiopian eunuch. This passage indicates that very possibly the first Gentile to be born again and brought into the Body of Christ was a black man. Additionally, the Song of Solomon has long been taught to be an allegory for the relationship between Jesus Christ, who is pictured in the book by King Solomon, and His bride, the Church. The Bride of Christ in this prophecy is represented by none other than a black woman (Song of Solomon 1:1-6). Why do you suppose it is that out of all races the black race generally proves to be the most receptive to the Gospel? Without a doubt, it is easier to win a black person to the Lord than it is to get a Shemite or a Japhethite to repent and be saved. Could it be that black folks, by way of their

long history of subjection, have acquired to a great extent the insecurity necessary for anyone to acknowledge in the first place their desperate need for a Savior? I believe so. I believe the Lord in His sovereignty has used the plight of the black race for centuries not only to reveal in type the plight of the soul in bondage to sin, but to also exemplify for all people what it looks like to have the heart of a servant. You don't have to like it. You don't even have to believe it, but the truth of the matter is that God would have us all to possess the same humility, the same spirit of brokenness that has defined the black race for generations. Philippians 2:5-8 says:

“5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of **no reputation**, and took upon him the form of a **servant**, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he **humbled himself**, and **became obedient** unto death, even the death of the cross.”

The mind that was in Christ Jesus, which Paul said ought to be in every believer, was the mind of a slave, the mind of someone whose body was not his own.

My dear friend and brother in the faith Pastor Sam counts himself among those descendants of slaves, who came of African blood by no means of their own choosing, but became of the spiritual seed of Abraham through an installation of faith and by the grace of God. If you like, you can find every one of them accounted for, in Glory, in Revelation 5:9:

“And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God **by thy blood** out of **every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.**”

This is a multitude speaking that will be made up of every person in this Age of Grace who by faith ever shed their flesh in favor of a white robe. It is known as the Church, as the Body, or the Bride, of Christ. Even now it is comprised of men and women drawn from every sin-ridden corner of the earth, out of the darkness that circumscribes all races, nationalities, languages, religious and cultural backgrounds, who've not only heard the name of Jesus but, beyond simply hearing, have abandoned all confidence in their own “ways” and trusted fully in the consummate, finished work of Christ for salvation, for the remission of sins, and for the crucial, effective divorcement of soul and flesh. The Lord has made it so that *in* Christ there are no differences, but that, without Christ, differences, and consequently prejudices, should abound.

God is the only true and righteous segregationist, because He knows from experience (Genesis 11:1-9) that when men unite in their own name and for their own cause, they will inevitably become their own gods and see no need in their lives for Him. The Holy Spirit puts it this way in Acts 17:24-27:

“24 God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any

thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; 26 And hath made of **one blood** all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and **hath determined the times before appointed**, and the **bounds of their habitation**; 27 **That they should seek the Lord**, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us..”

We would all doom ourselves straight to Hell if we never found any power to glory in beyond our own, and make no mistake, it is God's mercy on display for us throughout history that has divided the lost from the lost, and pitted nation against nation, race against race, in order that we might look beyond our dirty selves to the one place where true peace may ever be found, which is in the Body of Christ. To that fact, 1 Corinthians 12:13 says, “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”

Consequently, anyone that's afraid to be called a racist is really nothing more than a self-righteous ingrate that's afraid to be called a sinner. There is no difference, because in the Lord's eyes there is no difference between racism and any other sin. James 2:10 says, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”

In Revelation 21:6 the Lord puts fearfulness, disbelief, and dishonesty in the same category as murder, idolatry, fornication, and witchcraft. God solved the problem of racism at the same time and in the same manner that He solved the

problem of death, which is the wages of *all* sin, and He did it on a cross with one Jewish Man's blood. God's graciously simple answer to racial discrimination and prejudice was and remains the Body of Christ. Outside of it no race or ethnic group will ever be satisfied with their lot, no matter how many diversity laws or social programs the state may implement. Try as they might, no one will ever be able to manufacture the kind of unity that's found within the Body of Christ.

Indeed, the issue of race appears to be, in many ways, as ubiquitous as ever. Is not racism, or at least our strange preoccupation with any and all things "different," as prevalent in these last days as it has been at any point in the history of man? We in the United States, within the last fifty years especially, have fallen prey to a culture in which the individual's concept of self, is esteemed more highly than just about anything else. The process of self-realization, self-identification and self-expression for many have become their sole purpose in life. Young people frivol away years of their lives, in their own words, attempting to "find themselves." If only someone would fill them in on the fact there is nothing at all in and of themselves worth finding, they might not waste their time. The Bible says in Proverbs 18:2, "A fool hath no delight in understanding, but that his heart may discover itself."

Nonetheless, because as children they were taught in school and at home to believe that personal fulfillment comes from knowing and pleasing one's self, that is, from pursuits of self-discovery and self-gratification, they spend the rest of

their lives looking to themselves and those around them in order to determine just who in the world they are. The truth is, except they look to the Cross, they'll always just be wearing hats.

Those who for a sense of self look to their emotional attachments, their cultural or racial heritage, their sex, line of work, marriage, children, and religious or moral activity will always have some idea as to who they are; the catch is, their perception of self is never static or complete; rather, it is ever-changing. So long as an individual's self-perspective is derived from any one of these functioning elements of their *humanity*, as a matter of natural course it will remain in a continual state of restless evolution, for the simple fact that man is a temporally-minded creature. No one, lost or saved, whose primary focus is on this world, it's timeline and value system can possess anything other than a temporal mindset, and the temporally-minded inevitably will have a temporal identity that's founded on temporal things. My identity as a white, American male never was enough to satisfy the notion I had concerning the man I *felt* I should have been. Born again though I was, as a teenager I began exploring whatever the world had to offer that seemed able to furnish for me a sense of self and purpose. This is exactly the situation in which the majority of young men and women find themselves, whether they're saved or not. For them, if anything, it's only worse, in that they have to contend with the technological advancements and methods of "social conditioning" unique to their generation. If we think for one second that children in these United States aren't being "conditioned" or indoctrinated, we're fooling ourselves.

It's been going on in public schools and universities for the last 50 years at least. There can be as many as 3 generations brought up within an interim of 50 years, and no generation prior to 1946 ever caused as much harm to this nation as the "boomers," "busters" and "echos" have done collectively, first and foremost by denying the power and infallibility of God's word, and by tending toward "alternative history," emotionalism, religious pluralism, and globalism. Since after all the character of one generation is in all ways instrumental in determining that of the succeeding generation, it's no surprise to me at all now when basic principles of Scripture, the divine creation of the universe (Nehemiah 9:6) for instance, or the traditional family structure (Genesis 2:23-24), are mocked, reviled, or deemed archaic or absurd.

7. Cheap Grace & the Unliberated Christian

Living in Chicago for the better part of a decade I found what seemed for a time like purpose. I was a musician; I'll admit not a very good one, but I had an ego big enough to make up for everything I lacked in proficiency. Somehow I had gotten it in my head that the more folks heard or knew of me, the more my life would matter for something. During this time I became a heavy smoker, and I began drinking alcohol daily. Egotistical and self-consumed, I grew committed to the development of a persona that I believed would captivate and intrigue anyone who came in contact me or my "work." I can say now that my greatest motivation at that time was public recognition. My self-worth and sense of purpose both were dependent on the acclimation I received from complete strangers in response to my creative expressions. Earlier we discussed at some length how God conceived of mankind with a specific purpose in mind. We looked at how our spiritual "mold," so to speak, had already been cast with Lucifer prior to Genesis 1:2, and how in Genesis 2:7, rather than with gold and precious stones, that mold

the second and final time was cast with the “dust of the ground.” My upbringing in a Bible-believing home and salvation at an early age did not immediately grant me this understanding, that as a born-again Christian, my identity and purpose in life were to be found entirely in the eternal work of Christ. I had the Holy Spirit dwelling in me from the moment I trusted in the blood of Christ to save me; I had undergone a spiritual circumcision; my flesh was dead whereas my soul had been made alive, and, when God looked at me all He saw was the blood of His Son, which to this day still somehow He counts to me for righteousness. Even so, for years I lived as if nothing in me was different. I read my Bible on occasion, but out of a sense of obligation, glancing over a passage just as quickly as I could, you’d have thought for fear the pages would burst into flames at any moment. I had the audacity still to wonder why the Lord wasn’t speaking to me.¹

My years in Chicago I spent running with atheists and Marxists, frequenting bars, harboring a profane and vulgar mind, and living solely for my own selfish ambitions. Eventually, however, making music began to lose its luster for me.

¹ Calvinism teaches that one cannot be truly saved and live the way that I did, which sounds good enough, but they’ll never be able to explain why so many Christians today, who have strong testimonies of salvation and will surely be in Heaven when they die, are living every day in sin, that is, in the flesh. 5-point Calvinists have a difficult time understanding there is a distinct difference between a soul’s salvation and his sanctification. Then again, since Calvinists won’t acknowledge the role an individual’s free will has in the act of faith, the only way one can have absolute assurance of their salvation is to live without sin. Of course they’ll deny it, but these “reformed” theologians are peddling just another variation of the same old works-based salvation as their Roman Catholic counterparts. As they say, the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.

The more I performed somehow the less I felt gratified in that pursuit. Little did I know this was just the first of God's numerous efforts to draw me to Him. My conception of self as a musician and performer seemed all of a sudden incomplete and superficial, and so I picked back up an old childhood vocation of mine, writing fiction. Though still performing and recording music, over the course of the next few years I wrote dozens of short stories and more than a few longer manuscripts. Nevertheless, at the end of it all, when I'd exhausted myself emotionally and mentally, I found I was no more fulfilled than I had been only making music. I encountered increasingly what's known among artists as "creative block." In reality, every one of these "dry spells" was a manifestation of God's desire for me, as a saved individual who'd never truly sought to walk in my newness of life in Christ, to see once and for all the perfectness of His will in contrast with the frailty of my own. In response to the Lord's many attempts at reaching my soul, I ran just as fast as I could in the opposite direction. As a result I became disheartened and restless, facing what seemed an insurmountable crisis of identity.² Often I used alcohol to suppress the overwhelming sense I had that outside of all my weary, uninspired efforts at self-expression, my life presented little purpose, if any. Because of my tendency toward bitterness and self-consumption, my marriage suffered. More than once I'll admit I came close to losing my wife. On a whim, once more trying miserably to fill a spiritual vacancy with more carnal activity, I started in on yet another

² I'd encourage no one who's having a crisis of identity ever to go looking for his or her self, but to lay hold on a King James Bible and go looking for the Lord. He says in Proverbs 8:17, "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."

creative endeavor. Possessing none of the necessary patience and no training whatsoever in the visual arts I immersed myself completely in drawing and painting, and within the year I had made hundreds of images, pen and ink sketches, charcoal drawings and acrylic paintings. There was for a brief time a small sense of fulfillment I got out of it, but very quickly I fell again into a state of creative frustration and self-confliction. In hindsight now I am able to see how through the years the Lord brought me time and again to a crossroads, to countless instances of personal insecurity or creative discontent where I would come face to face with a decision between two manners of living, two alternatives that would determine the trajectory of my life. The first of these, which appealed to the comfort of my flesh, was to keep on the same road I'd been going down for years, continuing to establish my personhood on the temporal, vainglorious affairs of the world, irrespective of the consequences. Now, when finally the Lord got hold of me, He did so through a few good men who invested His word into my life. I became thereby so profoundly aware of the difference between a soul-saving faith in the blood of Christ and a life-altering submission to the cause of Christ (the Christian's reasonable service), that I chose to go the other way, to no longer discourage God's grace or circumvent His will; in fact, it so happened that I wanted nothing more in life than to seek, to know, and to do the will of Him that saved me, and to be identified not in part but altogether with His blood, His cross, and His resurrection.

My personal testimony I've discovered is nothing extraordinary. Thousands of Christians have a story that's almost

identical, and the reason for that is the gross lack of Biblical discipleship in the local church today. Though I put my trust in the Lord at an early age, as soon as I could fathom at all what was done for me at Calvary, like so many of my brothers and sisters in Christ, beyond that moment of realization and acceptance I was left with little sense of what to do next. Though I was taught God's word, I was not in my formative years held accountable to it. While I had an in-depth knowledge of the Bible and sense enough even to discern between most right and wrong doctrine, I knew nothing when it came to any real, inward application. I had been a recipient of what some writers have called "cheap grace." Dietrich Bonhoeffer defined it as "the grace we bestow on ourselves." Vance Havner once put it that grace is free, but not cheap. He said, "People will take anything that is free, but they are not interested in discipleship. They will take Christ as Savior but not as Lord."

This cheap grace has come about simply as a result of "good" men preaching an incomplete, and thus a mostly ineffective version of the Gospel. The last hundred or so years have seen Christianity, particularly in the United States, fall victim little by little to a myriad of heretical notions and conduct, higher criticism, ecumenicalism, easy-believism, New Thought philosophy, progressivism, supersessionism, and liberal and prosperity theologies. Under pressure from the world system there arose these and countless other seemingly benign abstractions, whereby once good and faithful pastors, missionaries and Bible teachers, abandoning in its completeness the truth of the Scriptures, have resigned to preaching a more "palatable" gospel. So long as

folks would rather have grace without conviction, salvation without repentance, redemption without bloodshed, and liberty without submission, Satan will see to it there's a back-slidden fellow somewhere that's more than willing to sell it to them. For almost every lost or wayward soul there is a friendly, smooth-talking operator primed and ready to appeal to their humanity with a hurried, superficial oration of the Gospel, which adheres only to those elements of the faith that by themselves work out to legitimize the sin condition and portray fallen man in an all too positive light. God's love, mercy, grace, compassion and such like, without His righteousness, discernment, judgment, wrath and vengeance, represent only a part of God's character and only a part of the Gospel. Spurred on by the same anti-Christ spirit that stood behind the publication of more than 200 corrupt versions of the English Bible, postmillennialists throughout the 20th century saw to the promulgation of what became known as the "social gospel," which in essence denied Jesus Christ as the sole and consummate solution to man's indigence under sin, and foreshadowed the "emerging" church's inclination toward the self-exaltation and will-worship of progressivism, and away from the supernatural authority and inerrancy of the Book (Proverbs 30:5), the unlimited ransoming power of the Blood (Romans 3:23-25), and the reality of every saved believer's Blessed Hope of a bodily transformation at the Rapture of all Church Age saints (Philippians 3:20-21). The fact is that from cheap grace proceeds more cheap grace, and from a half-hearted gospel half-hearted converts. Whereas there are thousands upon thousands alive today who've been born again by faith in Jesus Christ and will doubtless find themselves in Heaven with the Lord one day

soon, you'd never guess as much from the way they lead their lives. They are the recipients of a partial gospel whose "love" for the Lord diminishes not at all their love for the things of this world. They are those whose faith runs only as deep as it must in order to benefit their own souls, but not so deep as to generate within them a desire to benefit the Kingdom of God. Plenty of folks believe in Jesus, the devil included, however few have trusted on Him for salvation, and even fewer seek to serve Him. As it was with me, one can be saved and often feel as if nothing about them is different. Millions have received and been converted with a partial presentation of the Gospel that never seek to know their Savior. Because of this I dare say there are more saved people than there are unsaved who go on for years feeling personally and spiritually dissatisfied in their lives. Such a Christian often feels that, while his faith may keep His soul out of Hell, it does nothing in the way of improving, or, for that matter, changing his life here and now. You can see, can't you, how a Christian's *feelings* can get him into a real mess of trouble? In most cases these "cheap grace" converts go through life just waiting for another "spiritual experience" to match or exceed what momentarily they might have felt when they got saved, rather than simply submitting to the truth and authority of God's word. Still, who can blame them, if they were at no time encouraged to prove out the facts of their faith for themselves through careful, diligent study of the Book.³

In the end, any presentation of the Gospel that puts forward grace without mentioning any need for personal conviction

³ Far too often, "newborn" Christians become students of men rather than students of the Bible (Psalm 119:9).

or repentance, that promises redemption but won't deal seriously with the reality of Christ's suffering and bloodshed, or that speaks plenteously of Jesus, but rarely of the Bible, is one that's dishonest and insincere, and one that produces men and women whose souls may be preserved from the wrath to come, but whose lives are wholly unfit for the work expected of a saint in these last days. So long as pastors keep on preaching some half-baked version of the Gospel instead of God's word from cover to cover, and so long as folks go on taking to it, the integrity of those who call themselves Christians will continue to erode, and the man or woman of faith will become scarcely distinguishable from those who have no faith at all. The average Christian in America has become a secular, self-affirming, politically-motivated, religious zealot who's more concerned with what makes him human than he is with what makes him a new creature. He's more captivated by various fleeting matters of the culture than he is by the literal words of God in print. He'd rather involve himself in social activities or personal endeavors than be about the mission of God. He takes a laissez-faire position when it comes to the salvation of lost souls. He takes more to heart the wisdom of men than the wisdom of God. He sees evangelism as being synonymous with "outreach," something accomplished with nothing more than a word of encouragement or an act of goodwill, through the transference of his human emotions and moral presumptions instead of an incorruptible investment of the word of God into another person completely in spite of himself. To him the subject of this book might seem strange or even absurd, much as it would to someone completely lost, because although the objective action of spiritual lib-

erty itself took place between his soul and flesh the very moment he trusted in Jesus Christ, possibly never in his life since has he known or experienced in its fullness the liberty that was at that time and only thereby made accessible to him. You see, the Bible teaches there is freedom from sin in the death of flesh.

Romans 6:7-11:

“7 For he that is dead is freed from sin. 8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

By this we understand a Christian remains in bondage not because he isn't free, but because he does not consider his flesh to be truly dead. Furthermore, Galatians 5:13-18 says:

“13 For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. 15 But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another. 16 This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

17 For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. 18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”

If ever there was any doubt about a believer’s flesh not co-existing with the Holy Spirit, verse 17 settles the issue. As we established earlier, When one reckons their flesh, and all that pertains to their flesh (their identity as determined by their sex, heritage, race, religious traditions or political affiliations, etc.) to be alive and well, in turn they render the Holy Spirit worthless, effectively dead, within their soul.

Even during the years I squandered running from the Lord I know for a certainty that my name was to be found written in the Book of Life; I know beyond question that, since I had trusted in the blood of Jesus Christ to save me, in God’s view my soul resided within but independent of my body. I had full assurance of my salvation, but I had no testimony. You see, like so many before and after me, I had been set free the moment I came to faith in Christ; whether I knew it or not, in some part my trouble was that I assumed “spiritual” sensations and experiences should’ve been the ultimate barometer for determining the extent of my freedom as a Christian. My trouble was in larger part that I gave more credence to my sublunary comprehension of spiritual realities than I did to those realities themselves, as they were available to me all the while in the unadulterated context of Scripture. If and when I read the Bible in those days, I did so not with any longing or expectation for it

to correct or transform me in any substantial way, since I felt that nothing about myself necessarily needed to be corrected or transformed. In this manner I possessed an uncanny resemblance to the modern Christian who seems to regard his sanctification as having been accomplished at Calvary at the same time as his justification. I was in fact no different from the multitude of Christians who've no concept of the liberty they've received because they do not want and therefore will not strive to be aligned with God's will or attuned to His perfect and righteous point of view. If you're saved and it's not already clear, I pray the Lord reveals to you as expressly as he did to me that any born-again Christian's refusal to present himself a living sacrifice, that is, his inexcusable failure as a sinner saved by grace to resign his life and personhood completely, without reservation, to the Lord, is always a result of the flawed human logic that perception, emotion and experience transcend doctrine. The trouble is that all of our perceptions, emotions and experiences have their provenance in our flesh, and as much as we may try to spiritualize them, there is nothing actually spiritual, in any real sense at least, about our personal judgments concerning the Divine or our emotional responses to the workings of the only two things in a Christian's life that are legitimately spiritual in nature: the Holy Spirit and the word of God. Anyone who says they're spiritual but not religious, or quotes the old New Ager's line that man is a "spiritual being," hasn't got an ounce of sense, for it could well be said the only thing spiritual about a person, apart from the Holy Spirit within them if they're saved, is a spirit of the devil, that which according to Ephesians 2:2 "now worketh in the children of disobedience."

For the believer we know that disobedience will not countermand his salvation (Romans 11:29, 8:38-39, 1 John 5:13); it will not undermine his justification, since that work was finished on the cross with Christ some 2,000 years ago. Still, we must not underestimate the severity of the natural ramifications of disobedience in the believer's life. We have to acknowledge that it will most certainly put an end to the process of one's sanctification. It will only lead to trouble, anguish and confusion for him, and we ought to expect nothing less. There are certain elements within nature which upon contact will not mix, cohabitate or coalesce under any circumstances, and we, understanding somewhat the laws that govern these elements, would not anticipate from them anything else. Just as like poles in magnets repel one another, as oil in water is immiscible, and as two male dogs in the same cage will inevitably fight tooth and nail, so contained within the reborn Christian are there two incompatible natures.⁴ We ought never to expect an easy or peaceful coalition to exist between two personalities whose interests lie in direct opposition to one another. Amos 3:3 asks the question, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Obviously the answer is, "Not a chance." Believers that willfully disregard the Lord's clear directives for them as new creatures and members of the Body of Christ had best get used to the symptoms of the unique internal struggle that goes on every day between their two natures. Sometimes, to the modern, carnally-minded Christian, it can seem as if the lost of this world have more hope, appreciate more liberty, and experience more fulfillment than they do in their own lives. You see, the reason many believers in these

⁴ Another analogy might be that you'll never see two pimps on the same corner.

final days complain so often of severe and chronic neuroses, of a sense of insoluble inner turmoil, of fear, depression, self-loathing and compulsivity, is not necessarily because they're unsaved, nor is it because the Lord wishes them to suffer; on the contrary, the Scripture bears out that it's because they continue to *grieve* and *vex* the Holy Spirit, who is the life of their "inner man" (Ephesians 3:14-16).

"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."
(Ephesians 4:30)

"9 In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old. 10 But they rebelled, and vexed his holy Spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them." (Isaiah 63:9-10)

Whenever spirits of restlessness, confusion or despair prevail in the hearts and minds of believers, odds are they've been living either in partial or outright rebellion to the word of God, and they're now suffering the pains of loss in spiritual warfare. The point is, if you've been born again, you no longer have the luxury like the sinner does to carry on in the flesh without also being a party to the anguish you impose on the Spirit. In other words, once you get saved, you're not alone in the "house" anymore, and the incoming Resident is righteous, perfect in every way, and jealous for your loyalty. Would we ever expect a principled, law-abiding

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person to live harmoniously in the same house as a known murderer or sex offender? I suspect not. So then, should we very well expect Someone who is righteous to coexist peacefully with someone who is wilfully and actively unrighteous? God forbid.

8. The Death of the Self

A disobedient Christian is the same as an ungrateful Christian. Let's not fool ourselves. One does not become rebellious against the Lord except he first becomes ungrateful to the Lord. While disobedience in almost every case proceeds from an ungrateful heart, appropriating an ungrateful heart almost always comes from having a distorted view or unrealistic perception of God. We must ask ourselves how, then, that it should even be possible for a true child of God, the soul of whom the Bible says has been incorporated with the Spirit of God (2 Corinthians 6:16), to obtain in the first place any kind of fallacious or inaccurate understanding of Him. I assure you it is possible so long as the Bible does not take center stage in the heart and mind of a Christian. The Book in its entirety is the mind of God, the sole, complete revelation of His purposes, perspectives and personality for mankind. It is the source of all objective truth. It is the best-selling and yet, somehow, the least-read volume ever printed.

The psalmist in Psalm 138:2 writes, “I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast **magnified thy word** above all thy name.”¹ From this one verse we ought to have no trouble at all grasping that God places more value and significance on His word than on His own name.

2 Timothy 2:15 tells the Christian, “**Study** to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” We may infer from this that if a Christian neglects to study, he *will not* be approved unto God for any kind of ministry, and he absolutely *will* have reason to be ashamed. The mark, therefore, of every dissatisfied, reticent, ungrateful, and unliberated Christian is an untouched Bible.² Let me be clear in saying that without the Bible there would be in this age no knowledge of Jesus Christ, no salvation of souls from the penalty of sin, and no legitimate form of “human spirituality” whatsoever. Moreover, there would be no concept of liberty for us to speak of, spiritual or otherwise. Outside of the preserved and inspired words of God there exists uninterrupted carnality and mundanity. The

1 The majority of New Age Bible versions published since the year 1890 have effectively butchered the verse. Instead of God’s word being magnified *above* His name, the scholars have changed it so that it reads as though His word and His name the Lord magnifies equally. Worst of all is the Roman Catholic Douay-Rheims Bible, which does away with God’s word *and* His name altogether.

2 If you attend or belong to any church whose leadership does not strongly—and I mean strongly—encourage members to read and study the Bible in their own homes and on their own time, my advice would be that you drop them like a bad habit and start looking until you find some place where they do.

born-again child of God could not become such without it, nor could he very well without it continue to be one. I would even go so far as to say that without the Bible there would be no God, for just as Christ, who is called the Word, was himself God in the flesh, so is the Bible a tangible manifestation of God (John 1:1-12). Its effectual characteristics, for that matter, are identical to those of Christ. This is to indicate that Jesus Christ and the Bible, insofar as they are both called the *W-O-R-D* of God, more or less accomplish the same work. You see, while by his vicarious death and resurrection Christ paved the way for mankind to be reconciled with his Creator, the Bible serves as the only effective means of communicating the fact. Romans 10:17 says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Thus, in essence, the Bible serves as an extension of the finished work of Christ, if not an extension of Christ himself, and until a believer can get a hold of this fact, he's guaranteed to have a view of the Lord that's not altogether true.³

The influence of the world on a Christian out of fellowship with God is such that he begins to look at mundane things

3 It's not only Charismatics and Pentecostals who're always looking for signs and wonders from God to convince them as to the reality of their position and responsibility within the will of God, but I venture to say that Christianity in general suffers from a sort of mystic hyper-spiritualism. I, too, felt for many years that if God wanted to use me in any real capacity, at some point I'd be getting a "call." This is a prime example of a believer standing in the way of his own ministry. If we read our Bibles and possess even a basic knowledge of church history it ought be clear as day the apostolic signs and wonders ended with the completion of the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 13:8-10). Be advised, Christian, that you'll not be receiving any signs or visions informing you as to the Lord's perfect will for your life. The true sign and only spiritual element for believers in this present age is the Bible. The Lord takes willing volunteers, not superstitious, hyper-spiritual prima donnas.

as spiritual and spiritual things as mundane. This inversion of realities makes it so that he can and will not recognize the Bible for what it really is—the only God-sent, supernatural and spiritually-effective material object available to him in this world. He begins to read and interpret it the same as a lost person. Rather than as a consummate statement by God concerning His personality and eternal purpose for the souls of men, he sees it, at best, as little more than a guidebook for religious practice and moral conduct. Moreover, If a believer does not “rightly divide” he can and will not rightly understand God’s word. I know it to be true from my own experience that if ever the Book seems a barren and lifeless article to a Christian it’s because they’ve been “sowing to the flesh” (Galatians 6:8), and the Holy Spirit, who facilitates the right application of Scripture, has thereby been grieved.⁴

The more I gave acquiescence to my flesh and consented to its whims the more the Holy Spirit within me was troubled and the more the word of God in my view became like any other old book. Because I lived in every other way according to my flesh, naturally I read and interpreted the Bible according to my flesh. The Spirit could not be involved in that activity until my flesh was put out of the way. Dozens of times the Lord sought to draw me out of my wicked,

⁴ The years I lived in apostasy were many but not endless. It cannot be overstated that for a would-be Christian to live year after year in unrepented sin without conviction, that is, with no intervention at any point from the Holy Spirit, it’s a very real possibility this “believer” was never truly saved to begin with. If there is any doubt in one’s mind as to their position in Christ, they had best get back to the basics of the faith, and settle the matter once and for all, not based on their feelings but solely on the words of truth. The following are a few passages for the purpose of verifying one’s salvation: John 6:37, 5:24, Romans 11:26-32, 1 John 5:9-13.

idolatrous lifestyle, but to no avail. It was not until through a complex series of events He saw to it that my wife and I left Chicago and wound up back in my hometown, of all places. So long as I was surrounded in that city with all the things I'd grown to love about the world, the Lord knew there would be no reaching me, and so, by His grace He relocated us to a strange but familiar place, and stuck in our path Godly men and women whose lives reflected an unyielding passion for souls and for the word of God. Through His Church and by His Spirit the Lord began to work on me, setting in motion the process of sanctification I had so long inhibited.⁵ I gave up smoking, and lost my thirst for alcohol. Likewise, my opinions and perspectives began to change concerning all manner of things, the arts, culture, politics, philosophy, and so forth. Indeed, the spiritual liberty that had been granted me more than twenty years earlier was at last bearing witness in my life to its authenticity. As I now approached it each morning in sincere expectation to learn the will of my Savior, the word of God for me revived. Before my eyes that Book took on the very characteristics it claims itself to possess in Hebrews 4:12: it showed itself quick, that is, *alive*; it showed itself powerful, sharper than any two-edged sword; it became in my eyes actually capable of delivering to someone the means of salvation, of spiritual liberation, the "dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow;" moreover, it became a "discerner of the thoughts and intents" of my heart. The Book began to change me. Even now, it continues to do so. I just

⁵ Just as it was Christ, and Christ alone, who made it possible for you and I to be justified before God, it is only the Bible that can sanctify anyone. (John 17:17).

have to allow it.⁶ Passages which before had often struck me as figurative, ostentatious or just plain meaningless, now, by virtue of the interpretive work of an unquelled and undeterred Holy Spirit, I read as though for the first time and comprehended with respect not only to their doctrinal and historical significance, but also to their practical and spiritual application. A few such passages involve one of the greatest truths in Scripture that applies to every sinner saved in this dispensation of grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and it is one that a great many Christians can't seem very well to understand. Don't get me wrong now; for as simple a thing as it is, it is by no means ascertained by human nature, instinct or intuition, but very much in spite of all three. I was saved 20 years before I could ever really get my head around it, and still at times I struggle to do so.

Nevertheless, I find it to be this truth in particular that deals most directly with the believer's personal disposition toward their own spiritual liberty. We touched somewhat on it earlier in connection with the volatile facets of a carnal man's identity. If you're at all looking for it, you'll immediately notice the apostle Paul alludes at least once to this truth in nearly every letter he wrote to the churches in Asia Minor and southeastern Europe. The spiritual reality is that if you've been born again everything about you in the human sense went extinct the moment you put your

⁶ If anyone has the sense they've gotten off course in their walk with the Lord, I suggest you set aside this book, and start reading the only Book in the world with the power to fundamentally transform you and your way of thinking. The Lord will never compel anyone physically to sit down and read or study His word. However, if you're saved but still find yourself more concerned with the carnal, temporal affairs of this world than the gainful, eternal avocations of Glory, before very long I suspect you'll want to.

trust in the blood of Jesus Christ. There's a hymn that says, "When He sees me, He sees the blood of the Lamb; He sees me as worthy and not as I am." The Biblical accuracy of these words cannot be overstated, not merely in terms of their connection to every believer's justified position in Christ, but equally in terms of their practical, objective statement concerning the reputation of every believer in the eyes of God.

In Romans 6:5-7, to all saved believers past, present, and future by way of those living in Rome at the time, Paul writes:

"5 For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: 6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. 7 For he that is dead is freed from sin."

When someone gets saved, Paul is saying their old nature, which for clarity's sake is the same as their "human nature," is put to death, for all intents and purposes crucified with Christ.

The apostle to the Gentiles wrote of the same "phenomenon," but as it affected him personally, in Galatians 2:20: "I am **crucified** with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

To some of the more ornery “critical thinkers” out there Paul may seem to have contradicted himself in the latter places with the first several verses of Ephesians 2. Possibly one of the greatest passages in your Bible, Ephesians 2:1-9 says:

“1 And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; 2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: 3 Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, 5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) 6 And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: 7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.”

The apparent contradiction would come from verses 1 and 5, which both imply that because of sin one is dead prior to faith in Christ, which raises the question, “How can some-

one be crucified who is already dead?" The answer is, "They can't." Still, if one knew or cared enough, I suppose a lost person could try and facetiously make the argument they might actually be going to heaven when they die by simply comparing Romans 6:7 with Ephesians 2:1 or Colossians 2:13 which says: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses..."

Their point of argument could be phrased something along these lines: "If Romans 6:7 is true and to be dead is to be freed from sin, according to Ephesians 2:1 and Colossians 2:13 in my sins I am already dead; therefore *by* my sins I am made free from the consequences of them!"

It's an ironic notion at heart, in that most unrepentant sinners could not care less what the Bible has to say; and yet there are a great many lost souls throughout the years who've espoused philosophies resembling this, which present brazen carnality and human baseness as the greatest modes of "spiritual" attainment or experience. These are your existential and moral nihilists, materialists, animalists, hedonists, humanists, and absurdists, like Camus, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Bataille, Genet, Nietzsche, Feuerbach, Russell, Ayer, and others.

The undoing of all Bible rejectors and critics, religious or secular, is that every encounter with God's word they facilitate under the most prideful assumption that it bears a need somewhere for correction. If they would only grant their Creator the courtesy of taking Him at His word, they might

come to an actual knowledge of the truth, instead of getting lost in the subjective, convoluted mess they've made for themselves. The Bible clearly says we're dead in trespasses and sins before salvation. It also says of believers that at salvation we are crucified with Christ, and it's true in both cases. Naturally we presume that for something to die it must be first alive, but, you see, whenever Paul speaks of the crucifixion, death, or putting off of the old man, flesh, or the body, he is referring to one of two things, either our immutable human condition from the only perspective that matters, or an individual's personal concession thereto. In other words, when in Ephesians 2:1, 2:5, and Colossians 2:13 Paul told believers they were, preceding faith, dead *in* their sins, he was dealing specifically with their flesh, their humanity, not their souls. You'll notice, too, that nowhere in his letters does Paul make any allusion to the flesh being alive at any time. That's because in God's economy no flesh after Adam was ever alive to begin with, and your body doesn't come alive when you get saved, either. The life of a Christian is the Holy Spirit, which inhabits the soul, and, since we know that by means of the circumcision of Christ any "connective tissue" that existed between the Christian's body and soul was done away with, your "newness of life in Christ" never comes in contact with your flesh. The flesh of a Christian is just as dead as that of a lost person. The difference always has been with the soul, which is either dead with the flesh or alive with the Spirit. The soul comes alive, whereas the flesh never does. It's not what the critics teach, but it's what the Bible says. Therefore, the thing for us to realize now is that when the apostle Paul directly charges believers to "put off the old man" (Ephesians 4:22; Colossians

3:9), or to “mortify” the deeds of their bodies (Romans 8:13) and members upon the earth (Colossians 3:5), he’s not suggesting we kill or put to death the flesh, not even in a figurative sense. Roman Catholics and Protestants alike have completely missed the mark when it comes to this doctrine of Mortification. Hairshirts and cilices have been worn by self-obsessed religionists for centuries, so as to cause themselves extreme physical discomfort. Martin Luther, in the third and fourth of his *Ninety-five Theses*, alleged that, “...inner repentance is worthless unless it produces various outward mortification of the flesh. The penalty of sin remains as long as the hatred of self (that is, true inner repentance), namely till our entrance into the kingdom of heaven.” To this day during Lent each year Roman Catholics in Italy, Spain and the Philippines whip themselves to a bloody pulp with scourges and perform grisly emulative crucifixions. Thomas à Kempis, a German ascetic who lived after the Great Schism but prior to the Reformation, in his book *The Imitation of Christ* wrote in support of self-punishment: “...Let us labor to forsake and renounce ourselves in all things, die to all self-satisfaction, often deny ourselves lawful pleasures, and punish ourselves for having indulged in those which are criminal...” The early American “Evangelical” Sarah Osborn, as well, is said to have engaged in self-flagellation. Paul said believers ought to glory in their sufferings, not to go looking for them. Moreover, if a man loves the Lord and seeks His will above all else, he won’t need to inflict pain or suffering on himself; he can rest assured that pain and suffering will find him.⁷

⁷ The only equivalent to this sort of behavior in Scripture isn’t found in connection with Paul’s Gospel of grace at all; it’s found in connec-

Nowhere does Paul tell born-again Christians they have yet to be crucified with Christ (future tense); he says they *are* crucified with Christ (present tense). In Galatians 5:21 he says, "...They that are Christ's **have** crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." It's nothing a believer does at any point after being born again, but simply being born again and spiritually circumcised that puts to death his flesh once and for all. Put simply, no Christian in the New Testament is being told to crucify their own self spiritually or physically, but to "face up" to the fact they've already been crucified.

It's a natural fact you can't kill what's already dead, so why do so many self-proclaimed "Christians" seem to think that you can? Could it have something to do with all the false doctrine on the subject that's supported in the text of every modern Bible? I'd say so, but don't take my word for it; for the truth you need only to lay hold on God's word.

1 Corinthians 9:27 in the "outdated," "obsolete" King James Bible reads: "But I **keep under** my body, and **bring it into subjection**: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

Contrarily, every new Bible published since the turn of the 19th century changes the verse from a clear statement on the importance of self-control for those in the ministry into an obscene promotion of self-abuse. The corrupt NLT, ESV and NKJV all replace the words "I keep under my body" with "I discipline my body," and the NIV, copies of which can be found by the hundreds of thousands in the backs

tion with devil-possession (Mark 4:2-5) and devil-worship, as in the self-mutilation practices of the priests of Baal described in 1 Kings 18:28.

of pews and on the pulpits of Evangelical, Southern Baptist, and non-denominational churches all over the country, makes the apostle Paul out to be some kind of deranged, flesh-obsessed masochist, when it says "...I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave...."

Likewise, if we'll again focus in on the so-called doctrine of Mortification specifically, the translators of the NIV make an utter disaster out of Romans 8:13, which says, "For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you **put to death** the misdeeds of the body, you will live." This reading is no exception to any rule in the Bible revisers' canon; it is the standard. Indeed, every modern perversion of the New Testament that's been derived from the Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus manuscripts misrepresents the apostle Paul, as though he were instructing believers to spiritually *kill* every wrongdoing of their flesh. The trouble is that anything done in the flesh must be dead, since the flesh itself is dead already, not to mention that any deed committed in, of, or by the flesh is a misdeed by God's definition. Can you see how the wordings in modern versions have been just so adapted in order to canonize the bizarre, dogmatic teachings of unsaved religionists, especially within the Roman Catholic Church?

Notice how in contrast the supposedly antiquated Elizabethan English of the King James Bible renders Paul's words in Roman 8:13: "For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do **mortify** the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

Not only does this reading contain fewer words, undoing completely the inane argument that modern versions are simpler and easier to understand, but its language is unmistakably deliberate, and such that it necessitates a closer analysis on the part of the reader. The operative word *mortify* appears nowhere in any Bible with a publication date later than 1900, and yet it is a thorough comprehension of this word in particular that cues us in on the doctrinal significance of the verse in relation to other parts of Scripture (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13; Matthew 8:22; Luke 15:32), which reference the inanimate state of the flesh both before and after repentance and faith. To hear the word itself in conversation anyone ought to be convinced that it does not simply mean “put to death,” like the textual critics from the United Bible Societies would maintain. A contemporary understanding is that someone can be *mortified* when they’ve witnessed another person die, but they’re not *put to death* themselves. A *mortician* doesn’t kill anyone, and no one dies in a *mortuary*. No one needs to know the Greek to know that *mortify* is not synonymous with “put to death.” A small child can tell you that two things that are different are not the same. Nonetheless, while I’ll never use the inferior Greek to correct the superior English of the King James Bible, I have no trouble consulting the Greek to prove out the English.⁸

8 The English is obviously superior to the Greek. There are more than 1.5 billion English speakers in the world today. Ancient Greek is a dead language and only about 13 million people speak modern Greek. The universal language of travel and the international business language is English, not Greek. In any case, don’t you think that in order for the Gospel to be delivered to as many people in the world as possible the Lord would use a language that crosses more borders and cultural lines than any other? It just makes good sense.

In the present case of Romans 8:13, the word *mortify* comes from the Greek *thanatoō*, which means “to kill” either literally or figuratively. Now, while based on this alone there may seem to be no real difference between what’s conveyed in the AV and what’s conveyed in all the modern versions, we must consider that if God meant to say “**kill** the deeds of the body,” He would have had the King James translators render it that way. There are a number of instances in which the same Greek word throughout the Received Text was translated in some parts of the King James Bible differently than it was in others, and the only explanation there can be for this is that God’s word in English was given by inspiration the same as it was in the original languages.⁹ The precedent here is that the same Greek word *thanatoō*, from which we got *mortify* in Romans 8:13, was translated elsewhere four different ways (*put to death* [Matthew 10:21; Mark 13:12; Luke 21:16; 1 Peter 3:18], *cause to be put to death* [Luke 21:16], *killed* [Romans 8:36; 2 Corinthians 6:9], and *become dead* [Romans 7:4]). Only in the case of Romans 8:13 was it translated as *mortify*.

The Lord intended the word *mortify* to show up twice in your Bible. If it doesn’t then you’ve been sold a counterfeit. Just like God didn’t *have* to become a man and suffer in the flesh in order for mankind to be reconciled, He doesn’t *have* to use the written word at all. Nevertheless, He did take on

⁹ If you can’t believe the Lord’s able to preserve His words along with their purity for all generations, according to Psalm 12:6-7, you can’t believe with much confidence anything in the gospels. Sure, you might be saved, but you’ll have hardly any assurance of your salvation and hardly any growth, because you’re not able to trust your Bible word-for-word. Either you’ll believe every word or you’ll doubt every word.

flesh, and still, He does use the written word, particularly in this age, and it's therefore imperative we see that God's choice of words, in any language, is always precise, always purposeful, and always indicative of His character. The only other place the word *mortify* appears in a King James Bible is Colossians 3:5, where it's translated from a different Greek verb altogether, *nekroó*, which means "to make dead, weak, or impotent." However, it bears also from its root adjective *nekρός*, literally "corpse-like," a sense of predetermination. In other words, the verb form only works to describe an action responding to the original assertion of the adjective form. Because here the adjective refers to the appearance of something dead, the verb form, being derived from the adjective, speaks to an action that concerns the *appearance* of death, rather than the cause or basic nature of death, as in the latter case of the verb *thanatoō*, which is taken from *thánatos*, a noun referring to death in and of itself. You see, in Colossians 3:5, the word doesn't mean "put to death" at all; contextually it means "to regard or to view as dead." Let's be careful not to overlook the significance of this. Contrary to the stated opinion of all textual critics God's word never contradicts itself. It is not fluid or controvertible based on the devolution of language or culture within a given society. When you read in a modern version that Christians ought to put to death their members or the misdeeds of their flesh, you're not hearing it from God; you're hearing it from a committee of over-educated stuffed shirts who're in the business of profiting off counterfeit Bibles. Moreover, you're not reading God's point of view on the subject by any means; you're reading a man's point of view that's been made to look as if it were God's. They've

printed it on gilded pages and all. Very simply, modern versions are nothing more than Bibles rewritten so as to fit in with the prevailing theologies and convictions of modern, “enlightened” man. They are the revelation of men, not the revelation of God.

When folks hear for the first time about this “controversy” regarding English versions of the Bible, often they wonder what crucial disparity there could actually be between the Authorized Version and its modern competitors. Well, in this instance, it’s only the difference between liberty and tyranny.

For more than a hundred years secular and religious critics have both pointed to the King James Bible as a book full of errors and contradictions, and all the while they’ve had three fingers pointing right back at themselves, because, as we’re beginning to see, it’s never God, but always man who contradicts himself. An entire book could be devoted to providing examples as to the countless ways in which human intelligence has continuously disqualified itself in the fields of ancient and modern history, philosophy, theology, psychology, psychiatry, biology, geography, astronomy, and so forth. That could be a book decades in the making, and besides, we’ve already come up against one such contradiction, which, as minuscule as it may seem at this moment in the scope of things, ought to keep us occupied for the time being.

Operating from the standpoint that God can not and will not contradict Himself, I’m able to say definitively that no modern English version of the Bible should ever be

considered God's word, let alone a real Bible. Don't get me wrong, a person can be saved as a result of hearing and receiving the Gospel of our salvation, but it will be in spite of their counterfeit Bible, not because of it. The same can be said for a Catholic, who's not inclined to read or study the Bible on their own in the first place; they can be saved as a result of hearing and receiving the Gospel, but it will be in spite of their religion, not because of it.

I was saved as a result of having the Gospel shared with me verbally by parents who knew the Gospel from a King James Bible. I didn't have to read it for myself to be saved. I had to read it for myself in order to grow in my faith after the fact. By God's grace thousands of illiterates in third world countries have come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior because the Gospel was shared with them verbally, in their own language. The Gospel message doesn't necessarily have to be read by a person for them to get saved, but it has to come from the right place.

No English version outside of the Authorized Version can possibly be God's perfect word for English-speaking people, because of the plain fact that God does not contradict Himself. The main idea put forward by the men responsible for the ESV, NIV, NASB, NKJV, and others in their boardroom interpretations of Romans 8:10 and Colossians 3:5 is that even after they're saved somehow Christians bear an obligation to annihilate every sudden whim, desire, or activity of their flesh. By way of suggestion what they've done is made the Christian's flesh alive so that it can be put to death over and over again, even though the flesh

is referred to as dead all through the New Testament. The natural world around us, that is, the whole of God's creation, emphatically declares for our learning that nothing can have life, limb or property done away with that never possessed life, limb or property to begin with. Romans 5:12-14 says:

“12 Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: 13 (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. 14 Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come.”

This, along with Ephesians 2:1-5, proves beyond a shadow of doubt that your flesh was subject to death the moment you left the womb. “All flesh is grass,” Isaiah 40:6 says. Seeing as no man or woman in history has outlived a single day in God's sight (2 Peter 3:8), it becomes near impossible to say with much certainty if our flesh ever truly lives in any capacity. When God warned Adam in Genesis 2:17 that if he ate of the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil he would surely die the same day, most Fundamentalists and Evangelicals teach that the Lord was referring to a spiritual death, since Adam lived to the ripe old age of 930, according to Genesis 5:5. Failing however to compare Scripture with Scripture, they either miss the references completely or settle for non-literal interpretations of Psalm 90:4 and 2

Peter 3:8, which describe the nature of time on earth from God's perspective. The oldest man who ever lived (Genesis 5:27), according to God's timeline, still died the same day he was born.

So then, why is it all the new age Bibles do away with the word *mortify* and put forward this idea in Romans 8:10 and Colossians 3:5 that you can put to death the one thing about yourself that from God's perspective never had any life in it to start with? Abolishing in our minds any notion we have at all that modern English translations bear nothing intrinsically poisonous in and of themselves is a good first step toward answering this question. The broadening ecumenical movement in the United States and Europe, headed up by none other than the Roman Catholic Church, has done a bang-up job convincing the majority of professing Christians today that every Bible scholar, teacher and commentator is for the most part a good, Godly, well-intentioned man. Nothing could be further from the truth. In plain English, Proverbs 30:5-6 says:

“5 Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. 6 Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar.”

Likewise, the book of Revelation gives clear warning to anyone that would dare add or take away from it:

“18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man

shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.” (Revelation 22:18-19)

The scholars, translators and publishers behind modern English versions are far from innocent. In fact, as we just saw, they’re called liars in the Bible, which even goes so far as to suggest that if anyone can lose their salvation, it’s these folks who make their living tampering with the Scriptures. On the other hand, Paul advises those of us who’re in Christ in Ephesians 6:12 that we “wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” This means my true enemy in this and all other spiritual matters is not a man. My adversary as a Bible-believer is no particular scholar, commentator, or translator; rather, it’s the supernatural force that’s been behind every attempt in the history of the world to cast doubt on God’s authority and aspersions on His promises. The only real enemy a Christian has is Satan, the old Serpent, the god of this world and the spirit that even now “worketh in the children of disobedience,” who Jesus Christ himself described in John 8:44 as a “murderer from the beginning” and a liar with “no truth in him.”¹⁰ You’ll remember that Satan deceived the woman in Genesis 3 by first calling into question the sovereignty of God’s word, and wouldn’t it be

10 Notice how God calls both the devil and anyone who adds to or subtracts from His words a liar.

only natural for Satan's main point of interest to be the one thing God values above His own name? Satan's *modus operandi* for more than 6,000 years has been to put words in and take words out of God's mouth, and whether they realize it or not, the Bible revisers and critics today are simply doing the will of their father the devil, stirring up as much confusion as possible and causing folks to view their Creator as inconsistent, insincere and illusive, if not imaginary. If we're supposed to learn the will and personage of our God by reading and studying His word, it would seem with all the varying English translations available today that He's either a pathological liar or some kind of lunatic with two-hundred some different personalities.

It is not the God of Heaven but the god of this world that wants your Bible to say "put to death" instead of "mortify," so that you think you've somehow got to kill your flesh every minute of every hour of every day in order to have a "good report" with God. This is how Satan derails a Christian's new life before it even gets started, not to mention the foundation for most religious cults. Moreover, it's how Satan keeps Christians from ever experiencing personally their liberty in Christ, which has been the fire in the belly of every Biblical Christian ministry since the founding of the Church in Acts 2. Satan knows better than anyone that if you're always putting to death your flesh, you'll always be focusing on your flesh. Why do you suppose the reputation of the Roman Catholic Church has been so tarnished with scandals and accusations relating to pedophilia, sodomy, sadism, alcoholism, drug abuse and so forth? Of course it's because there's no one more carnally-minded or flesh-obsessed

than a man foolish enough to take the church's so-called vows of chastity, poverty and obedience.

To put to death their flesh one must first imagine their flesh to be alive, and for a Christian to attribute life to what God attributes death is to lose sight of one of the most critical elements of their salvation. No one can be of the right spirit to accept the grace of God in their life before they've obtained a proper view of their mortal self. One has to become so unsure of his temporal form, so insecure in his own mind, body and conscience as to picture himself from an utterly Biblical standpoint, as a sinner by nature (Psalm 51:5), whose humanity by nature comes up damnably short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). To at all fathom his desperate need for salvation, one has to acknowledge the reality of his condition, that the soul is dead by its association with the trespasses and sins of the flesh, which is subject to death in any case. This acknowledgement is the basis for every decision of faith in Jesus Christ. It's imperative that one grasps the seriousness of their condition in order for the worth of the cure to be accurately measured. You'll notice that no lost person imagines their flesh to be dead; instead, they assume there to be life where there isn't any. Still, it's only natural when you really think on it as a believer and realize that, without Scripture as their sole authority, their flesh is all they truly know of themselves. This in itself is so great a tragedy that my heart starts to break for the unsaved before Hell even enters the equation. Haven't you ever wondered what it is exactly about sex, drugs and alcohol that appeals to so many folks? Have you ever given any thought as to what possesses a person to go to a casino or nightclub, to get high on alcohol, marijuana, cocaine, heroin,

methamphetamine, ketamine, mescaline, codeine, morphine or some other toxin, to read or watch pornographic material, to pick up a prostitute or have an extramarital affair, to engage in such perverse and abnormal sexual activities as fetishism, bondage, sadomasochism or sodomy, to overeat or starve oneself, or to be obsessively busy or consumed with some worldly interest? If not, then haven't you at least asked yourself what inherently causes some people to lie, steal or kill just for the thrill of it? Of course sometimes folks have mental illnesses, and in some cases they're even full of the devil, but nine times out of ten people get caught up in these sorts of things because they've got little concept of anything if it's not related to this world and their flesh. They can't abide the feeling that comes with being both spiritually dead and subject to physical death, and so they impute an imitative form of life onto their only appreciable sphere of existence. Today Christians are as messed up with this as lost sinners, and because of it often the only effective difference between the two concerns the eternal destination of one's soul, not one's testimony, witness or worldview here and now. It's not only the lost who ascribe life to their flesh but carnally-minded Christians who've reverted to a lifestyle of self-reliance and self-gratification, as though the Lord never did anything for them.¹¹

11 It's no coincidence that more often than not people come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ when they've seemingly lost all control of their circumstances or when their physical health begins to fail. Some of the saddest places on earth, such as hospital emergency rooms, nursing homes and prisons, play host to a great deal of honest-to-goodness spiritual activity. It's no coincidence either that some of the "happiest," most "desirable" places on earth to live, usually coastal cities or islands, are as spiritually bankrupt as can be.

9. On the Realism of Spiritual Things

In my own experience I've found that when the devil can't manage to keep someone from getting saved, his next course of action is always to prevent them from becoming a fruitful Christian. Whether they're vigilant enough to see it or not, he will try to interfere with every opportunity a believer has to increase in their faith, in their knowledge of the Book, and in their love for souls. That's what Satan did with me, and it's what he's done and continues to do with countless others. Even though my flesh was dead, even though I had been crucified with Christ, and even though my soul had been permanently occupied and made alive by the Holy Spirit when as a child I prayed the Lord to save me, for two decades I carried on in spite of the Lord's chastening, as if my flesh alone were the source and stronghold of my life. I granted my temporal self near everything it wanted. I saw life where God saw death, just the same as if I had never been born again. The devil could not prevent me from getting saved, nor could he thereafter change my soul's destiny, but for all that he had no trouble ensuring my faith never

amounted to anything more than a little head knowledge and the occasional religious activity. For twenty years the devil made certain I remained as disinterested as ever in the Lord's will for my life, as unfruitful a Christian as one could be, by keeping me effectively in bondage to my flesh. During those years I know there went up many prayers on my behalf, all of which I'm grateful for, and all of which I do believe were answered in our Lord's own impeccable timing. Still, it pains me to say that no Christian in my life ever showed me any of this. No one ever taught me from the Scriptures that when I got saved I was at the same time crucified with Christ. No one ever explained to me that when I received Christ as my Savior simultaneously, as a direct result of the supernatural circumcision of Christ, I also obtained liberty. No greater liberty is there to be had than that which sets free the soul from the corruption of the body, but so long as no one teaches this truth, we leave it up to men who've been led down the garden path once before and emerged from it complicit in the devil's work to define liberty for us. Tens of thousands of believers will never find out the depths of their liberty in Christ, because they've been fooled into having an impractical, anti-Biblical view of themselves by apostate scholars and so-called pastors and teachers who're under the influence of an antichrist spirit.

Whether someone is saved or lost, covered by the blood or not, the Bible says their flesh is dead, and only the devil would that we thought differently. There is one thing that all religionists and secular humanists share in common one way or other, and it's an obsession with the body, a preoccupation with matters concerning the senses, the temporal

world, and the human intellect. While Charismatic types consume themselves with outward, physical manifestations of perceived spiritual movement, Calvinists revel in their own supposed intelligence. Likewise, Anglicans, Lutherans, and both Greek and Roman Catholics dress in silly costumes, carry around prayer beads and images of “saints” and the “queen of heaven” about their necks and in their pockets, and preoccupy themselves with keeping up an *appearance* of piety, whereas nondenominationalists, universalists and religious atheists pride themselves on doing acts of “kindness,” on being good, decent, moral people who’ll gladly provide for the needs of those less fortunate, but only so far as those needs concern the nourishment, covering and protection of their bodies, not their souls. You see, it’s all just the same flesh-obsession carried out a hundred different ways, and the only sort of person that knows any better is one that reads, believes, rightly divides and spiritually applies their Bible word for word, from cover to cover. Like it or not, the only sort of person in these last days who can possibly know the truth about their flesh and have the wherewithal to live in agreement with that truth is a born-again, blood-redeemed, Bible-believing Christian. Now, for those of us who fit that description, to take thorough account of the liberty we have in Jesus Christ is all a matter of our being reconciled with the facts of our altered existence as newly-animated souls biding what little time remains for us in these ever-lifeless bodies. As believers, we’ll not be able to fathom or appreciate the fullness of our liberty so long as we envision ourselves to be anything other than a bunch of dead folks walking. Our liberty becomes appreciable to us when, and only when, we adopt the proper Biblical view of

ourselves. It comes from the physical acknowledgement of a spiritual fact. Defining right and Biblical mortification for us, Romans 6:8-11 says:

“8 Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: 9 Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. 10 For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. 11 Likewise **reckon** ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

In my case, to mortify my flesh, more aptly, to reckon my flesh to be dead, meant for me to reckon every love, desire and passion I had at that time to be dead right along with it. It meant I had to recognize every last thing to which I had imputed life and purpose for what it really was: dead and useless. Dead and useless was my flesh to the pleasures of nicotine, alcohol and pornographic material. Dead and useless were all of my moral and philosophical positions. Dead and useless was the color of my skin. Dead and useless were my creative ambitions. Dead and useless to me were all things except those which I knew to be alive and useful unto my Lord and Savior. By God's grace prevailing in my life, at last I put away any confidence I ever had in myself or in this world, and ever since then I strive day by day to present myself a living sacrifice, a dead man walking for the glory of the Lord, and no greater liberty than what results from that in this life or in eternity will I ever know.

I do believe all of this is easier said than done when you're standing, so to speak, on the opposite side of the bridge. Before the Lord finally got a hold of me, often any words of advice or encouragement from those in my life who were saved and actively seeking the Lord struck my ears as cliched, simplistic nonsense. If you're saved and still your liberty in Christ escapes you or seems too abstract a thing for you to comprehend, for all I've said in this book, I would ask that you simply read your Bible and believe it. There is but one Book that is able to discern and transform a man's heart. The Bible will reveal to you more truth about yourself, the universe and it's Creator than all the books in the world combined. If, on the other hand, you're as lost as lost can be; if you've never come to a point in your life so desperate you could see just how far beyond hope you are in actual fact, that is, if you've never trusted in the blood of Jesus Christ to clear the way for you in this life and into an eternity with your Creator, my advice to you is the same: get your nose in a King James Bible. You'll likely not understand half of what you read, but it's a promise that when you pick up that Book, read it and submit to it with a sincere desire to know God's will, the Holy Spirit will begin working on your heart externally, until one day, I pray, by faith you allow Him to work through you internally. Saved or lost, you'll never know the liberty God conceived for you in Jesus Christ by attending or joining any particular church, by tithing, being baptized or taking communion. You'll never know it by speaking in tongues or having hands laid on you, by confessing your sins to a priest or praying the rosary. You'll never know it by practicing mindfulness, transcendental meditation, or any

of these so-called “spiritual” disciplines. You’ll never know it by giving to the poor or by supporting charitable causes. You’ll never know it even by sharing the Gospel; in fact, I suspect a fellow could share the Gospel with upwards of ten thousand people and still not tell between genuine liberty and an old bell in Philadelphia. As I’ve set out in this book to explain, the real truth of the matter is that you’ll only ever acquire this kind of liberty if your soul is cut away from the inside of your body (Colossians 2:11). You’ll only acquire that kind of liberty when you give place to it in your soul through absolute faith in the person and finished work of Jesus Christ. You might recall 2 Corinthians 3:17, which tells us that wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Now if that’s so, then the object of liberty itself enters your soul in tandem with the Spirit as soon as you have undergone the New Birth, according to Ephesians 1:12-13:

“12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. 13 In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were **sealed** with that holy Spirit of promise...”¹

Now, in the same way that believing in Jesus Christ is not the same as knowing Jesus Christ personally, understanding this concept of spiritual liberty is not the same as being a witness to it firsthand. Nevertheless, all it really takes for any new believer to go from having just acquired liberty to seeing verifiable proof of that liberty in all aspects of his

¹ Notice in verse 13 what starts off the conversion process of a lost sinner to a born-again child of God: it all begins with the word of truth.

life is to keep reading and believing the Book. The short answer as to why so many Christians don't see any evidence of liberty in their lives is that they've stopped reading and believing their Bible. If you read and believe every word of your Bible, your justification before God is sure to follow. If you continue on reading and believing every word of your Bible, you'll not only believe your flesh to be dead, but you'll also envision it to be so. If you continue on and don't skip out on reading and believing every last word in your Bible, you can rest assured you'll know the measure of your liberty in Christ, and it won't be just some abstract thing floating around up there in a mess of gray matter, either. It'll be the real deal, the sort of tangible, manifest liberty that billions of lost souls the world over cast about in the dark for all their lives but scarcely ever find.

Should this book serve to accomplish anything, I pray it is that you'll be encouraged in your heart to know personally, or more profoundly, the liberty that defines a life given over completely the word of God. I'll see it all as time well spent if even one of you should begin to invest your life in the truth of Scripture. Most of you I am sure would claim to believe the Bible already, but the question is, to what end? To what end, in your opinion, is God's word believable? To what end do you suppose the Lord can be trusted? The Bible is either faithful in all things or suspect in all things. I could not very well speak dishonestly on one subject and count on you to trust me on another. You can't have it both ways. You either have a perfect Bible or you don't, and if you, as a self-professed Christian, believe there is no such thing today as an inerrant English Bible, the fact is you have

an imperfect and untrustworthy god. If your god can't or won't provide you with a perfect and complete copy of His words today as promised (Psalm 12:6-7; Matthew 5:18), what makes you think he can or will do good on his word to keep your soul out of Hell? You see, when I suggested that all it takes for you to see evidence of your liberty as a born-again Christian is to keep reading and believing your Bible, what I meant was that all it takes is to keep reading and believing what your Bible *says*, not what you think it says or would like it to say, not what your pastor, priest, rabbi or some seminary-educated fool interprets it as saying, but what it says line for line, word for word. Without fail you'll find that every heretical teaching and false doctrine this side of Calvary has developed as a result of men figuring they're smarter than that Book. Any time God says something too far outside the realm of human comprehension, the tendency of all reprobate minds is to dumb down or "spiritualize" the reference.

When the Bible says emphatically, for instance, that Noah's flood was global in scale (Genesis 6:13, 7:19), there are those nonetheless who say the waters were localized, and even those who say the account is purely allegorical. When God tells us in 2 Peter 3:9 that He is "not willing that any should perish, but that **all** should come to repentance," still there are many "well-read" and "educated" men who believe the Lord wills it that in the end a predetermined number of souls will be saved and all the rest will burn. Whereas the Bible is clear with regard to the existence of a literal Hell (Matthew 10:28; Revelation 20:14) in the center of the earth (Matthew 12:40; Amos 9:2; Ephesians 4:9), millions of Evangelicals and unsaved atheists alike say there is

no such place. Whereas the Bible speaks clearly of the sons of God in Genesis 6:2 as supernatural, direct creations of God, whose relations with human women resulted in a super race visible throughout much of the Old Testament (Numbers 13:33; Deuteronomy 2:11; 2 Samuel 21:20), there are those who're so small-minded they go so far as to suggest the sons of God were simply the "righteous" sons of Seth.² Even though the Bible says that Jesus Christ rose from the dead, there are those who do not believe in the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ (John 2:22) or the future resurrection of the dead (John 5:27-28).³

Right along with the rest of the world modern Christianity has intellectualized its way out of any real accountability to the Scriptures. You see, God's grace folks will revel in all day long; His truth, on the other hand, in their eyes is only credible so far as it aligns with the dogmas of contemporary science and philosophy. These types refuse to believe it, but for everything physical there is and always has been a clear spiritual parallel. As one scours God's word for truth he will in turn begin observing the world from an increasingly Biblical perspective, and the parallels between things carnal and those spiritual will come naturally into view. Moreover, one soon realizes, much in spite of all the "Christian" scholarship, that spiritual things are more certain and true to life by far than anything physical. In the Bible spiritual matters are dealt with in literal, physical terms, and not solely for the reason one might expect. Though God indeed

2 Job 38:7 proves them wrong.

3 The apostle Paul called out these brainiacs all the way back in the first century A.D., in 1 Corinthians 15:12.

makes use of human circumstance to reveal to our carnal minds His truth, His truth, we've got to understand, being spiritual, is infinitely more definite and objective than the sum of all human experience, past present and future. Even a Christ-rejecting atheist recognizes the concept of a supreme being as something spiritual, and all one has to do is read the first four words in their Bible to see that before there was a known universe, before there was any solid, liquid or gaseous matter to speak of, there was God, who is a Spirit, according to John 4:24. Nothing existed prior to the Spirit, and nothing in existence could exist without it (Revelation 1:8). Mind you, that doesn't mean everything in itself is spiritual, like the pantheistic New Agers teach. God is not comprised of everything and everything certainly does not constitute God; in other words, a creation is always distinct from its creator, and a creator from its creation. What it does mean, however, is that all matter is either a direct or indirect achievement of God, and therefore of Spirit. In addition, it means that every person conceived after the fall of man has been born with one of the three parts of their intended nature missing altogether. Can you guess which part that is? In a previous chapter you'll recall we established man as having been originally designed by God a tripartite being, after His likeness, possessing a body, soul, and spirit. The notion so widely-propagated among self-professing Christians that we're all made in God's image to me is indication enough that many believers don't actually read, let alone study, their Bibles. Genesis 3:5 describes the loss of God's image in the nativity of Seth, who the verse definitively states was born in the image of his old man, Adam. Absolutely no one since then, apart from Jesus Christ, has

been *born* in the image of God. It's that image that gets a person into Heaven by performing in them the operation of spiritual circumcision. It's that image that convinces one of Biblical truth, that grows and equips one for the work of the ministry, and allows one to see things the way God sees them. You see, the image of God that was lost in Adam is none other than the Spirit of God that indwells the believer upon rebirth. According to Luke 3:38 Adam was the son of God. Compare that with John 1:11-12, which tells us that when a person gets saved they receive "the power to become the sons of God." It's obvious Adam had something that you don't have under normal circumstances. You have to come by the power to reclaim that Godly image as a result of your faith in Jesus Christ. This is why the Holy Spirit literally enters into the soul of everyone that believes on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, because the soul was always intended by God to be a habitation for His Spirit. It's not rocket science, it's basic human anatomy. If you've not been born again you are an incomplete, subnormal creature, because you're lacking the Spirit of God. You've got a spirit, no doubt, but it's not the Holy Spirit; it's the spirit of man (Zechariah 12:1), which is nothing more than the life of your temporal body, synonymous with the "breath of life" in Genesis 6:17. We call it "human life," though it's really not *life* at all.

The life of all flesh is in the blood according to Leviticus 17:11. Any first-year medical student could tell you that one of the foremost functions of the blood in humans and animals is to transport oxygen to the cells and tissues within the body. The level of oxygen necessary to sustain life, by

God's grace and design, is only present in our atmosphere, on this planet. Job 27:3 says, "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in my nostrils." Observe how the "spirit" in this verse is not capitalized. Obviously this is not a reference to the Holy Spirit of God, as in Romans 8:14, but to the breath of life, or the spirit of man, as in Proverbs 20:27 and Ecclesiastes 12:7.

In large part what we're dealing with in this chapter are spiritual phenomena that occur under natural circumstances. Consider the rainbow, which science describes as a meteorological phenomenon that occurs when sunlight is refracted and dispersed through water molecules. Notice how science is able to answer *what?*, *when?*, *where?*, and *how?*, but not *why?*; they'd need a Bible to answer that question. Read Genesis 9:12-17 and you'll have the answer to the question no scientist wants to bother with. The rainbow is a *spiritual* phenomenon, insofar as it is the Lord's doing, but it occurs under completely natural circumstances, insofar as you can see it with your own two eyes and it involves apparently natural elements. The majority of Christians today don't recognize the implications of this sort of thing like they ought to, for if they did they'd not be living so much like the rest of the world. We must ask ourselves, what makes the rainbow a phenomenon any more than the oxygen in our atmosphere? Both have their own scientific explanations, but why do we assume that Scripture can't explain them even more accurately?

Without the New Birth you are, as a matter of simple biology, two-thirds of a person. Does anyone care to guess what two-

thirds equates to in the decimal form? If your guess is .666 you're right on the money. It's the same number you'll find in Revelation 13:18, where it's referred to as the "number of the beast" and, not surprisingly, the "number of a man." This is just one of countless phenomena that can't be explained unless you hold to a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. Ecclesiastes 3:18-19 says:

"18 I said in mine heart concerning the estate of the sons of men, that God might manifest them, and that they might see that they themselves are beasts. 19 For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity."

The only thing spiritual about an unsaved man is his soul, but, as such, without the Holy Spirit, his soul is dead. There is no Godly spiritual element to the natural man.

Further confirming the preeminence of Spirit, if you read Genesis 1:3-19, you'll see, too, that following Lucifer's expulsion God reformed the third heaven (vs. 8), His domain, first and foremost, followed by the second heaven (vs. 14), before even setting to work on a new Earth.⁴

⁴ There is one original creation and two recreations of the universe outlined in your Bible. They are the heavens and the earth that *were* (2 Peter 3:5-6; Genesis 1:1-2), "the heavens and earth which are now" (2 Peter 3:7; Genesis 1:3-19), and the heavens and earth that *will be* after the future Millennial reign of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:12-13; Revelation 21:1-4).

If you were not convinced by the fact that God, as an eternal Spirit, is the Creator of all things known to us in the universe, then this ought to, that genuine spiritual things are the standard, not the exception; that real spiritual matters are the essential basis for all others. Simply by consulting the order in which eternal, spiritual things and temporal, fleshly things first appear in your Bible, it becomes undeniable that this present world system is the anomaly, not the other way around. I find it interesting that a great many of the works of science fiction produced in the last 75 years deal in the concept of simulated reality, in which generally the reality first thought to be true is revealed in the course of such stories to be an elaborate imitation manufactured either by supernatural or technological means. It's merely derivative of the age-old supposition that life as we know it might just be a dream (Psalm 90:5), but such authors and filmmakers as Philip K. Dick, Stanisław Lem, Douglas Adams, Damon Knight, Michael Crichton, Terry Gilliam, and the Wachowski brothers for years in their creative efforts have been pointing, though aimlessly, at one of the most enduring universal truths concerning human life on this earth, and yet not one of them has been smart enough to acknowledge, let alone to admit, where it comes from. The Bible says in Colossians 2:16-17:

“16 Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: 17 Which are a **shadow of things to come**; but the body is of Christ.”

Similarly, we read in Job 8:8-9:

“8 For enquire, I pray thee, of the former age,
and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers:
9 (For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing,
because **our days upon earth are a shadow**.)”

Also consider Ecclesiastes 6:12, which says, “For who knoweth what is good for man in this life, all the days of his vain life which he spendeth as a **shadow**? for who can tell a man what shall be after him under the sun?”

And finally, in referring back to the Old Testament saints Hebrews 11:13 speaks to the natural facts of this life, and the correlation that exists between one’s faith and their acceptance of these facts: “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.”

These verses summarize what all unsaved intellectuals refer to as the “human experience.”⁵ The Bible refers to it as a “shadow.” King Solomon in the book of Ecclesiastes called this life and everything in it “vanity,” which in the Hebrew means “vapor.” The Old Testament saints, who had no access to a complete and perfect Bible, no spiritual circumcision, and no Holy Spirit dwelling in them, still knew better than most Christians do today that this life

⁵ Humanity need only be described according to the grace that God throughout history has bestowed on it. The so-called “human experience” consists of nothing more than a finite series of opportunities for us to “shape up” and get right with the Lord. Today and for the last 2,000 years that’s done by way of the Cross.

is a shadow, a vapor, a suggestion as to what was, what is, and what will be. Though perhaps not even to the extent we now are able with the Bible as our authority, they knew their situation in the flesh, their combined circumstances and experiences, to be in itself a sort of dynamic symbolism for the “invisible” things of God. How do I know that? The Bible says they *confessed* they were “strangers and pilgrims on the earth.” They could tell by the nature of it all that the world was not their home; like the old song goes, they knew they were just “passing through.”

Romans 1:20 says, “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse...”

Under sin we understand the natural world can have no association with the Lord because of his righteousness, and yet the natural world speaks in perpetuum to the reality of Him. You're free in your flesh to dislike it and even to reject it, but the truth is that in all its aspects nature (which, of course, includes your flesh) serves to confirm every word of God as written in a King James Bible. At the bottom of it all, we're not living so much in a simulation as we are in a kind of interactive allegory, in which every positive and negative occurrence that takes place in and around our bodies points one way or other to some spiritual element. In fairness, though, we can't very well expect the “creative” types in Hollywood, San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and so forth to know anything about that. After all, they reckon they're the ones who first conceived of such things as

parallel universes or alternate realities, extraterrestrials, UFOs, human-alien hybridization, spirit-possession, reanimation of the dead and interstellar spaceflight. Apparently, not one of these egomaniacal phonies has ever read Ecclesiastes 1:9-11:

“9 The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. 10 Is there any thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us. 11 There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after.”

Every one of their “original” ideas appeared someplace in the Scriptures long before the thought occurred to them to base a novel or screenplay around it. All they’ve ever done is take the stuff of the Bible and pervert it for the sake of “entertainment.”

We don’t often consider it, but this strange form of life we possess in our corrupt bodies is meant to serve as an allegory for the glorious life a soul in Christ inherits in three stages, in the New Birth, at the Rapture, and in Eternity. What follows are a few examples of what I mean. There’s much in this way to glean from the Scriptures, so I pray you’ll study these things out more deeply for yourself.

- The birth of every child pictures the birth of a new creature in Christ (John 3:2-8, 16:20; 1 Corinthians 3:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 Peter 2:2).

- Every marriage between a man and woman symbolizes the marriage of Christ, the bridegroom, to the Church, His bride (Matthew 25:1-13; Revelation 18:23-24, 19:7-9)
- Every family, consisting of one man, one woman and at least one child (a type of the Godhead), typifies the structure within the Body of Christ (Ephesians 3:14-21). There are spiritual fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and even grandfathers and grandmothers. The familial bond in this case isn't blood (remember, your blood's no good), nor even shared experience. It's the Holy Spirit. If there were such a thing as a "one-world family" it would be the Body of Christ.
- Just about anything properly broken down will consist of three parts. This is an allusion to the Godhead. Man is made up of a body, soul, and spirit; a family consists of a man, woman, and child; Reality consists of space, matter, and time, whereas space consists of length, width, and depth; matter of liquid, solid, and gas; and time of past, present, and future. Our lives take place in 3-dimensional space. In physical geography there is land, air, and sea; in biology there is an animal, vegetable and mineral kingdom; a man in the flesh can experience trouble mentally, physically, or emotionally; the Bible was written in three languages (Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek) by three sorts of men (fathers, prophets, and apostles); the Old Testament is comprised of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings; the New Testament is comprised of the Gospels, Acts, and Epistles. There are even three basic economic systems. They are Catholicism, Communism, and Capitalism.

- The circumcision of the male foreskin as instituted by God in Genesis 17:9-14 prefigured the circumcision of Christ more than 2,000 years before Paul wrote about it in Colossians 2. Approximately 75% of American males are circumcised, and few if any of them realize that the operation performed on their bodies as infants is a symbol for the operation that Christ would have to perform on their souls. Prior to circumcision, both the male foreskin and the human body are intrinsic to the central member. This is why in the Old Testament you'll often find the body and soul referred to as though they are one and the same (Exodus 1:5; Leviticus 5:2; Jeremiah 2:34). Just as the physical operation separates the glans from the foreskin, the spiritual operation allows for the soul to be isolated from the body. Also, in the study of Biblical numerics we find that the number *Seven* means *completion* (Genesis 2:2; Hebrews 4:4) That being the case we may deduce that the number *Eight* stands for something *new* altogether. You'll find physical circumcision connected everywhere in your Bible with the "eighth day" (Genesis 17:23, 21:4; Leviticus 12:3; Luke 2:21 Acts 7:8; Philippians 3:5). Taken together, the number *Eight* and physical circumcision indicate that it is the spiritual circumcision in particular that makes someone a *new* creature.

- Every armed conflict in the history of mankind has pictured the ongoing spiritual warfare between the God of Heaven and the god of this world. This war, the only war that's ever really mattered, which began in Genesis 1:1, will end in the fulfillment of Revelation 20:9. The image of the armor-clad Christian soldier as popularized in the *Pilgrim's Progress* by

John Bunyan and the 1865 hymn by Sabine Baring-Gould is a product of this parallel (Ephesians 6:11; 2 Timothy 2:3-4). For further evidence, look into the prevalence of northern victories in military operations throughout both biblical and modern history (Job 26:7; Psalms 48:2; Jeremiah 15:12, 46:20, 50:9; Isaiah 14:13, 41:25; Ezekiel 26:7; Daniel 11:15).

- The needle of every magnetic compass naturally settles at *true north*. That should come as little surprise when we read such verses as Jeremiah 1:13 and Job 26:7.

- Every residential structure symbolizes the human body, whether it be a cave in the side of a mountain or a shack in the woods, a studio apartment in the city or a farmhouse on forty acres. Any good mother will tell you that a house doesn't make a home. The same is true with us in the sense that a body by itself doesn't make a man or woman. The body is a short-term habitation for the soul, a vessel, according to 1 Thessalonians 4:4. A modern equivalent often used in science fiction is "meatsack." (Job 18:5-14; Luke 12:23; John 2:18-21; 2 Corinthians 5:1-4)

- The clothes we put on every day picture the supernatural covering of sin. For sin to be covered at all it has to be a supernatural thing, because it concerns God's view of man exclusively, not man's view of himself. I can't cover my own skin adequately all by myself. Naturally, someone had to make my clothes before I could wear them. The first known article of clothing was designed by God from the skin of an animal to cover man's nakedness (Genesis 3:21). From then

on the Lord has never failed in providing the means for man to be “covered” both physically and spiritually, but whether it’s the covering of the body with a garment or the covering of sin with blood, something always has to die. In light of that I think it’s hardly coincidental that animal skins and fibers still account for a great deal of the materials used in the manufacture of clothing around the world.

- Consequently, the naked human body correlates directly to the fallen nature, or the sin condition (Genesis 3:7; Numbers 19:15). If you think on it long enough you’ll find that most sinful behaviors in consummation result in a person taking off their clothes. Drunks and dopers often wind up naked (Genesis 9:21); left unchecked the lusts of the eyes and flesh inevitably devolve into adultery, fornication and all manner of sexual sin, the commission of which always ends with a certain degree of nakedness. The pride of life, too, which is the erroneous attribution of life to the flesh, ultimately leads to an infatuation with the naked body one way or another. Not surprisingly you’ll find nudity in your Bible connected with devil-possession and idol-worship (Luke 8:27; Exodus 32). An accurate mental depiction of the “natural man” will always be a man without any clothes on, and the first instinct of every “new man” should be to “cover up” (Job 29:14-15; Ephesians 4:24, Revelation 3:18).

These represent but a small fraction of the corollaries that exist for a born-again Christian between the shadow of life within the body and life itself outside of the body (2 Corinthians 5:8). There are innumerable others to uncover should one be willing to put in the time and personally

observe themselves, their circumstances, and the world around them through a Biblical lens. There is no greater parallel, at least with respect to the subject of this book, however, than that which rests between our free will and genuine, spiritual liberty.

In his 1836 essay *Nature* the so-called father of transcendentalism Ralph Waldo Emerson posited that “words are signs of natural facts,” and that “particular natural facts are signs of particular spiritual facts.” Now, albeit the man was almost certainly unsaved and thus completely at a loss when it came to any legitimate spiritual matter, I believe it’s fair to say that with regard to these two points Emerson had it mostly right. It’s interesting in such cases how the devil seems always to feed intelligent and well-intentioned people with just enough truth to make them dangerous, but never enough to make them “wise unto salvation” (2 Timothy 3:15). Here and even elsewhere, on the surface, Emerson got it right, and yet I doubt he had any idea as to just how right he actually was, for the simple reason that he would not be held accountable to any authority apart from that which he found in his own mind. Emerson, like many others, had come by fragments of truth, but never got hold of the truth in its entirety, and the trouble is that a little truth always leaves room alongside it for a great deal of fiction. As Christians it will always be to our advantage to judge the words and principles of those like Emerson who claim to have an intimate knowledge of spiritual things against the Bible, because as far as that Book is concerned, the father of transcendentalism never “transcended” anything. Instead, he died a prideful, self-reliant, flesh-obsessed fool. Still, the

simple thoughts he had about language in relation to natural facts and natural facts in relation to spiritual ones happen to be quite helpful in getting us to where we can better appreciate the realism of spiritual things, and, by the same token, acknowledge the “surrealism” of natural things.

You see, while we know there is nothing spiritual about the natural world in any way (this is contrary to Emerson’s philosophy right off the bat), nature does in fact give us every reason to envision for ourselves a higher form of life, that is, a form of life that substantively surpasses all perceivable matter, time and space. We can’t fathom it, but herein we have defined the spiritual form of life, which we know to be true insofar as nature declares to us that it’s true.⁶ No one’s able to fathom what it’s like to live outside of their body, but never has that prevented anyone with any sense from believing they’ll have some form of life after death. Nearly every belief system and religious tradition in the history of mankind has anticipated a continuance of life in some fashion beyond the grave. That’s no coincidence, because, as Emerson put it, natural facts are signs of spiritual facts. Someone once said they could count on there being a resurrection of some kind because at the end of every day, after the sun sets and the west fades into darkness, the sky begins to fill with stars. There’s no adequate explanation for such natural processes as respiration, photosynthesis, the hydrologic cycle, the circumsolar orbit of the

⁶ Any atheist who meditates on the subject for more than five minutes can’t help but suspect there will be something awaiting him after death. He had to convince himself otherwise to be an atheist in the first place. It’s absolutely unnatural to have air in your lungs and blood in your veins and still believe that your life and consciousness will simply expire along with your body. No one truly believes that unless they’ve been pressured into it.

planets and so forth, except they all somehow represent various spiritual processes.

Science has never been able to explain why it is that trees, plants and other “photoautotrophs” transpose light energy from the sun into chemical energy. It’s never been able to give any kind of answer as to why the earth revolves around the sun and not the other way around. The only real achievement of modern science in 400 years has been answering how certain systems in nature function, and even in that venture often it fails miserably. Isn’t it interesting that for all the supposed genius and wisdom in the modern scientific community, it has never been able to answer why the various systems in nature function in the first place. It’ll sometimes answer *who?*, *what?*, *when?*, *where?*, and *how?*, but never *why?*⁷

As natural proof in and of themselves for the immortality of the soul the late Dr. Peter S. Ruckman often used to cite the laws of thermodynamics, the first of which states that energy cannot be created or destroyed, only changed or converted from one form to another. The second law says that, barring the influence of an outside force, energy will never increase, but always decrease in a closed system (by the way, this describes a process of devolution, not evolution). Finally, the third law states that the entropy,

⁷ One of the questions most frequently asked by young children is also one of the most difficult questions for their parents to answer. The question is *why?*, and it’s such a difficult question to answer because there’s no trustworthy, scientific authority in the world one can turn to that’s ever come up with its own satisfactory way of answering it—that is, no trustworthy, scientific authority in the world outside of a King James Bible.

or degeneration, of a perfect crystal at absolute zero is exactly equal to zero. What's the point? Well, here we have three principles that each have a dual application, in that each principle not only governs physical matters within our natural system, but spiritual matters within the supernatural system. They're just as true and relevant concerning our bodies as the Bible confirms they are concerning our souls.

Everyone knows that when we die our bodies won't just up and disappear; to the contrary we all know that decomposition will set in, and with enough time the whole thing, the eyes, teeth, muscles, bones and all, will be turned back into soil. That's not annihilation—that's a clear conversion of energy. Likewise, dead or alive, the soul never vanishes. You see, the very notion of oblivion is based entirely on a misconception, for outside of the body the soul will either live forever (John 3:36, 11:25-26), or it will die forever (Daniel 12:1-2; Matthew 18:8; Mark 9:44). For any part of God's creation there is no such thing as non-existence. No matter the cost we must come to realize that neither life nor death is finite, first of all because God's word says so, and secondly, because the real, demonstrable laws of science prove it beyond a shadow of a doubt.⁸ Modern science tries it's best to work around all this by saying the laws of thermodynamics don't apply to living, or open, systems, but who ever said the natural man is a living system? Last I checked he was "dead in trespasses and sins." Man only becomes a living, or open, system when he undergoes the New Birth and has his soul indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In

⁸ If it's the real thing, not the Satanic counterfeit that's being propagated in every public school and university in America, science will always corroborate God's word.

accordance with the second law of thermodynamics, the soul must be acted upon by an outside force, in order for its “energy” to increase rather than decrease throughout eternity, that is, in order for it to live for all eternity rather than die for all eternity. That’s a spiritual truth evidenced by a natural truth, and a scientific fact, but none of the “geniuses” of contemporary science can explain it, and they can’t explain it because they won’t accept the only source of absolute, objective truth in the universe for what it is.

Now, beyond all that, what if I told you that in your Bible there’s a reference to the concept of four-dimensional space? We can’t comprehend a fourth dimension naturally, since our perception is limited to three dimensions. All matter as we know it exists in 3-dimensional space, and for us these three dimensions will always be understood by a combination of no more than three chosen from a possible 5 parameters: *length, width, height, depth, and breadth*. Nevertheless, Ephesians 3:17-19 says:

“17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,
 18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the **breadth, and length, and depth, and height**;
 19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.”

You see, before Riemann ever dreamt of non-Euclidean geometry; before Charles Howard Hinton ever conceived of the tesseract, or the hypercube, in his 1888 book *A New*

Era of Thought; before Minkowski ever fantasized about time fulfilling his expectations for a fourth dimension; before Einstein concocted his theory of relativity; before H. G. Wells ever wrote *The Time Machine*; before Salvador Dalí ever painted the *Crucifixion (Corpus Hypercubus)*, which portrays a Caucasian, counterfeit Christ levitating in front of a three-dimensional “double cross,” the all-knowing Creator of the universe alluded to a higher, fourth dimension in the book of Ephesians. By inspiration through Paul He revealed the love of Christ, and in so doing His own person (1 John 4:8), to be four-dimensional in nature. You read it in the Bible first that God Himself is the fourth dimension. This is just another instance in which the written word of God proves itself to be more accurate and faithful even in the fields of geometry and physics than any document published on either subject in the last 400 years.

Natural facts are indeed signs of spiritual facts, though Emerson didn't know the half of it. Shamefully, the majority of professing Christians in the world today don't even know that much. I heard Ruckman once say that America's destruction is ultimately the result of Christians having taken “a light view of eternity, a light view of salvation, a light view of Christ's atonement, and a light view of Heaven and Hell.” I'm afraid a more accurate statement on the present condition of Christianity has never been made, and I'll only add that it's not solely this country, but the Body of Christ and its ministry that have been weakened. In fact, I believe it is the doctrinal and spiritual weakness of the Church first and foremost that is responsible for the destruction of this nation. It is the universal Church and

its individual members who have failed in their charge to preach the word, to be instant in season and out of season, to reprove, rebuke and exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Timothy 4:2).⁹ Why should we as true believers be surprised if the world denies the realism of spiritual things, when self-professing Christians do the same? Why should we expect anyone to believe in such things as a literal Hell, the remission of sins by literal blood, the literal resurrection of the dead, or the literal, 1,000-year reign of Jesus Christ on this earth, when we who claim to know the Lord don't really believe in those things either. If anyone claims Jesus Christ as their savior, in turn they ought to claim Him as their Lord. If anyone claims Jesus Christ as Lord, in turn they ought to take Him at His every word, no matter how strange, far-fetched or foolish it may seem. A light, ethereal view of the Bible simply will not do, for there is nothing light or ethereal about the God who wrote it. He is more real than the skin on your bones. He's more tangible than anything you've ever touched, tasted, smelled, seen or heard in all your life.

Hebrews 1:10-12 says:

“10 And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands: 11 They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as

⁹ Though every believer looks forward to the rapture of the Church, and though for every one of us that is saved it will be a glorious day to be sure, it will not happen because of a job well done on our part, but because the Church will have become ineffective in its purpose here on earth. Every dispensation, including the Church Age, ends in apostasy.

doth a garment; 12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.”

The passage is describing our universe itself as an article of clothing, which can get worn out, be taken off and folded up. The implication here is that the natural world, everything we can see with our eyes, touch with our hands, taste with our tongues, hear with our ears and smell with our noses, constitutes God’s clothing.¹⁰

In light of all this I find it a worthwhile exercise to reacquaint myself daily with my true physiology, with precisely who and what I am according to the word of God, as opposed to the word of all medical doctors, psychiatrists and phony scientists, who make all kinds of assertions without any basis whatsoever concerning the nature of man.¹¹ This is

10 You’ll remember how in a previous chapter we saw that God appeared to Moses from the mercy seat, from between the wings of two golden cherubims. You’ll remember, too, that Lucifer was the “anointed cherub that covereth.” Herein lies another parallel not to be missed, for as the Lord appeared in those days within the context of certain facets of His creation, in the flesh (Genesis 18:1-8), in a cloud (Exodus 16:10), in a fire (Exodus 24:17), and from between the cherubims (Numbers 7:89), so is He now, as always, covered by the whole of His creation. One day soon He will bare it all. His garments will have become like filthy rags, when at last He takes them off, folds them up, and puts on a brand new set of clothes (2 Peter 3:10-11; Revelation 20:11).

11 I’m not suggesting that anyone should just up and quit seeing their doctor. My point is that no one is qualified to treat something they don’t know anything about, and in my experience most medical and mental health “professionals” don’t know anything when it comes to the condition of a man’s soul, let alone most of the illnesses that might affect his body. In Jeremiah 8:22 the Holy Spirit spoke through His prophet to the fact that

where the majority of Christian modernists, Evangelicals, universalists, postmillennialists, and Fundamentalists, have dug themselves into a hole, and, in part, why so many saved men and women have absolutely no sense of liberty and hardly any assurance of their salvation. There are thousands, perhaps millions, of sorry souls in the Body of Christ who see their liberty in Christ as nothing more than a release of liability, an absolution from all condemnation in this life and hereafter. These carnal-minded, Laodicean Christians will quote Matthew 7:1 until they're blue in the face, all the while avoiding 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 like the plague. They miss the context in both passages entirely.¹² They make little to no distinction at all between the liberty of their flesh and spiritual liberty, because they make little to no distinction between the life of their flesh and the life of their soul. They make no distinction between natural and spiritual realities, and they make no distinction between natural and spiritual realities because they see no difference between God's perfect word in English and all the Satanic counterfeits. To them spiritual things exist on the same plane as their emotions, because they've bought into the lies of Greek philosophy and modern secular psychology, which tell them their soul is the epicenter of human emotion, the source of their personality, and it's for this reason that so often they confuse the two. More than ever among believers there is a conflation of

Israel's trouble couldn't be fixed by doctors with medicine: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?"

12 In Matthew 7, the Lord Jesus Christ is speaking to an unsaved crowd, whereas Paul in 1 Corinthians 6 is dealing with folks who've been born again and spiritually regenerated. The point is that judgment should never be withheld from those who ought to know better.

emotional and spiritual matters, for in preference to simply reading and believing their Bible, they're always looking to have a "spiritual" experience, which is nothing more than a self-induced sense of euphoria. This is why the vast majority of congregations in America today in their services put more emphasis on their music than they put on sound Biblical teaching and preaching. Don't get me wrong, there's nothing wrong with music when it's made for praising the Lord (Psalms 96:1-3), but we must not be blind to the fact that music in itself, like any creative activity, behaves as an emotional carrier for both the musician and listener. One of Satan's greatest ploys against the Body of Christ is to muddy the line between human emotions and the work of the Holy Spirit, and for centuries it has been largely successful. Today's professing Christian is one who feels everything and knows nothing. Their concepts of justification, sanctification and liberty in Christ are based upon an emotional and figurative interpretation of the Scriptures, the Scriptures which, in order to get out of their responsibility to one and only one authority, they claim were only ever inerrant in the "original manuscripts." You see, since they can't actually take any of their so-called Bibles seriously, they can't very well take them literally either, and their only recourse, apparently, is to spiritualize the text, that is, to fill in all the doctrinal gaps and spiritual voids in their faith with a bunch of superficial, self-affirming nonsense. Salvation for them thus becomes a matter of feeling, not a matter of fact. The same is true of their sanctification, their love for the Lord, their ministry, their testimony, and even their liberty in Christ. Their entire spiritual life, if in fact they have one at all, becomes a matter of feeling, based on personal experience

and individual perspective, rather than a matter of fact that is based on continual and prayerful study of God's true and perfect words.

Jesus said in Matthew 4:4, "...It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by **every word** that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

Since, as it stands, the King James Bible is a supernatural Book, it will always be a foolish thing to try and spiritualize it. Similar to how I can't put to death my flesh because it's already dead, I couldn't make the Bible spiritual if I tried, because it's as spiritual as anything can be already, and beyond that, nothing about me is spiritual apart from the Spirit of God within me, who is ultimately responsible for the composition and preservation of my Bible in the first place. You can't spiritualize the truth, because the truth is spiritual by itself, and you're not. You'll need that Book and the Holy Spirit before you have any hope of being "spiritual."

The Bible is spiritual, and yet, at the same time, it's a tangible, material object. That alone ought to astound us. Just as the Lord Jesus Christ possessed both a divine and human nature, so does God's Book. It has the power exclusively to save souls from an eternity in Hell and transform a person's heart and mind in inexplicable ways; it has in collaboration with the Holy Spirit the capacity to convict you and I of our condition and wrong behavior in our flesh; it has the potential to make abusive husbands and fathers into Godly men, cheating wives into committed women, rowdy, disobedient children into focused, well-mannered boys and

girls, drunks and dopers into sober-minded, vigilant servants of the Lord, sodomites and sex perverts into right-minded, virtuous lovers of the word, and even murderers, thieves, rapists and all manner of criminals into fruitful, Spirit-led disciples of Jesus Christ. The Book has the power within its pages to do all this and more, and yet, somehow, we're able to lay our hands on it, learn from it, and be restored by it, just as folks were with Jesus Christ (Matthew 8:16; Mark 6:56). What are we as believers supposed to do with that? Here's a Book that takes you and I seriously, a Book that speaks in earnest about the state of man under sin, a Book that deals with our trouble in the flesh sincerely and with our souls literally. The same cannot be said for any sacred, religious, historical, philosophical or scientific text produced in 6,000 years of human history. The least we can do with God's precious Book is to approach it with fear, reverence, and a readiness to be changed.

Not only do natural facts represent spiritual facts, but, as Emerson wrote, natural facts are first evidenced by words. I suspect the man didn't estimate the full significance of his thoughts on this matter either. Emerson was the sort of man the Bible describes as "wise in his own conceit;" that is, although it had about it an air of spirituality, his wisdom was not in line with God's wisdom, and Proverbs 26:12 declares of such a man, "there is more hope of a fool than of him." Once again, Emerson had latched onto a morsel of truth, but never could figure out exactly what to do with it. It's possible for us, however, with Scripture as our standard and key point of reference, to find out the depth and utility of that truth in all the ways Emerson could not. You see, as it concerns our

understanding of spiritual liberty in particular this premise that words in any language anticipate various facts of nature proves especially interesting. Emerson stated that, "Every word which is used to express a moral or intellectual fact, if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance." It could be alternatively stated that the use of any word to instill or perfect in one's mind even the simplest concept will always pick up where the work of our external sensory faculties left off. For us at all to comprehend and suitably communicate to others principles of an abstract or subliminal sort, such as *life* or *death*, *joy* or *grief*, *peace* or *conflict*, *freedom* or *slavery*, they must needs be defined in terms relative to at least one of the body's five means of external perception.

The student of any language knows that all vocabularies contain both concrete and abstract nouns. However, we must get to the realization that any idea put forward by an abstract noun always requires the use of one or more concrete nouns in order for our fleshly minds to grasp it. The idea here is that if something cannot first be observed in our material universe, it cannot by any means be put into words. For example, to know even on its surface the meaning of death one would at least have to observe with his own eyes a creature die. Though none should aspire to such a thing, as it goes, in order to attain a deeper knowledge of death, one would have to do more than witness the transpiration of an animal or human life; they would have to encounter it with one or more of their other four senses; that is, they would have to detect with their ears, nose, mouth, or fingers, in addition to their eyes, the natural features of death. The same is true of

any abstract principle. A written or verbal description of love, for instance, is meaningless unless you have some firsthand experience with the thing. Now, of course the development of certain technologies over the last two centuries has made this a more difficult thing to illustrate. The successive advancements in photography, videography, telecommunication, and, most recently, virtual reality, have enabled the individual to live and learn vicariously through the perceived experiences of others. It is therefore possible nowadays to have some idea as to what love looks like without ever once coming into direct contact with it yourself. Still, the fact is that our understanding of any abstruse or philosophical notion relies on a clear mental picture, an image acquired from the sum of our bodily experiences. As all this concerns our meditation on the nature of liberty generally speaking it would be an altogether useless endeavor had we no means on our own to envision a man's free will in the most corporal of terms. The freedom an individual has in the flesh to do as he or she pleases, were it not for specific externalizations of that freedom, such as the appearance of a pair of broken shackles, a severed stretch of rope, or a vacant prison cell, would remain on the periphery of our minds obscured, unidentified. I can speak legitimately to the nature of my own free will only because I bear witness every day to an abundance of material proof that my will indeed is free. Likewise, we can only address human autonomy in general by virtue of certain moments in history wherein the liberty of one's flesh was either lost or acquired. It's in this fashion that words act within our minds to illustrate material truths, and material truths, in turn, those which are spiritual.

10. Liberty & the Christian Emersonite

In the introduction to his essay *Nature* Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote the following: “All science has one aim, namely, to find a theory of nature. We have theories of races and of functions, but scarcely yet a remote approach to an idea of creation. We are now so far from the road to truth, that religious teachers dispute and hate each other, and speculative men are esteemed unsound and frivolous. But to a sound judgment, the most abstract truth is the most practical. Whenever a true theory appears, it will be its own evidence. Its test is, that it will explain all phenomena.”

Reading these words it becomes clear as day that, spiritually speaking, the man couldn't see for looking. While his theories, as we've observed, were in some cases accurate, he'd not under any circumstances concede to the fact that a tried and true theory could always be found and substantiated by anyone within the pages of a King James Bible before it once appeared in any form elsewhere. Now to me it seems that Emerson's failure was much the same as the failure of most

all “speculative men,” in that he figured that all truth in life was broken up and scattered in a hundred different places just waiting to be found. Is that not precisely the way we often characterize truth even now? Saved or lost, like Emerson and every last secular philosopher since the day man first started trying to “discover” himself in the garden of Eden, in our flesh we tend to see ultimate or absolute truth as some fugitive thing that exists beyond our grasp almost entirely. Whether they’ll admit it or not, there are a great many today, some of whom even call themselves followers of Christ, who assume the answers to all the questions posed by man in the last 6,000 years with regard to his design, condition, and eternal destination have either been lost to the erosion of time or strewn among the numerous and varied faith systems of this world. These are they who shudder to think that all knowledge and wisdom useful to us in the entire universe might actually be contained within a single volume, let alone one that has no *real* copyright attached to it and can be picked up for next to nothing almost anywhere.¹ Why do you suppose it is that, whereas so often we feel as though for a thing to be true it must be verified as such by an authority of some sort, as soon as it comes to a particular verse in our Bible, we immediately strip the Lord of all His authority only to entrust ourselves with it, as if we could withstand such a burden?

¹ King James Bibles can be purchased at secondhand stores for less than \$3. Imagine that. There are bums panhandling on the street who rake in more than ten times that amount every day, and most of them blow it all on drugs and alcohol. It costs more money for them to remain in subjection to their flesh than it would for them to find untold peace and liberty in that Book. At the end of the day, folks aren’t afraid of losing their money; they’re afraid of losing themselves. Sometimes their identities just happen to be so tied up with money that you can’t tell the difference.

It is a sad state to be sure that even the Body of Christ now finds itself in after 2,000 years of steady corruption and Satanic infiltration. Historically, Christians, as well as Jews, have been referred to disparagingly by the Mohammedans in Palestine as a “people of the Book.” It’s a designation, however, that’s warranted no longer, since the overwhelming majority of those who profess to be followers of Christ in these last days are not really a people of *the* Book all, but a people of many books. I’ve known brothers and sisters in Christ who’re more apt to quote MacArthur, Graham, Spurgeon, Moody, Chambers, or Tozer than they are to quote the Lord Himself. That fact by itself ought to make the better part of all Evangelicals, Fundamentalists, and Calvinists blush. When, as born-again Christians, we’re more apt to read and mind the words of men than we are to read and mind the words of God, it’s one of a number of signs that we’re off once again trying to make a way for ourselves in the same desolate territory we inherited by birth from our old man, Adam. You see, a preference for the incessant words and irreconcilable thoughts of men over the faithful words and incontrovertible thoughts of the living, almighty God as recorded perfectly in the 66 books of your Bible is as good a sign as any that you’re either lost or living in outright opposition to your new nature in Christ.

Emerson had the audacity to say, “Make your own Bible. Select and collect all the words and sentences that in all your readings have been to you like the blast of a trumpet.” Now, granted, this is the perspective of one unsaved man; still, the question is, how many who claim to know the Lord do you suppose, at least in practice, share his sentiment?

Moreover, how many Christians today do you reckon are involved in this business of *making their own Bible*? How many self-avowed Christians do you know that attempt at all times to reconcile every wind of conventional wisdom with their faith?; a faith which, mind you, to their instant disgrace, is inherent and therefore in all matters subject to one Book, that is, the Holy Bible.

The Body of Christ now suffers more than ever because of its gradual departure from the truth of God's word, not in spite of it. Consider, if you will, the fact that no Protestant or Bible-believer in America today has to fear the same bodily persecution that his predecessors in the faith endured at the hands of the Roman Catholic Church for more than a thousand years.² Whereas we believers on this side of the world scarcely suffer bodily harm on account of our faith, it seems we suffer all the more from an absence of spiritual liberty. I find any trade-off such as this to be hardly coincidental. Could it be that we suffer less persecution today because the Church, universally speaking, has compromised its position on the authority and singleness of God's word? To phrase it another way, what need has the devil anymore to persecute men and women of the faith physically, when, under the auspices of modernism and ecumenicalism, textual criticism and eclecticism, "Christian" rationalism and liberalism, the old Serpent has succeeded at putting in the hands of believers anything and everything but the actual words of God. What need has

² For more on the subject of the historical torture and mass murder of Church Age saints by both Catholics and Protestants, obtain copies of *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* by John Foxe and *Martyrs Mirror* by Thieleman J. van Braght.

the devil in the Western Hemisphere to see to the torture, imprisonment and killing of millions of Christians when he has implanted in the Body by means of such worldly influences as science, philosophy, and religion a lackadaisical temperament toward the Bible, an aversion to its study, and a sourness toward its literal interpretation; the result is that whenever a Christian professes to have *freedom* or *liberty* in Christ, it is more often than not, even to them, an empty phrase. You see, the words “freedom in Christ” or “liberty in Christ” themselves have no meaning, insofar as the Christian lacks conviction as to their basis, not only as a matter of presumption, but as matter of physical and existential fact. For one’s liberty in Christ ever to be more than just three meaningless words, that is, for it ever to become the critical and effective aspect of one’s life and ministry it was always supposed to be, the true Christian has to at some point take full account of his liberty and acknowledge it for what it is.

It is a shame that at present most professing Christians in their relationship with the Lord and His Book resemble Ralph Waldo Emerson. Their approach to spiritual things follows a pattern set by a lost man, who, now in Hell, awaits the judgment. Often in spite of Holy Spirit instruction and conviction, born-again believers just the same as unsaved religionists engage in applying spiritual attributes to natural things. Whether they’ll confess to it or not, they’re invested in the process of making their own Bibles, just like Emerson recommended, in selecting and collecting all the words, phrases, and ideas that speak in one way or another to the inherent “goodness” of humanity, in spite

of the blood Jesus Christ spilled on its behalf, specifically on account of its filthiness. Evidently, theirs is a protean theology, an authority contrived out of an urge to integrate Spirit with flesh, righteousness with unrighteousness, to reconcile their newness of life in Christ with their love of this world, through the synthesis of Biblical principles and secular ideologies. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump,” the Bible says in Galatians 5:9, though it seems in no way to dissuade these sad, feckless people in the Body of Christ, who, with respect to their bearing in the faith, share more in common with men like Emerson than they do with any one of the decorated soldiers of the Cross to have served their Master within the last 300 years, let alone the Scriptural model for all Bible-believers in the Church Age, the apostle Paul.

It is the most conspicuous trait of all such Christian Emersonites to have more faith in things like modern medicine, public education, legislative action, and social activism, than they do in the providence of God in the interpretation, translation, and preservation of His own words. You’ll notice before anything else that for as much as they invoke the name of the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ, they forsake almost altogether the written words of truth, and consequently their faith tends to be in a man they know little to nothing about. The quickest and best way to find out about any historical figure is of course to read their autobiography if they wrote one. The trouble with biographies is that you’re always getting the information secondhand, if not three, four, five, or even six times removed. The Bible—and I mean all of it, not just the books of Matthew, Mark,

Luke, and John—constitutes the authorized and complete autobiography of Jesus Christ. In it the only God on record to show up on this planet in human form reveals to us His will for man generally, the desires of His heart for you and I individually, right along with the most intricate workings of His mind, and still there are millions of men and women who claim a personal relationship with Jesus Christ that would sooner believe what their pastor, priest, or some scholar has to say about Jesus Christ than simply read for themselves the one and only Book ever authored by the Man Himself.

The apostle Paul forewarned each of us by way of his own disciple Timothy that even folks within the Body of Christ would one day depart altogether from the singular authority of God's words. We'd do well to realize that the very same heart underlying all of Emerson's doctrines on nature, spirituality, and the soul, was present and active in the Church even at the time of Paul's ministry, and the same folks I now refer to as Christian Emersonites Paul describes in 2 Timothy 4:3-4:

“3 For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; 4 And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

To be clear, no one needs to have read or even heard of Ralph Waldo Emerson in order to be called a Christian Emersonite. They need only to resemble the man intellectually, philo-

sophically, and theologically. Even at the time, the doctrines this fellow advanced in his essays and lectures were nothing new. Emerson was nowhere near the individualist he imagined himself to be; he was an emulator, like all New Agers, a syncretist and an eclectic whose guiding “lights” included his contemporary and close friend Henry David Thoreau, who once said, “I have much to learn of the Indian, nothing of the missionary,” along with enlightenment-era “free” thinkers like Victor Cousin, Immanuel Kant, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, mystic Roman Catholics like Thomas Aquinas and Meister Eckhart, some early “Christian” Gnostic groups, Platonists, and the ancient pagans who, as far back Genesis 31, deified and worshipped the “forces” of nature (Satan is called the God of forces in Daniel 11:38).³

The supernatural, supervisory influence behind every religious structure and phony spiritual philosophy known to man is the same one that caused the woman in the garden of Eden to first doubt the words and sincerity of God some 6,000 years ago; the same one that saw to the construction of a tower called Babel and simultaneously laid the ground-

³ Prior to Genesis 31, and particularly before Noah’s flood, which by itself no doubt inspired countless traditions and mythologies among the descendants of Shem, Ham, and Japheth, idolatry most likely was quite a different affair. There are no idols, no inanimate graven objects of worship once mentioned in your Bible prior the flood as recorded in Genesis 7; we can conclude nevertheless from Genesis 6:4 there was a great deal of idolatry going on. The earliest idolaters had no need at all to create for themselves gods to worship. Their gods were at that time incarnate, living with them on this earth, in the flesh. There’s a reason the Lord sometimes refers to the gods of other nations throughout the Old Testament in a manner usually reserved for walking, talking, breathing, living things, not cold, impersonal, and lifeless works of fiber, clay, wood, stone, or metal (Exodus 12:12, 23:32; Psalms 96:4). See also, Acts 7:41-44.

work for a one-world antichrist system; the same one that infiltrated the church of God at its formation and oppresses it still to this day through subtle appeals to the human ego, intellect and instincts. It is this same age-old spirit characterized by pride and outright contempt for the Lord that inspired Thales of Miletus to surmise that “all things are filled with gods” (*De Anima*. 411 a7-8), Plotinus then to say that “God is not external to anyone, but is present with all things,” Rousseau in turn to philosophize that man is by nature good, and finally Emerson to broadly assert that “God is in every man.”

The Bible declares emphatically that God most certainly is not “present with all things,” or “in every man;” nevertheless you’d be hard-pressed anymore to find one professing Christian in America who doesn’t think that every person in the world is a child of God. If you’re listening, you’ll hear it everywhere from talk radio to the lecture halls at Loyola University, from political campaign speeches to the evening news, that everyone is born in God’s image, and that everyone therefore belongs to God. The sad thing is that most folks who say this actually believe they have a Scriptural basis for it, when in fact they’re only spreading a lie that started with the devil himself. Nowhere in the Bible to begin with does it say that you and I were born in God’s image, let alone that we came into this world having any real association with Him at all, and yet that fact does little to prevent folks believing and disseminating these ideas, who supposedly got them from a credible source, perhaps from their favorite televangelist or religious author, from a well-intentioned relative or a trusted friend.

All of this reverts back to the realization we came to in an earlier chapter, that whenever the devil can't prevent a person from getting saved, his next course of action will always be to prevent them from becoming a fruitful Christian. It is his secondary objective, in other words, to inhibit the process of every believer's sanctification and maturation in the knowledge of the truth, so that he or she remains as perfectly useless for the work of the Lord as they were at any point prior to their conversion. A man or woman may give their life to Christ and get saved, but the novelty of their new life wears off in no time when they're not each and every day looking to do, let alone even to know, the will of their Savior. Oftentimes Satan's efforts are little more than crimes of opportunity, the exploitation of a weakness we already have, or a wrong we in our flesh have already committed. What naturally happens therefore whenever a newly enlisted Christian soldier wavers even in the performance of his most basic duties is that in every battle between his flesh and the Spirit of God within him his flesh takes the victory, and Satan, having smelled blood in the water, so to speak, simply picks up where that poor soldier left off, leading him unawares straight back into captivity. You see, most of the work the Christian does himself, for it's he who fails to maintain his weapon, to read and study his Bible; he who stands guard out of uniform, who expects to survive an assault without armor; he who takes a sympathetic view toward the enemy, who shirks conviction and makes light of sin and its effects; it is he, and no one else, who wanders from his post, who strays outside the will of God. The devil merely lies in wait on the outskirts of the camp for such a Christian to come along who is unarmed

and defenseless of his own volition, compromised and absent without leave. This is the progression by which so many brothers and sisters in Christ have been turned into Christian Emersonites. The Bible says in 2 Timothy 2:3-4:

“3 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a **good soldier** of Jesus Christ. 4 No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.”

To those who've undergone the New Birth and spiritual circumcision—who as a result thereof, for the first time in their lives, are in fact at liberty by nature—but persist in looking to the world system for discernment, consolation, and satisfaction, the Lord gives precisely that for which they've asked. The first thing to go is always their liberty. The sad part is they rarely know it's gone, because they never knew they had any to start with. The Lord has given them life and liberty like nothing this world can provide, and without a second thought they waltz right back into the same damp, dark, rancid cell from whence they came, and without any fuss or objection let the devil slap on the shackles once again.

Now, I'm afraid it is possible for anyone that would seem to fit our description of a Christian Emersonite to not be born again at all, but that is for God to know, and for me to find out when I get to Glory. Whether a soul is saved or not, one thing is for certain: you can be born again without knowing Jesus Christ, but you can't really know Jesus Christ without being born again. Not surprisingly, what's true of

the incarnate Word of God is also true of the preserved, written word of God: you can be born again without being in complete submission to the Book, but you cannot be in complete submission to the Book unless you've been born again. No one has any business associating themselves with the name of Christ who has not at least acknowledged their condition under sin and at some point in their life trusted in the blood of Christ to pay their debt in full.⁴ Consequently, the term is not to be applied just to any lost person who claims a connection with Christ on the basis of their affiliation with some religious organization or pseudo-spiritual social club. This isn't a Christian by any stretch of the imagination, let alone the sort of Christian we're concerned with in this chapter. You see, by definition the Christian Emersonite is an individual who can recall specifically a time in their life in which they laid hold on the gift of eternal life by God's grace through faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We may attribute to such a person the name of Christ, but not for any reason save that in the sight of God they are covered by His blood. This individual's relationship to Jesus Christ therefore is based on Jesus' blood, and nothing else. Now, whereas that may at first sound well and good, we must make absolutely certain that we do not muddy the line between one's eternal *standing* in the eyes of the Lord and their present *state* of serviceability to His cause. It's needful that we differentiate between the thing which

⁴ On its own the Bible disqualifies at least 75% of the professing "Christian" world. Jesus said, "...**Narrow** is the way, which leads unto life, and few there be that find it." If everyone in the world were truly saved that claimed to be a Christian, I'd have to assume that my Savior lied. After all, a way's not *narrow* in any sense of the word that'll accommodate upwards of 2.2 billion people, which is the number of adherents the crooked world system likes to attribute to the religion of "Christianity."

justifies a man and that which has the potential over the course of time to transform his way of thinking and pattern of behavior. The two are not the same. Verse after verse in your Bible speaks plainly to the fact that a soul's justification in every dispensation has been provided for by innocent blood.⁵ Beyond its historical context Leviticus 17:11 makes a clear-cut prophetic reference to the universal blood atonement of Jesus Christ: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for **it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.**" Likewise, Hebrews 9:22 says, "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and **without shedding of blood is no remission.**" Romans 5:8-9 says:

5 John MacArthur has faced warranted criticism from Fundamentalists and Bible-believers alike ever since his 1976 article *Not His Bleeding But His Dying*, in which he said, "It was His death that was efficacious. . . not His blood . . . Christ did not bleed to death. The shedding of blood had nothing to do with bleeding . . . it simply means death. ..Nothing in His human blood saves . . . It is not His blood that I love... it is Him. It is not His bleeding that saved me, but His dying." If that were not enough, MacArthur attempts to minimize the blood by correcting your King James Bible in a note on Hebrews 9:12 in the 1997 edition of the *MacArthur Study Bible*: "A better translation would be 'through His own blood.' ... Nothing is said which would indicate that Christ carried His actual physical blood with Him into the heavenly sanctuary." You can always tell a Bible-rejecting wolf in sheep's clothing by their critical treatment of the AV For all those like MacArthur who conceive of the blood as little more than a symbol of death, who go so far as to say there was nothing exceptional about Jesus' blood in any way, I have one question: Who other than Jesus Christ in the history of the world has ever had 100% human blood coursing through their veins, but remained 100% sin-free for 33 years? That's supernatural blood, no matter how you try to spin it.

“8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, being now justified **by his blood**, we shall be saved from wrath through him.”⁶

No one is saved or justified apart from Jesus' blood. It is that simple. However, I'd be out of line if I said that Jesus' blood at any time changed my opinion or perspective on anything. The blood never altered my view of the world or impressed on me a burden for lost souls. The blood never increased my faith or my knowledge of the Man who shed it. Not once in my life has the blood convicted me of sin. It has never convinced me of the reality of spiritual things. It has never given me the least insight into my Lord and Savior's will for my life. Indeed, none of these things has ever been accomplished in my life except by the Spirit of truth in collaboration with the supernatural word of truth. We've established there is no salvation and no association to be claimed with Jesus Christ outside of an installation of faith in His blood, but in much the same way, there is no real intimacy to be had with Jesus Christ apart from an earnest, personal interest in His words. Whereas for salvation one must have faith in the blood, for all else pertaining to the life of a true Christian one must put all their confidence in a Book. This, I firmly believe, is where the trouble for every Christian Emersonite begins, for theirs is not a relationship *with* Jesus Christ, but merely a relationship *to* Him. They've laid claim to the blood, but put little if any stock at all in the Book, even though it was the Book, directly or indirectly, that enlightened them initially as to

⁶ More references on the significance of Jesus' blood in salvation include Matthew 26:28; Romans 3:25; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14; Revelation 5:9.

their desperate need for a Savior. They've come to faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ to save their souls from an eternity in a lake of fire, but when it comes to the lives they now lead as new creatures quite literally, who've been redeemed spiritually but not yet physically, they're more apt to embrace one of many scholarly, humanistic reinterpretations of Scripture than they are to believe that God has in fact provided for them within the pages of one Book the answer to every question they could ever think to ask and the solution to every problem they'll ever encounter in their lives on this earth.⁷

Every Christian Emersonite shares in common with the "Sage of Concord" himself a much too positive view of human nature, and a much too cynical view of their Creator.⁸ I believe wholeheartedly that one must first take a completely negative view of himself as a sinner by nature before he is able to appreciate the value of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on any

7 The Bible has more answers than all the branches of science and philosophy put together have questions.

8 Fear and reverence for God in modern Christianity has been succeeded by cynicism and apprehension. This is without a doubt part and parcel to the overt demasculinization and sissification of all things male in western culture, and also, by extension, within the Body of Christ. The marriage relationship between a man and a woman typifies like nothing else in the world the relationship between Jesus Christ and His Church (Ephesians 5:21-33). In these last days the Bride has grown skeptical of her Husband, not because He has proven Himself suspect or unfaithful, but because she has made a woman out of Him. It's a fact of nature that no woman has any respect, fear or reverence for a weak, effeminate man, and the same is true of the Bride with her Bridegroom. She has been cheating on her Husband with a made-up, hermaphroditic imitation for so long now that if He were to show up today, she'd likely not even recognize Him.

level. It is Biblical repentance not merely to be sorry for what you've done, but to be sorry for what you are. Nevertheless, what happens these days to so many Christians after they get saved is that somewhere along the line they begin once more to see themselves and the world system in a positive light. Their view of humanity turns positive; their view of public education turns positive; their view of modern medicine turns positive; their view of technology turns positive; their view of money turns positive; their view of celebrities and entertainment media turns positive; their view of the flesh turns positive; their view of self-expression turns positive; their view of sin turns positive, and it's only a matter of course that, in turn, their disposition toward the Lord, His Book, His ministry, and His people reverts back to negative. Inexcusably, the Christian Emersonite has bought back in to the devil's age-old deception that liberty begins and ends with a man's ability to choose his own way. Of course it's no surprise that the sort of liberty esteemed by most professing Christians in America today, not to mention by most Americans in general, much resembles that which Emerson Himself espoused, a carnal, one-dimensional article with no eternal value or spiritual significance whatsoever. In his book *The Conduct of Life* Emerson wrote, "A part of fate is the freedom of man. Forever wells up the impulse of choosing and acting in his soul." Little did Emerson realize that in this statement he was not describing the liberty of a soul at all. He was describing rather the manner in which a man remains in subjection to his body. As an ordained Unitarian minister, Emerson took very little if any of his Bible seriously, and figured as a result, like most folks do, that liberty desig-

nates in general a freedom of choice, and more specifically a right to self-governance. He, along with every overeducated, hyper-spiritual fool since Clement of Alexandria, including the majority of our nation's founders, missed all the references in his Bible to the fact that liberty pertains to all men both naturally and supernaturally, that it concerns not just our minds, bodies, and functions on this earth, but each one of our souls today, tomorrow and for eternity.

Accordingly, to the Christian Emersonite, liberty has nothing to do with his soul or eternity, and everything to do with the free exercise of his will as it concerns his circumstances and his body. To him it has to do with his autonomy as an individual, or as a citizen, which explains the obsession we have right now in the West with human rights.⁹ There is more talk even in your local church these days about rights and freedoms involving the things we do with our mouths, hands, feet, and private parts than there is about the ministries of reconciliation and Biblical discipleship. This is evidence in itself the Church has failed miserably in its call to be peculiar and separate from the world (2

⁹ I heard on the radio recently a fellow trying to differentiate between a privilege and a right. He couldn't do it, because they're the same. In an English thesaurus they're synonyms. No one has any rights or privileges but for the grace of God. That's a fact, and if the Lord would have in mind to revoke our privileges as spoiled-rotten Americans, our freedoms of speech, religion, and the press, our rights to assemble, to keep and bear arms, to petition the government, and so forth, you had best believe that He will do it. He did it with Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union, Adolph Hitler in Germany, Mao Tse-Tung in the People's Republic of China, Idi Amin in Uganda, and the Castro brothers in Cuba. To this day He continues to do it wherever in the world His Book is despised, rejected, or simply ignored (2 Chronicles 34:18-28).

Corinthians 6:17).¹⁰ To the immediate discredit of all conservatives and liberals alike, the only right God gives to every man across the board, irrespective of his culture, nation, race, or class, is the right to choose his own master. He gave the right to Adam, and Adam blew it. Adam chose to be his own master. He gives the same right to us, and nine times out of ten we blow it. We choose for our master the wisdom of other men. Joshua 25:14 says, “And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, **choose** you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” This is where liberty begins, not in the absence of authority, but in the God-given elective power each and every one of us has ultimately to serve the Lord of Heaven or the god of this earth; however, contrary to the mindset of Emerson it doesn’t end, nor is it ever fully realized, here, in the liberty of our flesh. The truth of the matter, as we’ve seen, is that real, spiritual liberty, which I believe takes the place of a Christian’s free will when his body dies, has its foundation in one verse: “...Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.”

10 The apostle John’s letters to the seven churches in Asia Minor as recorded in Revelation 1-3 reveal prophetically, in perfect succession, the 7 stages in the 2,000-year life of the Church. The last of John’s letters is addressed to the church in Laodicea, which represents the Body of Christ throughout late modern and contemporary history, from around the year 1900 to present. I’ll have you read Revelation 3:14-18. If that doesn’t strike you as a picture-perfect summary of modern Christianity, I’ll have you try this one on for size. The Greek word “Laodicea” means “people’s rights,” or, “justice of the people.” The emerging church today has become obsessed with its rights and liberties as a social, religious, and political organization. It could not care any less about the liberty of souls from bodies of sin and death.

So then, as we've said, true liberty, must always come as an immediate result of the indwelling of the Spirit of Christ within the soul of an individual, according to Romans 8:9. In the same moment, it is physiologically actuated by spiritual circumcision, the operation of the Holy Spirit in which the soul is literally let go from the body. Let me be clear on this point that if the Spirit of the Lord does not literally inhabit and extricate your soul from your flesh as a believer, then your so-called liberty in Christ is a farce. It isn't real. A literal spiritual circumcision is the only means by which one is able after death to vacate their body and wind up in Glory with the Lord. The state of an uncircumcised soul, on the other hand, is described in Psalm 119:25: "**My soul cleaveth unto the dust:** quicken thou me according to thy word." His destination is then revealed in Matthew 10:28, which says, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The physical implication of these two verses for a lost man is that his body in death will behave like an anchor, something of a ball and chain, by confining his soul forever to this planet, which is destined for fire (Revelation 20:11); as the body decomposes and returns as dust into the ground, the soul, continuing naturally under the force of gravity, will be carried on down, through the lithosphere, asthenosphere, and finally, into the "core."¹¹

11 Gravity within our atmosphere generally is defined as the force of attraction by which objects tend to fall toward the center of the earth. The Bible could not be any more clear about the location of Hell. It is in the center of the earth, and for at least 6,000 years everyone and everything in the world, except for the soul of a born-again child of God, has been drawn towards it.

The majority of what we're talking about will come as news to all Christian Emersonites, who have missed out on what I believe to be one of the greatest and most edifying realities in the life of a New Testament saint, and all because they've taken so little of God's word literally. It is never a figurative thing to have liberty in Christ. It is a fact of one's new nature in the Lord that his soul has been *made* free from the law of sin and death, according to Romans 8:2; the law of sin and death, which is expressly revealed in the natural life, pleasure, suffering, and death of a human body (Psalms 39:5; Romans 6:23). It is one thing to be set free. American state penitentiaries "set free" upwards of 600,000 people each year. It is something else entirely to be *made* free.

We read in John's gospel, chapter 8, verses 31-33:

"31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. 33 They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?"

Here we have a group of self-righteous, religious Jews who can't get it through their heads there is something inherently wrong with them. Imagine that! Verse 31 tells us they believed on Jesus Christ, though, much like Nicodemus, who had trouble grasping the concept of a second spiritual birth, these folks struggled to comprehend that someone could be in spiritual bondage to their own flesh just as easily

as they could be in physical bondage to another individual. Jesus told these flesh-obsessed, carnal thinkers that the truth would *make* them free, and their response was as delusional a one as it could be. “We be Abraham’s seed,” they said, “and were never in bondage to any man.” Not to mention their spiritual blindness, it’s worth noting these Jews weren’t even honest with themselves concerning their own history. You see, if nothing else the Hebrew Bible was, and still is, a testament to the fact that Abraham’s physical seed had up to that moment in history spent more years in bondage as a nation than not, but that is beside the point. Should we go on to read the rest of John 8, we’ll see how many of these Jews in the temple went from believing on Jesus Christ in verse 31 to bearing up stones to kill him with in verse 59, and all within a matter of minutes. In one instance they believed on the Man, but in the next they wished He were dead. They were moved in their hearts in no time from belief to outright rejection of Jesus Christ. Now, I doubt very much that any of you reading wishes Jesus Christ were dead, though, depending on whose hands this book has fallen into, it may be that you don’t believe Jesus Christ was actually raised from the dead and lives today, in which case you’ll have some 500 eyewitnesses to convince in eternity (1 Corinthians 15:6). All the same, I am confident in this assertion, that nearly all professing men and women of the faith, myself included, at one time or other have shared in common with these Jews in John 8 essentially the same malfunction. It is typical I think anymore for people to get saved early on in life, only to find themselves ten, twenty, thirty, forty, sometimes fifty years later off in the wilderness, messed up with drugs, alcohol, sexual sin, and in some cas-

es even guilty of rape or cold-blooded murder. At the very least they find themselves almost always miserable, full of anxieties, unable for all their seeking to find any sense of direction or purpose in their lives. Whereas these Christian Emersonites consider themselves in bondage to no man, they, like the Jew, can't tell any difference between their physical and spiritual liberty. For years, though I had been born again at a young age and made free by the circumcision of Christ, I personally had no sense of spiritual liberty at all. You see, somewhere along the line I myself had become a Christian Emersonite. I had come to love this world more than I loved my Savior (1 John 2:15-17). To my mind spirituality was something anyone on their own could produce, for I had believed the lie of the New Age that man is a spiritual creature (Romans 7:14). Moreover, politics, philosophy, and "secular theology" interested me more than any of God's own words (Psalms 119:9-16). My purpose in life I believed was to create, and create I did, though solely to bring honor and glory to myself (Romans 1:25).¹² I, like Emerson, daily knelt and worshipped at the altars of self-reliance, self-indulgence, and self-expression. I was in bondage to no man, or so I thought. I had adopted a quite similar egocentric idealism to that which impelled Emerson in one of his most well-known essays to suggest

12 Artists and creative types can be among the most miserable and psychologically troubled people you'll ever come in contact with, and I believe based on personal experience this is because in most cases they are applying for their own glory certain aspects of their nature that God intended originally for *His* glory. Creatives have been blessed by God with talents in the visual, textile, and performing arts specifically in order that they might use their talents to exalt Him, to reflect on His perfection, His righteousness, His grace, His truth, and His salvation. Most of their problems start simply because they don't.

to anyone in the world that would listen that, “Nothing can bring you peace but yourself. Nothing can bring you peace but the triumph of principles.” If that were so, then I should have had no shortage of peace, and yet, somehow, for all my principles, I had no sense of peace. If Emerson had been correct also when he said that “freedom is the accomplishment and perfectness of man,” then with all my freedoms as an American, with all my creative pursuits and accomplishments, which came as a direct result of the liberty I enjoyed in my flesh as an American, I ought to have had an especially keen sense of liberty, too, and yet I never had any such thing, because Emerson was dead wrong. Liberty never was and never will be the accomplishment or the perfectness of man. My problem, as I came to find out, was a problem with the truth, forasmuch as I had received a quite strong foundation in the Scriptures as a child, as a young man I began looking for truth wherever else I was told I might find it. The real problem every Christian Emersonite has at heart is a problem with the truth. In the course of time they’ve either added to it or subtracted from it, watered it down or synthesized it with their own preconceived notions about the relationship between God and man, between spirit and non-spirit.

You’ll recall what Jesus told the Jews who believed on Him, that if only they would “**continue in His word,**” they would be His disciples indeed; “And ye shall know the **truth,**” He said, “and the truth shall make you free.”

In terms of their applicability and effectiveness in one’s life truth and spiritual liberty are integral to one another. It is the

truth, after all, that makes us free, according to the author and finisher of our faith, the Man Christ Jesus Himself. Now, the truth is found in connection with two things in the New Testament. Don't miss it. In John 14:6, Jesus says "**I am** the way, **the truth**, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Jesus Christ is the truth, but that's not all. Three chapters over in John 17:17, Jesus addresses His Father: "Sanctify them through thy truth: **thy word is truth.**"

Bearing in mind its essentiality to every believer's freedom in Christ, isn't it something extraordinary how the truth itself is a twofold principle? Did we not learn earlier on in our study that liberty is also a twofold principle? In the same way that liberty in a Biblical context may refer either to the freedom of the human will from external forces or the freedom of a soul from the body, the truth may refer either to Jesus Christ or the entire written counsel of God. In a previous chapter you'll remember that we touched briefly on the correlation that no doubt exists between God's Son and God's Book. Now, this is one of those doctrines in the Scriptures, like that of the triune nature or sovereignty of God, that I don't reckon we will ever be able to envision adequately with our limited spiritual capacity in the flesh; however, we must never be too quick to gloss over things the Lord might otherwise teach us simply for fear of their remoteness or complexity. I put it earlier that both Jesus Christ and your Bible have two natures. While on this earth Jesus Christ was both physical and spiritual. Your Bible is both physical and spiritual. They are both called the Word (or, the word) of God. Moreover, they

are both referred to as “the truth.” I don’t expect anyone to fully understand it, but the implication in your Bible is that, somehow, some way, they are both one and the same.¹³ It stands to reason then, does it not, that an affront to God’s Book is an affront to Jesus Christ; that a renunciation of the Book in any wise is a renunciation of Jesus Christ. No one can simultaneously love Jesus Christ and hate the Book. No one can be a disciple of Jesus Christ and at the same time neglect, alter, or make light of the Book. Nevertheless that is precisely what the Christian Emersonite keeps on trying to do, albeit, mind you, to his own detriment. As we’ve said, his is a problem with the truth. Despite having believed on the incarnate Word for salvation, he has not with any faith continued in the written word. What was it again that Christ said to those Jews that believed on Him in John 8:31? He said, “If ye **continue in my word**, then are ye my disciples indeed;...”

Notice the semicolon at the end of the verse, which indicates that Jesus’ statement doesn’t end there, but carries on into the following verse. The point is that God’s message to us in verse 31 is not complete without the reading of verse 32: “**And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall**

¹³ A common accusation leveled against Bible-believers by Catholics and most Protestants is that we’re idolaters for worshipping a book. It’s a rather effective accusation, too, in that very few Bible-believers know how to respond to it. My response is this: “In exalting the written word of God, we exalt the incarnate Word of God. In honoring God’s words, we honor his Son.” The psalmist writes in Psalms 56:10, “In God will I **praise his word**: in the LORD will I **praise his word**.” The real question anyhow does not concern whether or not we ought to worship a book, but what the Christian has to place his complete faith and absolute confidence in as he lives out his days on this earth, if it is not in fact a *perfect* Bible.

make you free.” Our Lord’s meaning in this passage is unmistakable, so long as we humbly incline our ears to wisdom and apply our hearts to understanding (Proverbs 2:1-5). Even if there were no other references anywhere in your Bible concerning the symbiosis between the truth and spiritual liberty, we’d have right here the key to living the liberated Christian life. There is, after all, no sense even talking about the “victorious Christian life,” while our churches remain filled with Christian Emersonites who have no Biblically-grounded concept to begin with about their liberty in Christ.

I’ll say just once more for clarity’s sake that if any one of you has been saved by grace through a personal faith in Jesus Christ the simple fact of the matter is that your soul is and will forevermore be at liberty. For us, no matter the scorn, ridicule, injustice, affliction, persecution, or captivity we may suffer in our flesh for the cause of Christ, liberty is not something we ever have to go looking for again; rather, it is ours in faith now and for all time. Being as it was within us the result of a literal, procedural operation of the Holy Spirit, our liberty in Christ is a part of what Paul refers to in Ephesians 1:14 as the “earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.” A grand and remarkable aspect of this *earnest*, which is meant to contribute every day to our hope of glory in the next, and which ought to uphold us now in our faith until the redemption of our souls from these bodies of corruption, is nothing abstract or figurative at all. It is not intellectually or emotionally determined. On the contrary, it is taken by a simple, childlike faith in God’s promise that what-

ever He has said, He will also do (Numbers 23:19). As a believer, then, if your liberty in Christ seems yet out of focus, ethereal, or unreal to you, as though it were some obscure, cryptic thing far off someplace on the periphery your consciousness, might the matter be, Christian, that you have not done what Jesus said? Might it be that you have gone the way of Emerson and countless others who have changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator (Romans 1:25)? Brother or sister, could it be that for some time now you have been occupied with the foolishness of making your own “Bible,” that is, with resolving for yourself based solely on your own convictions and experiences what is true or false, moral or immoral, spiritual or physical, literal or figurative? Have you been living in spite of the Holy Spirit’s conviction a life that’s more consistent with the course of this world than it is with the way of truth, peace, and liberty? Have you been trying to lead a “spiritual” life without consulting on a daily basis the only legitimate spiritual resource on this planet? Have you bought into the lie that you can love God’s Son without loving His Book? Have you been living in bondage to your body in spite of the spiritual fact that have been liberated from it through your faith in Jesus Christ? All of these questions I believe for the sake of the expansion and edification of God’s family demand answers. If indeed you are a brother or sister whose soul has been bought and paid for by Christ’s shed blood I must ask, is it possible that between the time you received Him and this present moment you have been moved from the truth? Is it possible that you have become a self-reliant, pseudo-spiritual, flesh-obsessed Christian Emersonite?

If so, I can with full assurance guarantee that unless you crawl back down on your knees, repent of yourself, and do as your Savior said, you will know and experience nothing of the liberty the Lord has given you. If the Truth, which is Jesus Christ, has made us free, it is simply because one day we heard the word and believed what it said. For us then to ever fully comprehend and have our lives and ministries benefit from this liberty, it will be for the simple fact that we *continued* in His word.

Galatians 5:1 says, “Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

Are you standing fast in the liberty wherewith Christ made you free, or have you gotten yourself tangled up again with the yoke of bondage? Are you living a liberated and victorious Christian life based securely on the truth of God’s word, or are you leaning to your own understanding, your own principles, or your own false sense of spirituality? It can only be one or the other, and if for you the latter is true my prayer is that you’ll be drawn under conviction before much time is wasted and surrender yourself, so that Christ, and Christ alone, may be exalted in your life and testimony on this earth.

If the Lord will use this book to such an end in any one of your lives I pray also that together we would see to it that all the honor and glory therefrom be given unto Him, in order that no flesh, not mine, not yours, or anyone else’s, should glory in His presence.

Now, I would be remiss in the Lord's call on my life if in closing I did not also address those of my readers who are without the Body of Christ. So, I write now in particular to anyone who has yet to obtain, let alone to experience the liberty that God reserves in store for them that will receive Him. If you have never in your life accepted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, I pray that you won't hold out on your Creator any longer. Don't delay. The time is short. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "...Behold, **now** is the accepted time; behold, **now** is the day of salvation." As the saying goes, there is no time like the present. The Bible declares as a matter of fact that *all* have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:20). The wages of sin, according to Romans 6:23, is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. God provides no exceptions to the rule. Try as you might, you'll never find an alternate way to Heaven. It may not be easy, but it is as simple as bending a knee. "For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God" (Romans 14:11). Why wait until it's too late to bow your knee? Why reject another second the only real good this world has ever known? Romans 10:8-10 says, "...The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Will you believe the word that is preached unto you here and now, that Christ, who is God manifest in the flesh, bled and died on a cross, was buried and rose again the third day, all to save natural-born sinners like you and me? Whether you are confronted with it now

for the first, second, third, fourth, or fifth time in your life, will you today acknowledge your sinful condition and believe the word of the Gospel? You'll not regret it under any circumstances, save those you may orchestrate in your own flesh, for there is no better life to be lived out on this earth than that of a born-again child of God, who is dead to self and submitted to the cause of Christ.

John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

You'll not be saved with some empty prayer, but with a heart sorry for sin. If you're genuinely sorry for what you are, truly fed up with the world system and your complicity in it, however, you might say to the Lord something along these lines: "God, I know that I am a sinner. I know that because of my sin I deserve to be in Hell right now, and that it is only because of Your grace I am even alive and able to recognize my need for a Savior. Lord, I believe that in your son Jesus Christ You paid the price for all my sin, past, present and future. You paid a debt I could never have paid myself, and today I place my full confidence in His blood, burial, and resurrection to save me."

If just now you sincerely called on the Lord in such a manner, you have been born again, not of corruptible seed, like the first time, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, according to 1 Peter 1:23. Whether or not you feel in your body any sort of change, you are as of this moment a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17), spiritually circumcised (Colossians

2:11), renewed with the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:5), and justified before God (Romans 5:9), because of Jesus Christ. Indeed, though we cannot see or hear it, there is great rejoicing in Heaven on account of your soul. Jesus said in Luke 15:10, “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.”

Glory to God you're saved, and your life in Christ has only just begun. My only prayer for you now, brother or sister, is that you do not depart from the faith, but become rooted and grounded in it. I encourage you to find and serve within a local body of believers in which Biblical discipleship is highly valued and practiced. Get discipled, and begin to disciple others. Continue in the word. Get your hands on a King James Bible. Read it, study it, and believe it for all it's worth. The salvation and liberation of my soul depended on it. The salvation and liberation of your soul depended on it. Likewise, the salvation and liberation of the souls of others, your friends, relatives, acquaintances, and even complete strangers, will depend on it.

I reckon some of the best advice ever given to a new believer comes from 1 Timothy 4:13, so I will leave you with this. Remember that while historically Paul may have written these words to Timothy, the Holy Spirit intends the message for you to be read as it were from Jesus Christ Himself: “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.”

If there are three things the world, your flesh, and the devil would have you never to involve yourself with, they are

NO GREATER LIBERTY

these: reading your Bible, evangelizing the lost with the Gospel, and discipling other believers in sound doctrine. That is why you ought to give all the time you possibly can to them. There is really nothing else that matters.

Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

Romans 8:21

