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MIDWES LANCH OUR LANCH OUR LANCH "Have I now become your enemy by telling you the truth?" Galatians 4:16

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UCRLDVIEW BOUTIQUE

By L.L. (Don) Veinot, Jr. and Joy A. Veinot

hough I no longer consider myself a Christian, I'm still keeping a space for God in my heart. I didn't lose my religion. Instead, I'm creating my own.

I don't believe that we humans can live and function

happily without any belief or faith in something outside of the physical world we live in.¹

These words from Keay Nigel near the end of his piece, "After 13 Years, I'm Leaving Christianity" on the *HuffPost Religion* Blog, reveals an individual who is a microcosm of what I saw and heard at the 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions (October 15-19, 2015) in Salt Lake City, UT. The Parliament is a veritable smorgasbord of religious and/or philosophical ideas from which you can pick-and-choose when building your own personal belief system! There were nearly 10,000 people at the event, and a follow-up from the

Parliament indicated there were 1,800 presenters.

Oprah Winfrey's film series *Belief* was previewed at the Parliament, and not surprisingly, her views mirrored the ideas and spirit of the Parliament. "Progressive Christian" author and speaker, Diana Butler Bass,² wrote an opinion piece in *The Washington Post* on Oprah's new *Belief*' series. In it, she shows how dramatically the "nature of faith is shifting." Bass wrote:

The show reveals how religion itself is shifting, how we are living through a period of intense spiritual de-

mocratization. In all the world's religions, older forms of remote and hierarchical authority — not to mention the very idea of a distant and monarch-like God — are being challenged by ordinary people as they pray, wor-

ship, walk pilgrimages and seek the divine in nature and neighborhoods.³

I have to agree we are currently "living through a period of intense spiritual democratization." Case in point is the story of Keay, who came to believe the Church was deceptive, made false promises, exploited its young members to increase its size, and whose leaders were nothing more than financial scam artists. Keay, being a homosexual, listened to a message at his church from a former homosexual and "went forward," with the expectation of being delivered:

But after a week or so, I slipped back to feeling those sinful urges. My samesex attraction didn't just go away in the name of God. There ain't no miracle.4

After being disillusioned and embittered by the lack of a miracle delivery from his besetting sin, he began to see problems with other things his church was teaching:

As I grew more and more distant, I started to realize that many of its teachings were not quite right too. For instance, my church would teach us that all other

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religions are works of Satan. Buddhism, Taoism and Hinduism were described as unintelligent religions, their worship of Pagan figures, animals and deities as nonsensical and laughable.⁵

The trickle of doubt turned into a flood of disbelief after a very public scandal developed at his home church, City Harvest Church⁶:

Fast forward to 2010, I started college. That year, my church got embroiled in a mega fraud investigation looking at \$50 million being misused. At first I was still supportive as I had faith in the pastors of the church. But as I did my own research, I realized that I might have been wrong ... For years and years of listening to the prosperity gospel in church, I had been brainwashed into giving thousands of dollars.⁷

Keay walked away from the faith, not because *Christianity* is false, but because the church he attended offered false, shallow teaching, and its leaders allegedly were exposed as frauds. The "Prosperity gospel" is *false*, and it has caused many people to leave their churches when the promised "returns on their money" never rolled in. In addition, there are very good and cogent reasons to reject Paganism, Buddhism, Taoism, and Hinduism that, sadly, he was *not* taught. In addition, his church was shown to be a greed-based enterprise. So, in search of something spiritually satisfying and bigger than himself, he is "creating his own" god and religion.

From Microcosm to Parliament

We live in an age when Western culture is rapidly abandoning their Judeo/Christian roots and returning to the various Pagan religions and pantheons of first-century gods and goddesses. The Parliament *embodies* this shift.

So why did I and about a dozen or so other Evangelicals attend? There are several reasons actually. As apologists, we need to know what it is the Parliament is trying to accomplish. Who are they, and what are they up to? The Parliament staff with whom I interacted via email, telephone, and some limited face-to-face contacts were quite pleasant and seemed sincere. Although wary of Evangelicals, they really appear to be interested in bringing about peaceful co-existence to the various people groups on the planet we all call home. In their document *Declaration Toward A Global Ethic & A Call to Our Guiding Institutions*," the section titled "Our Approach" declares:

The Parliament of the World's Religions seeks to promote interreligious harmony, rather than unity. The problem with seeking unity among religions is the risk of loss of the unique and precious character of each individual religious and spiritual tradition; this understanding is key to our framework.

Interreligious harmony, on the other hand, is an attainable and highly desirable goal. Such an approach respects, and is enriched by, the particularities of each tradition. Moreover, within each tradition are the resources (philosophical, theological and spiritual teachings and perspectives) that enable each to enter into respectful, appreciative and cooperative relationships with persons and communities of other traditions.⁸

Certainly, we all want cordial and "respectful ... relationships with persons and communities of other faith traditions." First of all, the Bible tells us that flesh and blood—human beings—are not the true enemy (Eph. 6:12), even though it may often seem that way. Our true enemies are powerful spiritual forces that often hold human beings captive to do their will (2 Timothy 2:26). Our neighbors, work mates, and other friends and acquaintances may be Hindu, Muslim, atheist, Mormon, Christian, Jehovah's Witness, as well as more exotic, in our view, religious and non-religious worldviews and practices. We want to get along with these people, practicing the all-American ideal of

"live and let live." We want the freedom to hold to our beliefs and practices without fear of reprisal, so fairness dictates that we extend the same right to those with whom we come in contact. We also want the opportunity to share and discuss our beliefs with others and to seek to understand their viewpoint as well. In short, we want to practice *true* tolerance.

Tolerance, as properly defined and practiced, assumes we don't agree with others, but we are willing to "tolerate" the discomfort that disagreement engenders. Past centuries have shown compulsory conversions are an evil endeavor, and forced conversions are not true conversions, in any case. And as Christians, we know it is not *our* job to convert anyone, but rather we simply present the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-4) as we have opportunity to do so. The Holy Spirit is the One Who convicts and converts (John 16:8).

True tolerance is necessary in almost all areas of life. We all have points of disagreement with others that extend far beyond the religious realm. Adults are expected to deal with differences of opinion in a mature way, without bringing harm to people with whom we disagree. If promoting *this* sort of mature tolerance was the agenda of the Parliament, we might think what the Parliament is attempting to do is a good thing. We hear of numerous wars and rumors of wars all over this planet, with many of them being due to religious differences. We know the kidnapping and killing of Christians by Muslims or killing of Muslims by Hindus, etc. makes the world a very dangerous and fearful place. Many in the world are sick of wars and tumult, and they cry out for peace and safety; which explains the popularity of the Parliament and its agenda in our world today.

One particular religious tradition is *not at all* sick of war and tumult, however, but rather gladly embraces it and hopes to force its will over the entire world at the point of the sword. Islam's bloody stampede continues unabated throughout much of the world, and the resulting bloodshed and chaos only makes the Parliament's solutions to conflict look like a far better alternative. Unfortunately, the tolerance promoted by the Parliament is a very different animal from the *true* tolerance we just outlined. The Parliament's tolerance is really an enforced unity based upon suppression of absolute truth. More on this later ...

A Tour Thru the Spiritual Marketplace

While wandering through the modern-day Areopagus, 9 which the Parliament called the "Exhibition Hall," I picked up a newsletter from Spiritual Directors International (SDI). It is a group who works at practicing the spiritual disciplines of "contemplative practice" and "deep listening." As I began looking over the lead article "Be Still: Awaken Your Heart," I decided to check out their website, where I read the "History of Spiritual Direction:"

Throughout human history, individuals have been inspired to accompany others seeking the Mystery that many name God. Spiritual direction has emerged in many contexts using language specific to particular cultural and spiritual traditions throughout history. The story of spiritual direction, expressed in the video below through music, word, and embodiment, helps seekers and spiritual companions appreciate the ancient tradition and emergent wisdom in spiritual direction. Understanding the deep roots of sacred listening encourages the wisdom of the past to guide the emerging wisdom of tomorrow.¹⁰

This religious Mysticism has already invaded the Church in recent years, under the name "Contemplative Prayer." It is as SDI point outs "emergent wisdom in spiritual direction" and so there is really little wonder why Emergents¹¹ such as Brian McLaren, Rob Bell, and others embrace it. There seems to be something in human beings that is attracted to the Mystical, Gnostic (secret knowledge), and experiential - and away from the life of the mind. Jesus gave as the greatest commandment:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. (Matthew 22:37)

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HAVE NOTHING
TO DO WITH
THE FRUITLESS
DEEDS OF
DARKNESS,
BUT RATHER
EXPOSE THEM.

~EPHESIANS 5:11~

"Worldview Boutique" Continued from page 3

The Greatest Commandment is all-encompassing and includes our emotions and affections, as well as a mind that is engaged in thinking about and understanding the things of God and the world around us. The mind is very important; not only does it give us understanding, but it also acts as a check on our easily deceived emotions. Good intentions guided by the instability and capriciousness of emotional experience can lead us into deception, spiritual, and even physical danger. Christians are in no way immune to deception; if they think they are, they are deceived! ©

Ye Olde Elephant Trick

Each of the religious groups who were presenting at the Parliament were doing so to persuade (Evangelize) other attendees to come over to their viewpoint or, at least, to accept their worldview claims as being on an equal footing with all other worldviews represented. The over-all agenda of the Parliament was to encourage the differing groups to *incorporate all other truth claims into one's own belief system*. The Jains¹² exhibit displayed the way to do this in the timeworn story of *The Elephant and the Blind Men*¹³:

Once upon a time, there lived six blind men in a village. One day the villagers told them, "Hey, there is an elephant in the village today."

They had no idea what an elephant is. They decided, "Even though we would not be able to see it, let us go and feel it anyway." All of them went where the elephant was. Every one of them touched the elephant.

"Hey, the elephant is a pillar," said the first man who touched his leg.

"Oh, no! It is like a rope," said the second man who touched the tail.

"No! It is like a thick branch of a tree," said the third man who touched the trunk of the elephant.

"It is like a big hand fan," said the fourth man who touched the ear of the elephant.

"It is like a huge wall," said the fifth man who touched the belly of the elephant.

"It is like a solid pipe," Said the sixth man who touched the tusk of the elephant.

They began to argue about the elephant and every one of them insisted that he was right. It looked like they were getting agitated. A wise man was passing by and he saw this. He stopped and asked them, "What is the matter?" They said, "We cannot agree to what the elephant is like." Each one of them told what he thought the elephant was like. The wise man calmly explained to them, "All of you are right. The reason every one of you is telling it differently is because each one of you touched a different part of the elephant. So, actually the elephant has all those features what you all said."

"Oh!" everyone said. There was no more fight. They felt happy that they were all right.

The moral of the story is that there may be some truth to what someone says. Sometimes we can see that truth and sometimes not because they may have different perspective which we may not agree to. So, rather than arguing like the blind men, we should say, "Maybe you have your reasons." This way we don't get in arguments. In Jainism, it is explained that truth can be stated in seven different ways. So, you can see how broad our religion is. It teaches us to be tolerant towards others for their viewpoints. This allows us to live in harmony with the people of different thinking. This is known as the Syadvada, Anekantvad, or the theory of Manifold Predictions.

On the surface, this story sounds like it *ought* to be right, because it sounds so *fair*. Americans love fair! Why should anyone have to be wrong? Can't everyone be *right*, so no one's feelings are hurt? In reality though, the old Elephant story is bogus.

Let's think about it: The storyteller is *sighted* so he knows what the elephant *truly* is, and that the blind men are *all* incorrectly describing the beast. Yet he does not tell them that, essentially leaving them in the dark! All of the blind men were absolutely *wrong!* An elephant is *not* a pillar, a rope, a thick branch of a tree, a big hand fan, a huge wall of a solid pipe. The sighted, supposedly "wise man" left them in their ignorance! He deceived them in order to stop the arguing. However, who was he to decide that it was in everyone's best interest to value short-term harmony over true understanding. Now, it may not matter *too much* in the big scheme of things if the blind men held on to their silly ideas about elephants. Nonetheless, it *really matters* for all eternity that people come to know the true nature of God! People need to know the truth about God!

Belief and Hate Speech

We have already pointed out the Parliament and its adherents take a very dim view of anyone claiming to know absolute truth. Today, there is an increasingly hypersensitive reaction to dogmatic truth claims—to the point of defining such claims as "hate speech." If you assert that Jesus IS the One and Only Truth, you are a "hater" and have committed a "hate crime" in the view of many.

One of the booths I visited was promoting Circle Sanctuary. A Circle Sanctuary is a Wiccan Church which claims to be the oldest 501c3 Wiccan church in the U.S. It was founded by Selena Fox, and its headquarters are in Wisconsin. The representative said they have a 200-acre preserve and the nation's first "green cemetery" (ecological correctness was very big at the Parliament). I asked if they allowed visitors; and with great excitement, she told me visitors are not only allowed, but also welcomed! She enthused over the many festivals and events in which visitors might like to observe or participate. I mentioned that I am an Evangelical Christian and wondered if I and, perhaps, some students or friends would be welcome to visit? She was visibly repulsed at

the idea and informed me "hate speech" isn't allowed. Why did she automatically connect Evangelicals with "hate speech?" It wasn't a very nice thing for her to say—it almost felt ... well ... hateful! ③ But being a very tolerant person, I decided to let the slur pass without comment. I asked her to define hate speech—is disagreement hateful? She did acknowledge that disagreement is not necessarily hateful, but asserted that Christians are always trying to evangelize people and are not honest. But, isn't evange-lism simply an attempt to persuade another person about something—in this case, their view of God? How is that different from Circle Sanctuary or other Wiccan and Pagan groups who are trying to persuade non-Wiccans and Pagans to embrace their views?

I did acknowledge that some Christians are not honest. But then again, some Pagans, Muslims, and Hindus are not honest either. Dishonesty is not a sin limited to any one worldview; it is a common failing of mankind. But she did have a point that should be addressed. Many Wiccans and Pagans have been raised in Christian churches. As they met Wiccans and Pagans in person, some discovered, like Keay Nigel, that what had been communicated by their church about Pagan religions was often false and/or cartoonish. Too many churches have uncritically accepted the information presented in such books as Satan Seller by Mike Warnke, Satan's Underground by Lauren Stratford, and other similar books. Mike Warnke claimed to have been a high priest of Satan. Turns out, Warnke was telling whoppers and really raking in the dough while he was at it. Stratford claimed to have been a victim of Satanic Ritual Abuse (SRA), which not only maligned Pagans, who were not in fact murdering babies in church basements, but set off a veritable conflagration of false accusations of so-called Satanic Ritual Abuse against Christian parents, teachers, siblings, and church leaders. If you'd like more information on the topic of false accusations of "Satanic Ritual Abuse" that raged for a decade or more, within the Church as well as in secular venues, please see the Summer/Fall 2001 issue of the MCOI Journal. 15

We do have a bandwagon problem in the Church. We, unfortunately, give too much credence to people like Warnke and Stratford; and, lately, it's the people who claim to have been to heaven and back who are getting lots of attention in Christian circles. Too often, we don't critically check the veracity of their claims as carefully as we should, nor do we check their claims against biblical truth. If something sounds too fantastical to believe, it probably is! Then, the "bandwagon effect" takes over—we invite these popular teachers/story tellers into our pulpit or youth group, because we've heard how great they are from *other Christians and churches whom we trust to have vetted them*.

On the other hand (and there is always an other hand), though our youth are not in much danger of being sacrificed to the devil by their pastor in a church basement, they are in grave danger of being proPagandized into accepting Mystic and Occult practices by a dark pop-culture aimed right at them: Rock stars, Hollywood, television, and video games, etc. They must be warned, shown what the Bible has to say about suddenly ubiquitous Occult practices, and educated to the dangers of Occult involvement. Moreover, even though we might assume adult Christians would not be vulnerable to Mystic and the Occult practices, unfortunately, they *are*.

The key is for Church leaders to become very well educated about false religions, false teachings, cults, and the Occult. Then we can educate our lay people and youth well enough to protect them from the onslaughts to their faith that inevitably will come, as well as enable them to present to others the truth of Christianity, and to give good answers to people whose faith is wavering. There *are* good answers; we must get them into the minds and hands of fellow believers.

Representing Evangelicals

Evangelical representation at the Parliament was sparse, but there were a dozen or so of us who were there to talk, observe, and share the Gospel. Even though we might have been viewed a little bit like a skunk at a picnic, one Evangelical was allowed to present a session. My friend, Scott Matscherz, Ph.D., is a solid Evangelical and a member of the International Society of Christian Apologetics. He had submitted a breakout session titled "Hating Hate," which was accepted by the program committee. It was well attended. He carefully defined hate and gave examples of what most would agree are hate groups such as Westboro Baptist Church—the group who shows up at funerals with signs proclaiming, "God Hates Fags." He also spent time making a case for truth and the Law of Non-contradiction. Scott used sources from other religions as well as Christianity to make his case. One of the guotes concerned the Law of Non-contradiction. For those who are unfamiliar with the term, the Law of Non-contradiction—sometimes called "The First Principle" states:

 \dots contradictory statements cannot both be true in the same sense at the same time, e.g. the two propositions "A is B" and "A is not B" are mutually exclusive. 16

Scott quoted from the Persian philosopher, Avicenna, ¹⁷ on this "First Principle:"

Those who deny the first principle should be flogged or burned until they admit that it is not the same thing to be burned and not burned, or whipped and not whipped.¹⁸

As he finished the quote, someone in the audience blurted out, "Are you saying that truth must be correspondent and coherent?" Scott answered that he needed to finish his presentation, but he would be glad to discuss this issue afterward. At that point, the individual got up and, as he stormed out of the room, proclaimed, "I don't have to take this!" Nevertheless, in the main, Scott was given a fair hearing.

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Another session—"Evangelicals and Mormons Overcoming Hate Speech"—was a panel discussion. Two of the four panelists were Mormon (aka Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, LDS) representatives—Robert Millet and J.B. Hawes and two-Mark Maddix and Thomas Jay Oord-ostensibly represented "Evangelicals." Mark Maddix opened by giving his history of growing up in the Evangelical tradition and detailed his interest in participating in dialogue with Mormons. He informed us that he doesn't view "inspiration of Scripture" as most Evangelicals do, but rather, he believes Scripture is a big story of what God is doing in this history of salvation. In his desire to protect Mormonism from exclusion, he set up various straw-man* arguments. He tried to muddy the waters by outlining a number of differences in practices among Evangelicals. If he could show that Evangelicals don't agree on everything, then how could they fairly exclude Mormons (from being considered Christian) for their differences? It is true Evangelicalism has no Pope or hierarchy to demand uniformity; and Evangelical churches do not agree on what we might call "the mechanics" of the faith. For example, they differ on such things as how often to have Communion or the proper method of Baptism. However, Evangelicals across-the-board agree on essential doctrines of the faith such as the nature of God (the Deity of Christ, Doctrine of the Trinity, Incarnation of Christ), the nature of man, and the nature of salvation, etc. Indeed, if you leave these essential doctrines behind, you cannot be considered Evangelical. Mormonism denies all of these essential doctrines. One of our group asked Maddix if Evangelicals and Mormons teach the same Gospel, to which Maddix replied, "Yes." Thankfully, for the sake of those listening, J.B. Hawes answered the same question with a "No." Hawes is correct: Evangelicals and Mormons preach very different Gospels. Now, it may be that *Maddix* teaches the same works-based, "we-can-become-gods" gospel as the Mormon LDS church, but it is not true that Evangelicals and Mormons teach the same Gospel. Perhaps Evangelicals need to be involved in the Parliament, if for no other reason than to correctly represent biblical views in this marketplace of religious ideas.

Ambassadors for Christ

The stated purpose of the Parliament—to bring about peaceful co-existence among the world's religions—is, as we've noted, not necessarily a bad thing. Jesus does say in Matthew 5:9:

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

In Romans 12:18, the Apostle Paul writes:

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.

However, living peacefully with others doesn't mean sac-

rificing truth, as was case with the blind men and the elephant story. Rather, it is figuring out ways to live in peace with others in spite of our differences as far as it depends on us. As Christians, we cannot affirm all religions basically teach the same things, and all belief systems are equally true. We would have to deny our Lord to do so. Jesus said He IS "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (John 14:6), and there is no other "path" to God except through Him. This declaration is the very foundation of our faith, and we cannot negate it for the sake of getting along with others or even the lofty goal of peace on Earth. Jesus is famous for making politically incorrect truth claims. He went so far as to say that He "did not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matthew 10:34)—not that we should kill others because they don't share our faith, but because He, as THE TRUTH, divides us from all others. No wonder, then, biblical Christianity is seen as a great obstacle to those who are peddling complete religious unity—a one-world spirituality.

But, while it may not be pleasant to be judged as an obstacle, it can't be helped—we cannot water down the Gospel or present Christianity as "just another path" to God. The Apostle Paul wrote his letter to the Ephesians while he was in prison for boldly preaching the Gospel. Paul in Ephesians 6:19-20 asks for prayer:

... that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the Gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

The first-century Christians had come out of either Judaism or Paganism, and they well understood what Pagans believed and how they thought; so it was not difficult for them to explain to people the clear difference in Christ. The time we live in today is more like the first century than any time between then and now; but many Christians have little understanding of what they believe, much less, what others believe. Western culture has been moving away from Christianity for a long time now, and some in the Church are just drifting into Paganism right along with them. Some are unknowingly drifting away; but some—like the Emergents—know they are leaving the faith and, in their arrogance, they believe they are establishing a more-enlightened version of Christianity.

In the first century, Christianity was the new thing, but today Christianity is viewed as passé. The ancient false religions or "paths" are now the new thing, the exciting thing, and enticing for that reason. The Bible—the inspired Word of God—is disparaged as just a collection of fairy tales written by mere men, while the real fairy tales of Paganism are happily embraced.

Have It YOUR Way

Today, "faith" is far more democratic than it was in times past. People feel they can freely pick and choose what god they'd

like to follow; and if none appeals, they can just make up their own. I wouldn't be surprised if people could buy a "create-a-god kit" on Amazon[©], full of warm and fuzzy variations which one can just paste onto one's own personal god. Want "your god" to be 100% non-judgmental? Of course! Who wouldn't? How about a "cheerleader god" who will work really hard to build up your self-esteem? That's *very* popular these days! How about Hell? Ditch it! Obviously Hell was something made up so the Church could control the masses. Surely, "my god" wouldn't impose *that* punishment on anyone—or *any* punishment for that matter! What about sin? Are you kidding? Just do what you want; "my god" is cool with it! What if you feel like doing something that you just know deep down to be *wrong?* C'mon! "My god" made you *just the way you are!* Surely then, whatever you want to do is right! Celebrate it!

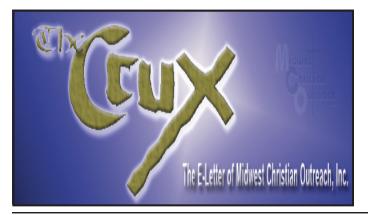
Here's a good test, friends: If "your god" agrees with everything *you* think, and everything *you* do, and changes as often as necessary to keep up with the times and *your* changing "values;" then you *know* who your god is!

Whether they know it or not, people need the true God, the real One, the One Who loves them so much that He gave His Son to die for their sins. In addition, people are just as much in need of the true Gospel today, which offers peace with God and life eternal if they will only believe the Gospel and call upon His name.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:20-21)

*A **Straw-man** is a form of argument and is an informal fallacy that gives the impression of refuting an opponent's argument, while actually refuting an argument that was not advanced by that opponent; or a by presenting a weak or imaginary argument that is intended to be easily defeated (misrepresentation of an opponent's argument).

All Bible quotes are from the ESV-English Standard Version of the Holy Bible.







L.L. (Don) & Joy Veinot are president and co-founder of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., a national apologetics ministry and mission to new religious movements based in Wonder Lake, IL. Don and Joy, his wife of 45 years, have been involved in discernment ministry as missionaries to New Religious Movements since 1987. Don is a frequent guest on various radio and television broadcasts including The John Ankerberg Show. In addition, Don is a staff researcher and writer for the Midwest Christian Outreach Journal, co-author of A Matter of Basic Principles: Bill Gothard and the Christian Life, and contributing author of Preserving Evangelical Unity: Welcoming Diversity in Non-Essentials, as well as articles written for the CRI Journal, PFO Quarterly Journal, Campus Life Magazine, Journal of the International Society of Christian Apologetics, Midwestern Journal of Theology and other periodicals. He was ordained to the ministry by West Suburban Community Church of

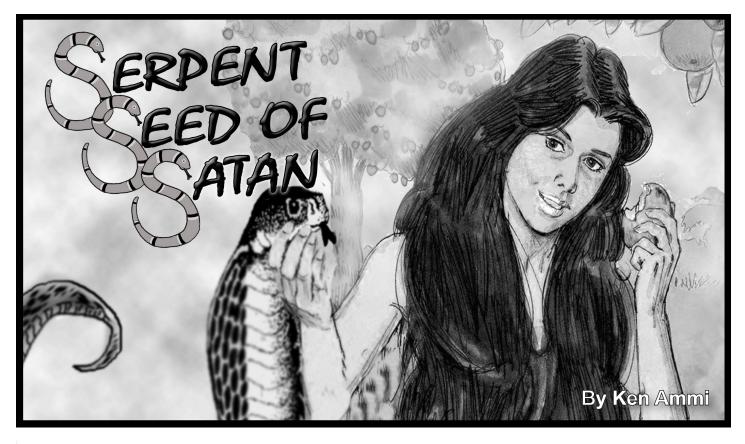
Lombard, IL at the Garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, Israel in March of 1997. Don is a charter member of ISCA (International Society of Christian Apologetics) and is also the current president of Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR), a consortium of counter cult/apologetic and discernment ministries from around the country.

ENDNOTES;

- 1 "After 13 Years, I'm Leaving Christianity," Keay Nigel, *HuffPost Religion*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/keay-nigel/after-13-years-im-leaving-christianity_b_8488624.html?ncid=fcbklnkushpmg00000063
- 2 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diana_Butler_Bass
- 3 "Oprah's new 'Belief' series shows how dramatically the nature of faith is shifting," Diana Butler Bass, *The Washington Post*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/10/18/oprahs-new-belief-series-shows-how-dramatically-the-nature-of-faith-is-shifting/
- 4 Keay Nigel, Op Cit.
- 5 Ihid
- **6** "City Harvest trial: Twists, turns and tears enough to fuel a Korean drama," Feng Zengkun, Singapore: *The Straits Times*; http://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/courts-crime/city-harvest-trial-twists-turns-and-tears-enough-to-fuel-a-korean-drama
- 7 Keay Nigel, Op Cit.
- **8** "Declaration Toward A Global Ethic & A Call to Out Guiding Institutions;" 2015 Parliament of the World's Religions, 70 E. Lake St., Ste. 205, Chicago, IL 60601, p 4
- **9** The events recorded in Acts 17:16-33 occurred in the Areopagus—an area in Athens where philosophy and religious debate and discussion took place
- **10** "History of Spiritual Direction, "SDIWorld, http://www.sdiworld.org/about-us/history-spiritual-direction
- 11 For those who may be unfamiliar with the term, *Emergents* are those who are in reality departing from the Christian faith but are keeping its name, while incorporating Mystical beliefs and practices into their newly formed belief-system. It is has pulled many former Evangelicals and churches into its orbit.
- 12 Jainism https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism
- 13 "The Elephant and the Blind Men"; http://www.jainworld.com/literature/story25.htm
- 14 https://www.circlesanctuary.org/
- **15** http://midwestchristianoutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/01sumfall.pdf
- **16** Law of Non-contradiction; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_of_non-contradiction
- 17 Avicenna, https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Avicenna
- **18** Ibid.

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

IPeter 3:15



ehold, I shew you a mystery;" Thus wrote the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:51, and it is the view of what this mystery is which fuels the alleged Serpent Seed of Satan Theory. It fuels both its identification and revelation for "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honour of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25:2, KJV). Serpent Seed of Satan Theorists are keen to promulgate something they consider to be a secret that actually has been "hidden in plain sight" since the beginning.

Other appeals to this word *mystery* come in the form of references to 1 Corinthians 13:2—which mentions the gift of being able to "understand all mysteries ..." and Matthew 13:11—where Christ tells the Apostles that they are given the ability "to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven ..." Yet, of course, just because there are mysteries and revelations does not necessarily mean the Serpent Seed of Satan Theory is one of these revealed mysteries or even true for that matter. This is a claim built upon the blank spaces of Scripture, and it gives its adherents a false feeling they know deeper things of God that others do not know.

But, perhaps we have gotten ahead of ourselves. For those who are unfamiliar with the Serpent Seed Doctrine, a brief explanation is in order. The basic claim is that Eve had sexual relations with the serpent in the Garden, and Cain is the result of that union—the seed of the serpent.

Our focus will be the theory itself and not its history nor its proponents.1 The Serpent Seed of Satan (hereinafter SSS) The-

ory proper, begins with The Fall into sin at Genesis three, and it is here we are told where the first mystery resides. The theory asserts the text of Genesis three is highly symbolic; historical and grammatical understanding is abandoned and is replaced with a mystical, mythical hermeneutic—a new template—whereby to interpret the rest of the Bible clear through to Jesus' parables.

Knowledge of Good and Evil

Let us consider relevant portions of the text interspersed with a SSS interpretation. Genesis chapter three begins with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden:

... the serpent ... was more subtle than any beast of the field ... said unto the woman, "Yea, hath God said, 'Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?' "And the woman said unto the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, 'Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.' "And the serpent said unto the woman, "Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." (Genesis 3:1-5)

The "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" (Genesis 2:17) in the "midst of the garden" (Genesis 3:3), SSS theorists would tell us represents Satan himself. The partaking of the fruit represents a forbidden sexual act engaged upon between Eve and Satan.

Thus, Eve is beguiled into engaging in the act as "... the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was

pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat ..." (Genesis 3:6a,b). Whether the serpent had the requisite physical attributes to engage in such a liaison is not really considered. The rest of this portion of the story begins to cause another problem for SSS theorists as it is likewise related that Eve "... gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat" (Genesis 3:6c). This would, in keeping with the logic of the SSS theory, mean that Adam also had sex with Satan by partaking of the same forbidden fruit.

In any case, SSS theorists begin to make their case at this point that due to this forbidden act "... the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; ..." (Genesis 3:7a) What, they would ask, does the recognition of being naked have to do with a literal tree, fruit and eating?

Well, the blame game ensues when "... LORD GOD called unto Adam, ..." (v.9). Adam replies that he was hiding because, "... I was afraid, because I was naked; ..." (v.10). God asks, "... Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" (v.11). Thus, Adam blames "..., The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, ..." (v.12), and Eve blames Satan, "..., The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat" (v.13)

God's curse of the serpent (most readily identified as Satan in Revelation 12:9 and 20:2) includes that there will henceforth be "... enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; ..." (v.15) which, according to the claim, means that since Eve's seed is literal, physical offspring so must be Satan's seed.

Stacking the Deck

Armed with little more than assertions, God's curses are said to add to the major *mysteries* which the SSS theory seeks to reveal, "... I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; ..." (v.16). This mystery is emphasized by asserting that the curses would otherwise violate the Bible's basic ethical law of "an eye for an eye" (Leviticus 24:20). How, we are asked to ponder, does literally eating a literal fruit result in increased pain in childbirth? The SSS theory explains this by claiming the curse is a perfect fit to the view that the tree, fruit and eating represent Satan and sex: a forbidden sexual act is being punished by increased pain in the birth which would result therefrom.

Of course, Adam was cursed as well, "... Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, ..." (v.17a), his curse relates to him personally and to the ground, "... cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In

the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; ..." (v v.17b-19a). The eye-for-an-eye aspect of this appears to be stated by God Himself as He concludes the curse by noting the reason is "... for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (v.19b).

As an ultimate result, Adam and Eve are driven out of the Garden of Eden (which was east of Eden itself), and God placed Cherubim and a flaming sword to keep them from returning.

Thus, the SSS theory asserts Eve had sex with Satan, their offspring was Cain (who is the literal son of Satan) whose offspring carry within them Satanic genetics—Satan's seed-line or blood-line. Thus, SSS posits humanity consists of descendants of Adam and Eve and descendants of Satan and Eve.

But who are the SSS? Well, this depends upon the particular prejudice, as it were, of the SSS theorist who decides to interpret who is who. The dichotomous enmity may be between the world's oppressive leaders vs. the hoi polloi, it may be the predetermined saved vs. the predetermined lost, it may be the "true Jews" (which British-Israelites, Anglo-Israelites, etc. falsely claim to be) vs. the false Jews who claim they are the true Jews, etc. SSS theorists conveniently place themselves within the lineage of Adam's seed; and anyone whom they are against is in Satan's spawn.

What is Known

The Scriptures do not give us extensive knowledge about Adam and Eve, which is all the more reason to pay attention to what we *are* told. Ultimately, the plain reading of the text explains why they were cursed in the manner that they were. As for Adam, "... the LORD GOD took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15). As for Eve, "... she was the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20b). Thus, their curses are specifically related to that which the text detailed about them, pertaining to their long-term activities.

Adam's pre-fall hobby, as it were, was "... to dress it and to keep" (Genesis 2:15) the Garden, but this then turns into hard labor since post-Fall "... in sorrow shalt thou eat of it ... In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat ..." (Genesis 3:17c &19a) because now "... cursed is the ground... Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth ..." (v v.17b & 18a). The ground once simply produced for Adam, but he would now have to work it. Eve was "... the mother of all living" (v.20b) thus, in that capacity, the LORD would "... greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; ..." (v.16a)

The way the punishment fits the crime is that the punishment correlates, directly, to that which was to be each one's specified task; working land and childbearing, respectively.

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Moreover, we are told Adam and Eve share the following in common, "... a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: ..." then "... they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). This may be part of why the curse upon Eve is "... thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:16c) since she got him to eat the fruit, as in taking the lead, "And unto Adam he said, 'Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, ..." (v.17a) thus, Adam was to take the lead since Eve had been beguiled (Genesis 3:16-17, cf. 1 Tim. 2:14).

The information that Cherubim were placed to guard the way to the Garden is rather telling, because the fact is: Satan is not an Angel, but rather he is a Cherub (Ezekiel 28:14). Angels and Cherubim are different categories of being; they look different and perform different job functions. Angels look like human males, have no wings and are, as the term angel denotes, messengers (such as in the evangel—the good news/message). Cherubim have four wings, four faces, cow-like hoofs and perform guardian duties (around God's throne, at the Garden's entrance, etc. see, Ezekiel chapters 1 and 10). One view about the Nephilim of Genesis 6 is that fallen Angels married and birthed offspring with human women and may be what is in view in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. Yet, we have no indication whatsoever that Satan was involved and the case appears to be that he does not even possess the, shall we say, equipment that would make such copulation possible. We are not given specifics about the key portion of Cherubim's anatomy, but they are different from Angels and humans and may not be conducive to such physical activities. Thus, such copulation with Eve (not to mention with Adam) may have been impossible.

But what of Cain's birth and actions? This is another major *mystery* which SSS theorists seek to uncover. The first portion of Genesis 4:1 states, "And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain ..." which is straightforward enough to conclude, without having to delve into etymological minutia, that Adam knew (had sexual relation with) Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare (gave birth to) Cain.

Some make an issue of the KJV's grammar within this verse, such as reading into the semicolon (so that "Adam knew Eve his wife" is a separate thought from "and she conceived, and bare Cain"), and within the Hebrew of Eve's reference to having "... gotten a man from the LORD" (the last portion of Genesis 4:1) when Cain is supposed to have been gotten from Adam.²

Genealogy

A related issue is that when "... the generations of Adam ..." are listed in Genesis 5, Cain is not noted therein because, or so we are told, he is not of Adam's seed but Satan's. Moreover,

Genesis 5:3 states, "... Adam ... begat a son in his own likeness, and after his image; and called his name Seth: ..." supposedly in counter distinction of Cain, who was not in Adam's own likeness and image. We are also told that Cain's actions—such as murdering Abel—derive from his Satanic genetics; because if he was born from Adam and Eve, he would not have followed such a course of action.

There is certainly a lot to unpack within these claims. All in all, entirely too much is made of the terminology involved in the announcement of childrens' births. After all, Genesis 4:17 states, in like manner to Adam and Eve becoming the parents of Cain, that "... Cain knew his wife; and she conceived, and bare Enoch:"

The SSS bottom line seems to be that including Seth and excluding Cain from the generations of Adam is that the genealogy ultimately results in a line from Adam and Eve to the Messiah Jesus. In fact, Galatians 3:16 is very specific about this point in noting, "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." There are three points of consideration here. First, as per Genesis 4:16, Cain moved away from Adam and Eve and began his own family-lineage: "And Cain went out from the presence of the LORD, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden." Second, while it is true Cain is not named as a child of Adam in Genesis 5, neither is Abel named. If the lack of mentioning Cain means he is the offspring of the serpent, then it would also mean that Abel (and the "sons and daughters" of Adam alluded to in Genesis 5:4) is the offspring of the serpent. Third, the lineage in Genesis 5 takes the reader from Adam to the three sons of Noah; and it may come as a surprise, but Cain is neither the father or son of Seth and so would not appear in that line.

As a rhetorical question: If Cain sinned as a direct result of having Satanic genetics why, pray tell, did Adam and Eve sin as they were direct creations of God Himself?

The ultimate biblical answer to Cain's actions as well as all claims to hidden references to the SSS (including within Jesus' parables) is the same; and that is what we will now focus upon and emphasize. Adam and Eve's curses have been elucidated and demonstrated to be not mysterious. The genealogy is clear and understandable. There is no need to invent and insert the SSS as a supposed explanation or to appeal to it with regards to Cain's absence from Adam's genealogy.

All Things Considered

The parables of Jesus relevant to our discussion are found in Matthew 13, 23 and John 8. But first, let us consider 1 John 3 which makes it clear that Cain was, indeed, of that wicked one:

Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for

his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. (1 John 3:9-12)

Take a moment to consider the contextual reason given for Cain being a child of that wicked one—the devil. Note that the Bible's pattern is that the issue with the "children of the devil," (v.10) by any other name, is not genetics, but rather it is actions. In this case, they are "... whosoever doeth not righteousness ... neither he that loveth not his brother" (v.10) and to top it off, specific reference is made to Genesis and that which "... ye heard from the beginning, ..." (v.11) which is that Cain "... was of that wicked one, ..." (v.12) but why? "... Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous" (v.12). Thus, the issue was Cain's actions— his works and not his genetics. Let us now consider the parables with this pattern in mind.

The first parable is found in Matthew 13:3-23:

Behold, a sower went forth to sow; And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matthew 13:3-9)

The Apostles asked Jesus, "... Why speakest thou unto them in parables?" (v.10) and He replied "... Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given." (v.11)

After some discussion, Jesus explains the parable:

Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. When any one <u>heareth</u> the word of the kingdom, and <u>understandeth</u> it not, then cometh the wicked one, and <u>catcheth away</u> that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. (v.18-19)

But he that <u>received</u> the seed into stony places, the same is he that <u>heareth</u> the word, and anon with joy <u>receiveth</u> it; Yet hath he not root in himself, but <u>dureth</u> for a while: for when tribulation or persecution

ariseth because of the word, by and by he is <u>offended</u>. He also that <u>received</u> seed among the thorns is he that <u>heareth</u> the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he <u>becometh</u> <u>unfruitful</u>. (v.20-22)

But he that <u>received</u> seed into the good ground is he that <u>heareth</u> the word, and <u>understandeth</u> it; which also <u>beareth</u> fruit, and <u>bringeth</u> forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. (v.23)

To reiterate the key terms emphasized within the parable: This was about those who heareth, understandeth, received, dureth, offended, becometh unfruitful, beareth and bringeth. Moreover, "... the wicked one ... catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. ..." (v.19) There is no genetic blood-line/seed-line in view here. Also, those who fail to produce fail to do so due to "... tribulation or persecution ... because of the word, ..." (v.21) and "... the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches ..." (v.22) and not genetics.

Jesus also tells another parable in Matthew 13:24-43:

... The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? (v.24-28)

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn. (v.29-30)

We are then told:

All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. (v.34-35)

SSS theorists appeal to this statement and insert their SSS concept of "... things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (v.35c). Yet, the disciples specifically ask Jesus to elucidate "the parable of the tares of the field":

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He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; ... (v.37-38)

Note the juxtaposition between the "children of the kingdom" and "the children of the wicked one." Jesus continues with:

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (v.39-43)

One must be careful when dealing with the issue of two blood-lines/seed-lines as the claim could be made there are two lines based on genetics; or there are two lines based on actions—on sin and on rebellion (which is the actual biblical point).

The parable in Matthew 23:2-39:

Matthew 23 also seems promising to SSS theorists as it does refer to the "child of hell" (v.15) as those being "serpents ... generation of vipers" (v.33) who "kill and crucify ... scourge ... and persecute ... prophets, and wise men, and scribes" (v.34):

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works [actions]: for they say, and do not [hypocrisy]. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers [lack of good works]. (v.2-4)

But all their works [actions] they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts [seeking honor], and the chief seats in the synagogues [seeking honor], and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi [seeking honor]. (v.5-7)

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. (v.8-10)

But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself [they did not serve but exalted themselves] shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (v.11-12)

But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, <u>hypocrites</u> [hypocritical actions]! for ye <u>shut up the kingdom of heaven</u> against men: for ye <u>neither go in yourselves</u>, <u>neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in</u> [action as hinderers]. (v.13)

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, <u>hypocrites</u>! for ye <u>devour widows' houses</u> [action of taking rather than giving], and for a <u>pretence make long prayer</u> [action of showing off]: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation. (v.14)

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves [clearly, they are not changing peoples' genetics]. (v.15)

Woe unto you, ye <u>blind guides</u> [they presume to guide but are blind], which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor! Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold? And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. (v.16-18)

Ye <u>fools</u> and <u>blind</u> [they are foolish]: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift? Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, <u>hypocrites!</u> for ye <u>pay tithe</u> of mint and anise and cummin, and have <u>omitted the weightier matters of the law</u> [action towards fulfilling small matters only], <u>judgment</u>, <u>mercy</u>, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Ye <u>blind guides</u>, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. (v.19-24)

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, <u>hypocrites</u>! for ye make <u>clean the outside</u> of the cup and of the platter, but <u>within</u> they are <u>full of extortion and excess</u>. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. (v.25-26)

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, <u>hypocrites</u>! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed <u>appear</u> beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrity and iniquity [hypocritical actions make them appear to be that which they are not] (v.27-28).

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, <u>hypocrites</u>! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. (v.29-30)

Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that <u>ye are</u> the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of <u>your fathers</u>. [Their fathers were not said to have had Satanic genetics, but they were those who killed the prophets]. (v.31-32)

<u>Ye serpents</u>, <u>ye generation of vipers</u> [thus, this has nothing to do with genetics], how can ye escape the damnation of hell? (v.33)

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. (v.34-35)

Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! (v.36-37)

Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. (v.38-39)

The repetitious emphasis is not that sinful actions are the result of being a child of the wicked one, of the devil, of hell; but that the actions result in one being accounted as being such.

The last parable to consider is within John 8:

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye <u>continue in my word</u>, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall <u>know the truth</u>, and the truth shall make you free. (v.31-32)

They answered him, We be <u>Abraham's seed</u>, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? (v.33)

Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you,

Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (v.34-36)

I know that <u>ye are Abraham's seed</u>; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with my Father: and ye do that which ye have seen with your father. (v.37-38)

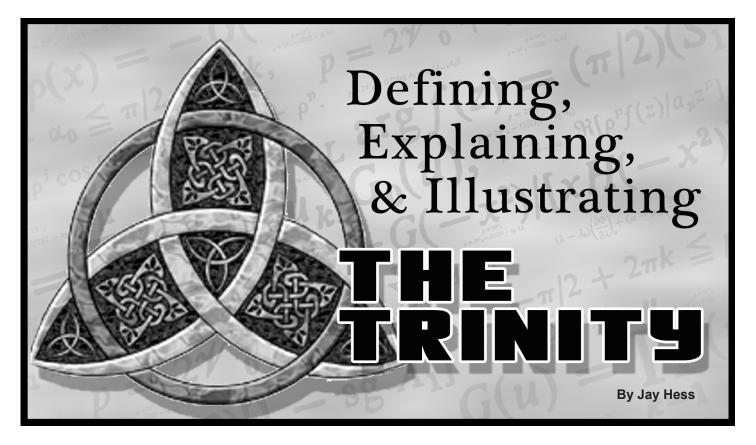
They answered and said unto him, <u>Abraham is our father</u>. Jesus saith unto them, If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham. But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham. Ye do the deeds of your father. Then said they to him, We be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God. Jesus said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would <u>love</u> me: for I proceeded forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me. Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. (v.39-43)

Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it. And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convinceth me of sin? And if I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. (v.44-47)

Then answered the Jews, and said unto him, Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil? Jesus answered, I have not a devil; but I honour my Father, and ye do dishonour me. And I seek not mine own glory: there is one that seeketh and judgeth. Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death. (v.48-41)

From here the discussion in the text continues regarding whether Jesus is from God, or has a devil, etc. The fact that this is about actions and not genetics explains how it could be that the Jews, of which Jesus was one, stated that they are "Abraham's seed" (v.33) and that "Abraham is our father" (v.39) why Jesus affirmed their genealogical ancestry, "ye are Abraham's seed" (v.37) but also stated, "Ye are of your father the devil:" (v.44) their genetics are Abraham's but their actions were devilish. This is why the action terms were emphasized above: "continue in my word ... know the truth ... committeth sin ... abideth ... the deeds ... love ... lusts ... ye will do ... murderer ... liar ... honour ... dishonor."

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n my personal exploration of the Doctrine of the Trinity as described in Scripture, I found it to be the most complex doctrine I have ever studied. I was raised a Jehovah's Witness (JW, student of Watchtower Bible and Tract Society*, aka WTBTS) and was in that false belief-system for over 23 years. Although the JWs are opposed to the Doctrine of the Trinity, I thought I understood it from what the WTBTS taught in their publications and from my discussions with mainstream Christians when going door-to-door with the WTBTS's message. After being expelled from the JWs for worshiping Jesus, I re-examined the doctrine. After much research and examining over 800 Bible verses, I became convinced of the classic Trinity Doctrine. I consider the Doctrine of the Trinity to be foundational but not essential to understand.

Since the doctrine is so comprehensive, I will endeavor to explain it using far fewer than 800 verses. To explain it to non-Trinitarians—especially to the JWs—and to demonstrate it in Scripture, I find it can be done with somewhere around 20 verses to support the definition and 5 verses to help in understanding it. That is what I will do here. Remember, this is not meant to prove the doctrine beyond all question, but rather it is to define it, to show where it is clearly revealed in Scripture, and to make it understandable.

Because there is so much confusion about the Trinity, I wish to first comment on what the Trinity is not. The Trinity is NOT Modalism, also known as Oneness Theology. That is a very different doctrine; and if you wish to understand that better, you can contact groups holding that belief like the United Pentecostal Church or the Apostolic Pentecostal Church. These groups believe Jesus is identically the same entity as God who changes the mode (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) in which he interacts with mankind, which is an idea that Trinitarians reject. This doctrine is attacked—but not by its name, Modalism—by the WTBTS in their 1984 brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?* pages 16-17, which is now out of print.

Theologians often prefer short definitions, but the words are often loaded with theological meaning. They use the term *God* not as meaning a person but as meaning a nature. I found this confusing when I first heard it, so I prefer using the term *Godness* and avoiding the word *God* altogether. So to avoid misunderstandings, I will start with a longer and more precise definition; and then I will support each part of the definition with Bible Scriptures.

DEFINITION:

In the One Creator are three, distinct testifiers: Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Who each equally and uniquely possesses Godness.

This definition will help identify the differences between mainstream Christianity and other groups such as the Oneness Pentecostals, the JWs, and the Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, aka LDS) who all deny the Doctrine of the Trinity.

There is a second part to this definition we will consider, because Trinitarians fall into two categories. The majority

view among Evangelical theologians is known as the Complementarian View¹ and the minority view is known as the Egalitarian View.² This additional part of the definition gives the Complementarian View.

DEFINITION, PART 2:

The Son and the Holy Spirit are eternally subordinate to the Father.

To support this two-part definition, we now turn to some Bible passages (all from the *ESV – English Standard Version*).

There is only One Creator

Thus says the LORD [YHWH], your Redeemer, who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD [YHWH], who made all things, who alone stretched out the heavens, who spread out the earth by myself," (Isaiah 44:24, also see Acts 17:24,26)

This One Creator includes the Father, Son and Spirit

1) The Father is Creator

Have we not all <u>one Father</u>? Has not <u>one God created</u> <u>us</u>? ... (Malachi 2:10)

2) The Son is Creator

Compare Psalm 102:25-27 with Hebrews 1:10-12

²⁵Of old <u>you laid the foundation of the earth</u>, and <u>the heavens are the work of your hands</u>. ²⁶They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, ²⁷but you are the same, and your years have no end." (Psalm 102:25-27)

This O.T. passage is quoted in Hebrews 1:10-12:

10 And, "You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; 11 they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, 12 like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will have no end."

Notice Hebrews 1:10 adds the reference to "Lord," while Psalm 102:25 does not. This is because the N.T. Greek text of Hebrews 1:10 follows the O.T. Greek Septuagint (LXX) which does add the specific reference "Lord." From the context of Psalm 102, this "Lord" must be YHWH/Jehovah (as seen in vss. 12, 21, 22). Carrying this forward to Hebrews chapter one, who then is the "Lord" in Hebrews 1:10? Is it YHWH? Since there is only one Creator, it would seem logical that it is.

Does the context of Hebrews chapter one give a clue as to who this "*Lord*" is in verse 10? Beginning in verse 5, there are a number of O.T. verses applied to the Son of God, and this continues through to verse 13. These applications to the Son are in verses 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13; the exception is verse 7, where it specifically states it is about angels. Therefore, what

is said in Psalm 102 about YHWH laying the foundation of the earth and the heavens being the work of his hands is applied to Jesus in Hebrews 1. There is no distinction made between YHWH the *designer* and Jesus the *builder* as typically claimed by most JWs. Both Psalm 102:25-27 and Hebrews 1:10-12 are about the builder who built the universe with his own hands; and in the O.T., this is the one Creator identified as being YHWH/ Jehovah (also see Isaiah 45:12).

3) The Spirit is Creator

The <u>Spirit of God has made me</u>, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. (Job 33:4)

When you send forth your Spirit, they are created, and you renew the face of the ground. (Psalm 104:30)

Thus says God, the LORD [YHWH], who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it. (Isaiah 42:5)

There are three distinct testifiers: Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The next part of the definition says there "... are three distinct testifiers: Father, Son and Holy Spirit." This part of the definition does not say separate, but rather it says distinct. Theologians use the term distinct rather than separate because of the implications of the term separate. In Mark 10:9, the concept of the term separate (the act of dividing one unit into two detached units) is shown to be synonymous with divorce and implies the relationship between two individuals is damaged. So if we wish to say a married couple is composed of two *separate* persons with an undamaged relationship, then we prefer to use the word distinct rather than separate. Since we hold that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have a perfect, interrelated relationship (see John 17:11, 20-23), then distinct is the right word to communicate there are multiple persons with a perfect relationship. We also do not say the persons are different since that, too, might imply the Father is of one kind of thing while the Son is of another kind. However, as we will see below, the evidence shows the Father and Son both have Godness, and thus, they are not different, but rather, they are distinct.

Further, as we shall see, the three persons are *testifiers* (I prefer this over the term *person*). *Testifier* is a biblical term and indicates *a person who is capable of observing reality and stating what is and is not true*. A *testifier* has a mind and is capable of individual actions.

Under the Law of Moses, if someone is accused of a crime, two or three testifiers are required to give individual intelligent testimony. One testifier is not enough:

A single witness shall not suffice against a person for any crime or for any wrong in connection with any offense that he has committed. Only on the evidence of two

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witnesses or of three witnesses shall a charge be established. (Deuteronomy 19:15)

If someone is called upon to testify in a court and brings a puppet and makes it appear to speak, no one would accept the puppet's voice as a distinct testifier. The testimony is invalid. Thus, the biblical term *testifier* captures the idea we are looking for when we use the word *person*.

So, what is the evidence that the three—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—are each a testifier distinct from the others? You might think this is obvious; but to non-Trinitarians such as Modalists (who believe all three entities are the same person) or to the JWs and Binitarians³ (who believe that the Spirit is not a distinct testifier), this is not clear at all.

¹³So the Pharisees said to him, "You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true." ¹⁴Jesus answered, "Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, ... ¹⁵You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. ¹⁶Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me. ¹⁷In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. ¹⁸I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me." (John 8:13-18)

The Pharisees believed Jesus was alone in His testimony and, therefore, according to Israelite Law, His testimony was not credible. Jesus then said in verse 16 that He was not alone for the Father Who sent Him was also with Him. Then He described His connection with His Father as that of two distinct witness bearers ("two people" in this translation: ESV). If the Father and the Son were the same person, the same testifier, then Jesus would have been alone, and His testimony would have been invalid under Israelite Law. For Trinitarians, this is solid evidence the Father and Son are two distinct testifiers.

¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ... ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying," [then follows a quote from Jeremiah 31:33] (Hebrews 10:12-15)

The O.T. Hebrew version of Jeremiah 31:33 reads:

"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD [YHWH]: ...

In Hebrews 10:12, it clearly mentions "Christ" Who sits at the right hand of another person—here identified as "God." This is an O.T. reference to Psalm 110:1 where the Lord Jesus Christ is described as sitting at the right hand of YHWH. This same verse is explained in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 by Paul who identifies the other person on the throne as the "Father."

Then, notice in Hebrews 10:15 it says, "the Holy Spirit also

bears witness to us." The word "also" (Greek kai) implies this is introducing a new entity—the third in the immediate context—and is a testifier other than "Christ" (Hebrews 10:12) and other than "God" (Hebrews 10:12 - Whom we know as the Father from 1 Corinthians 15:2). This Holy Spirit is said to be the testifier (or witness bearer) Who "bears witness" in Jeremiah 31:33. But that text specifically says the speaker is YHWH. If one were to suppose the Holy Spirit Who authored Jeremiah 31 is identical to the throne's occupant "God" in Hebrews 10:12, then why not use the same terminology God in verse 15? This leads Trinitarians to conclude that God, the Father, (the throne's occupant in verse 13 and in 1 Corinthians 15:24) is distinct from the Son, Jesus Christ (in verses 12 and 13), Who are both distinct from the testifier, YHWH the Holy Spirit (in verse 15).

Each testifier equally possesses Godness

The next part of the definition claims that each of the three testifiers equally possesses *Godness*. What is *Godness*? I do not use the typical term *deity*, because this term no longer has precision and clarity in our culture and this term could potentially invoke thoughts of Hindu deities. By *Godness*, I mean *the nature of God as found in the Bible*. Trinitarians claim it is the *nature* of God that is equally possessed by the three testifiers: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

1) The Father has Godness

The N.T. references "God the Father" about 19 times. Here are examples:

²⁷Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him <u>God the Father</u> has set his seal. ... ⁴⁵It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me. (John 6:27, 45)

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from <u>God our Father</u> and the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 1:7)

2) The Son has Godness

¹Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:1-3)

From verse 3 it says of the Son, "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power." This phrase, especially the reference to "the exact imprint of his nature" convinces Trinitarians the Son has the exact nature of God, what I am calling Godness.

³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:3-7)

Paul is asking the Philippian Christians to adopt the humble servant attitude they knew Jesus had and apply it to their relationships with others. This attitude comes from recognizing Jesus existed in the "form of God," but He behaved as though He did not. Even though He had this "form," He still did not exploit it—counter to humility—as the Philippians were doing. The Philippian Christians all had the same human form and were living counter to humility. They were living as though their shared "form" entitled them to an attitude of equality among persons with the same "form"—humanity. Paul asks them to abandon that attitude in order to emulate Jesus Who had the same "form" of God—Godness, yet He did not behave as though that "form" entitled Him to equality with God. Instead, He emptied Himself of his God-privileges that came with being in the "form of God," took on the "form of a servant," and was born in the likeness of humanity ("men"). Did Jesus truly possess the likeness or form of humanity? Yes. Therefore, He must have truly possessed the likeness or form of God—Godness.

²He [Jesus] was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (John 1:2, 3)

On the top of a piece of paper, write: "All things." Under that make three columns side-by-side: At the top of the first column write: "All things that were not created, they always existed." At the top of the second column write: "All things created (without agency of Jesus)." At the top of the third column write: "All things created (with the agency of Jesus)."

not created, created without created with always existed agency of Jesus agency of Jesus

Now list things like: The Father, the Holy Spirit, angels, stars, humans under the appropriate columns. Lastly, find the appropriate column for Jesus. However, note we learn from John 1:3 that there cannot be anything in the column that says, "All things created (without agency of Jesus)." Jesus also cannot be listed in the column "All things created with the agency of Jesus," because Jesus could not create Himself. Therefore, Jesus was not made and is under the same column with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The above three passages support the case that the Father and the Son both have the *nature* or *form* of *Godness*.

3) The Spirit has Godness

The Holy Spirit is identified in the Bible as being YHWH (as we saw above in Hebrews 1:15) and elsewhere as "*God.*"

³But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back for yourself part of the proceeds of the land? ⁴While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? Why is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to man but to God. (Acts 5:3-4)

Peter claims Ananias has lied to the Holy Spirit, and this is lying to God.

how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the <u>eternal Spirit</u> offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9:14)

Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice to God through the "eternal" Spirit. The Holy Spirit is eternal, which is an attribute of Godness. (Also see 2 Peter 1:21; John 4:24; 1 Cor. 3:16.)

Each testifier uniquely possesses Godness

If any person other than the Father, Son and Holy Spirit has *Godness*, then our definition is invalid. So, do angels have Godness?

⁸There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours. ... ¹⁰For you are great and do wondrous things; you alone are God. (Psalm 86:8, 10)

⁵Let the heavens praise your wonders, O LORD [YHWH], your faithfulness in the assembly of the holy ones! ⁶For who in the skies can be compared to the LORD [YHWH]? Who among the heavenly beings is like the LORD [YHWH], ⁷a God greatly to be feared in the council of the holy ones, and awesome above all who are around him? (Psalm 89:5-7)

Remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, (Isaiah 46:9)

From these three passages it is clear no angel, no heavenly creature is like God. None of them have *Godness*. Putting the previous together, we have this definition:

In the One Creator are three distinct testifiers: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Who each equally and uniquely possesses Godness.

If I encounter anyone who has a disagreement with the Doctrine of the Trinity, I have them identify with what part of this definition they disagree, and then we examine the supporting Scriptures.

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Addendum to the above definition

Within the Evangelical Trinitarian camp are two views: Egalitarian and Complementarian views. The Complementarian View is the majority view among Evangelical scholars. This view holds that the Father is the final-decision-maker and has the highest rank and authority over the other two testifiers. The other two testifiers are eternally subordinate. This is also sometimes referred to in scholarly literature as "the eternal subordination of the Son." In contrast, the Egalitarian View holds that the Son is *temporarily* subordinate to the Father and only as part of the Plan of Redemption. If you present the Complementarian View to a JW, you will meet with much less resistance. Therefore, if you hold to the Egalitarian View, I recommend that you at least mention the Complementarian View. This is the reason for my addendum to the previous definition.

ADDENDUM TO DEFINITION:

The Son and the Holy Spirit are eternally subordinate to the Father

If you wish to compare these two views, you can listen to a debate on the internet that was held on October 9, 2008. It was over two-hours long and involved four seminary professors—two supporting each view. Each professor either was or had been a professor at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School. You can find this debate on the internet by searching for "TEDS Trinity debate audio Ware" (one of the debaters was Dr. Bruce Ware).

A typical verse used to support the Complementarian View is:

When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:28)

How can three persons be one?

In what biblical sense does one, plus one, plus one truly equal one? Is there a biblical illustration to make this easier to understand?

I am not in favor of the non-biblical illustrations. They may be easy to use and appealing, such as the water illustration—water is solid (ice), liquid (water) and gas (steam), but I do not recommend any of them. They do not offer a precise explanation of what we mean. The water illustration is somewhat close; because in all three forms, the water has the same *nature*—that of water—but functions differently.

There is another illustration that is definitely not Trinitarian. This illustration says, "I am a father, because I have children. I am a husband, because I have a wife. I am a son, because I have a father. But I am not three persons; I am only one." This does not illustrate the Trinity; it illustrates Modalism.

Illustrating the Trinity with social relationships

If you can understand Adam and Eve, you can understand the Trinity. Let's read about Adam and Eve in the Garden.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. (Genesis 2:24)

Here the Bible describes something that is to be understood by all: Two persons can become one. One person plus another person can become one flesh.

¹This is the book of the generations of Adam. When God created man, he made him in the likeness of God. ²Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man when they were created. (Genesis 5:1-2)

The text says, "When God created man, he made him;" how many persons does this say God created? How many is this? This is one specific person, whom we know as Adam. Then in the rest of the verse it says, "Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them Man." To whom does this "Man" refer? Humanity, the nature—Humanness—possessed by the two persons God created. How many make up this "Man?" Two! There were two persons here called "Man." Is this concept borrowed from pagan ideas or from Greek philosophy? No, this is found in the beginning of the Bible! No one inserted this to support the Doctrine of the Trinity. In Genesis 5:1, the term man identifies a single person; but in verse two, the term man refers to a nature. Remember this as we continue; it is a key concept.

Now a little bit more about Adam and Eve and marriage:

6"But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.'7'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, 8 and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two but one flesh. 9What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Mark 10:6-9; also Matthew 19:4-6)

This is talking about the first couple, and Jesus said they were no longer two. What did Jesus mean when he said, "they are no longer two?" He meant they were two, but then they became one. They started out as two what? Did He mean they were two persons, and now they are no longer two persons but one person? That does not seem right since they still look like two persons. So apparently, this does not mean they are now one person. So what was it that had twoness before, and then became one through marriage?

This passage is talking about the marriage relationship. Before my son was married, I could talk to him as a single person. We could arrange to do things, and he did not have to consult with anyone. The same was true of his fiancée. Anyone could deal with her as a single person, and she would relate to them. However, once they were married, the relationship between my son and me changed. If I wanted to arrange to do something with my son, he would consult his wife. My relationship with my son

now necessarily included his wife. Before their marriage, they were two independent persons, each having a distinct relationship with all others. But after their marriage, they no longer were two independent persons with separate relationships; they were now a single relational unit whom all others must recognize. To relate to one person, you must also relate to the other. The two persons with separate relationships, become one joined relationship—a social unit. Outsiders must now view them and relate to them as a single entity. It is in this context that Jesus said, "What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Mark 10:9)

So one relationship plus another relationship equals one merged relationship. One plus one equals one. Is this pagan arithmetic? This is Jesus' arithmetic! I think this is something simple enough that a child can understand it, and it is biblical.

So in the Garden, Adam and Eve became one thing—one flesh. First of all, they shared the same *nature—humanness*. They were both human. Eve was genetically related to Adam since she was made from his rib. Eve was not more or less human than Adam was. This kind of unity based on *nature* (*ontology*⁴) is called an "ontological unity." Secondly, they were joined as one in a special relationship that went beyond their shared *human nature—humanness*, and this special relationship required all others to relate to them as a single entity. This was a "social unity." This is the illustration I prefer, and it is a biblical illustration

Let's explore this illustration and see how it can be adapted to explain the Trinity. Consider this saying: "In the garden was the woman, the woman was with the man, and the woman was Man."

Do you recall Genesis 5:1, 2? God made them "*Man?*" Do you understand what the above sentence is saying? Do you see how in the light of Genesis 5:1, 2 this is true?

But if I reword this to say, "... the woman was <u>a</u> Man," would it still be true? No, because the woman was not a man, she was a woman. She was to become "one flesh" with this man and be in a special merged relationship.

What if I reword this to say "... the woman was the Man," meaning the same man she was with? Would that still be true? That sentence does not even make sense. How could she be the same identical person with whom she also was?

So this phrase does not work with either "the woman was <u>a</u> man" nor with "the woman was <u>the</u> man." This only makes sense if we say, "the woman was Man," that is, she was man by nature—humanness and was man by a special united relationship with the man.

Let's build on this illustration by considering another verse that is a favorite of the JWs:

"You are my witnesses," declares the LORD (YHWH), "and my servant whom I have chosen, ..." (Isaiah 43:10) In this text, God is addressing his people Israel and first

calls them His "witnesses" (plural). As we saw earlier, this is a legal term under the Law that identifies as testifiers the people who can all individually speak to Who God is. But then, he refers to the whole nation as a single entity—God's "servant" (singular). God relates to this body of believers as a single unit, and they were not to see themselves as just a collection of individual servants. No single individual was regarded as a servant separated from the whole. They were simultaneously a multitude of individual testifiers and a single, social unit in a single relationship to God. This is much like our illustration of Adam and Eve, but it expands on the number of persons involved. But is this illustration a valid illustration of the Trinity? Yes, it is. Jesus says so in John 17:

11"... that they may be one, even as we are one. ... ²⁰I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, ²¹that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, ... ²²The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, ²³I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, ..." (John 17:11, 20-23)

This explains the kind of *unity*—the kind of *oneness*— between the Father and the Son. Jesus says in prayer to His Father that the kind of *oneness* they possess is the kind of *oneness* Jesus requests for all His followers. This kind of *unity* must be based on more than just having the same human *nature—humanness*, which is common even to those who do not believe in Jesus. This *unity* is more, since it reflects the *spiritual unity*—the special relationship possessed by the Father and the Son. This *unity* is more than ontology; it is a social relationship. The Father and Son are so close, that Jesus could say the Father was in the Son and the Son was in the Father (John 17:21). This is the kind of closeness Jesus is requesting His followers to have one day in perfection, including all those who would come to believe in Jesus through the message of the Apostles (John 17:20).

This passage cannot mean the Father and the Son are the same person. Jesus' request, in prayer, was that the same kind of *oneness* eternally experienced by the Father and Son was what Jesus wanted for all His followers, although they are not eternal like God is. If the Father and Son are the same *person*, then Jesus would have been requesting that all His followers would one day truly become a single person. Rather, this is a uniting of a collection of *distinct persons*. This alone refutes Modalism.

The *oneness* between God and us is NOT a oneness of *nature*, for we will never have God's eternal nature. But the goal Jesus requests is that one day, we human followers will be united with each other in perfect unity, and then we also will have a unity with the Father and Son. This *oneness* that the Son refers to here is a *social unity* like that shared by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit from eternity to eternity; this is the "Social Trinity."

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To summarize: The three *Testifiers* are one both in *nature—Godness* (the Ontological Trinity—based on Philippians 2:6; Hebrews 1:3) and in *social* relationship (the Social Trinity—based on John 17:11, 20-23).

Let's apply this illustration to the Trinity in John 1:1:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)

Does this allow for "the Word was a God?" No. Just like we saw previously, Eve was not 'a man' distinct from Adam. Likewise, as we saw previously in Isaiah 4:10, no individual testifier was 'a servant' distinct from the whole. So here in John 1:1, "the Word" is not a distinct God from the God with Whom He was. "The Word" is united in both nature and in relationship with God.

Does this verse allow for saying "the Word was THE God?" No. For the same reason we said Eve was not THE Man—the man with whom she was. That would not make sense to say the Word was with (the) God and was that same God. How can He be with Himself? But as was mentioned earlier, there is a theological position that holds to this view: Modalism. Modalism claims that the Word, Who is the Son, Jesus, is identically the same person as God just acting in a different mode. There is no distinction. This is more than saying the Word has the nature of God and is to be viewed as if united with God. No, this view claims the term God in John 1:1 refers not to a nature or a relationship but to a single person. Adherents claim this single person manifests Himself in any or all of three modes: Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, but this is still only one person, one testifier.

John 1:1 makes the Trinity clear. The "Word was" not "a" God, nor was the Word "the" God. The "Word was God," because He was/is/forever will be what God is. In the first part of John 1:1, where it says "the Word was with God," that term God refers to an individual, the person (or testifier) we know as the Father. At the end of the verse where it says, "the Word was God;" this time the term God is not an identifier of a person (or testifier), but it refers to the nature of God, or as I prefer to say, "Godness."

Does this sound odd that in the same verse the same noun "God" can in one case be a *person* and in another case be a *nature*? Do we see this in Scripture? We did in Genesis 5:1, 2.

... When God created <u>man</u>, he made <u>him</u> in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, ... and named them Man.

In Genesis 5:1, the term "man" was applied to a single individual and referred to as "him." But in verse 2, God names them both "Man," which refers not to an individual, but rather to a couple who shared a single nature and to whom all outsiders would relate to as a single entity.

Does the WTBTS (aka JWs) teach "the Word" has the nature of God? In print, they have implied such. In the 1985

edition of their Kingdom Interlinear Translation (KIT, now out of print), on page 1140 of the Appendix and also in their 1984 New World Translation Study Bible (pg. 1579), they attempted to support their translation of John 1:1 by quoting an article written by scholar Philip J. Harner for the Journal of Biblical Literature, (Vol. 92, 1973). There he discusses clauses like John 1:1 and says this on page 85 of that article, which portion they quote in the KIT: "They indicate that the logos [Word] has the nature of theos [God]." There it is: The Word has the nature of God. This quote was intended to be supportive of the WTBTS's own translation of John 1:1; and in using it, they do not make any negative comment. This must have slipped through the WTBTS reviewers. Harner's full article is not quoted; but if it were, one would find he explains John 1:1 cannot mean "the Word was a God" nor can it mean "the Word was *the* God" for reasons like those given above.

Perhaps the clause could be translated, "the Word had the same nature as God." This would be one way of representing John's thought, which , as I understand it, that ho logos [the Word], no less than ho theos [the God], had the nature of theos [God].

(Harner's article page 85)

What do Christians mean when they say, "Jesus is God?"

Normally, the word is means identically the same as. But Christians do not mean to say Jesus is identically the same as God—although Modalists affirm this. On pages 264-266 of his 1995 book God in Three Persons—A Contemporary Interpretation of the Trinity, Millard Erickson comments on this issue and points out that the word is can have different uses. In his list, he cites three uses; the third he calls the "'is' of predication," and this is what is meant when Christians say "Jesus is God." This is similar to saying "my car is red." I can have several cars that all have the exact same color—red, but they are not the same car. There are multiple cars but only one red color. Likewise, when we say "Jesus 'is' God," we mean Jesus has the very nature of God. There are other *persons* distinct from Jesus Who are also properly called "God;" yet there are not multiple Gods, there are not multiple natures, there is but one God—Godness. This is the one nature that is shared by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In this phrase ('Jesus is God'), the term God is a qualifier, not an identifier. The Son, Jesus, is equally God, but not the same person as either the Father or the Holy Spirit. This is why I use the term Godness in my working definition of the Trinity.

Now let's examine two passages the WTBTS teach the JWs to use in order to challenge the Doctrine of the Trinity.

Who is "the only true God?"

And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)

Does this mean the Father *alone* is the only "true God," and no other person can properly be called "true God" as the JWs typically claim? [See the WTBTS 2005 publication What does the Bible Really Teach?, page 152, paragraph 17] Since John 1:1 says Jesus is God, what kind of God is He? Is Jesus a true God or a false God? If there is only one true God—the Father, and Jesus is a true God, then He must be included in the "only true God" along with His Father. So, even the WTBTS has a problem here, since they do teach that Jesus is "a god" (their translation of John 1:1) but not a false god.

To understand John 17:3, we first ask if this is speaking about ontology (*nature*) or something else? Is Jesus saying only the Father has the *true nature* of *Godness*, or is He referring to some other quality associated with being the "*only true God?*" The answer is found by noting that Jesus refers to Himself as being the One Whom God sent ("*and Jesus Christ whom you have sent*"). This is not a distinction of *nature*, but rather it is a distinction of function and rank.

We find references to Jesus be sent by the Father elsewhere in the Book of John (John 5:23,24,30,36-38; 6:44,57; 7:28; 8:16,18,42; 10:36; 12:49; 13:3,20; 14:24,28; 17:3,8,18,21,23,25; 20:21). For example:

... I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. (John 8:42)

Functionally, Jesus is the One sent; the Father is the sender. This has implications for a difference in rank. Note how Jesus refers to the sent One as being a "servant;" while the One Who functions as the sender is greater in rank.

Truly, truly, I say to you, a <u>servant</u> is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who <u>sent him.</u> (John 13:16, also see John 15:20)

Notice how the disciples identified Jesus as being the servant of God in Acts 3:20, 26; 4:24, 27:

²⁰that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that <u>he may send the Christ</u> appointed for you, Jesus, ... ²⁶God, having raised up <u>his servant, sent him</u> to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness. (Acts 3:20, 26)

²⁴And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ... ²⁷for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy <u>servant Jesus</u>, whom <u>you anointed</u>, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ..." (Acts 4:24, 27)

Is Jesus ever the sender? Yes, Jesus sends his disciples into the world to deliver the Gospel in John 17:18 ("As you sent me into the world, so <u>I have sent them</u> into the world.") and in John 20:21 ("... As the <u>Father has sent me</u>, even so <u>I am sending you.</u>"). But it is the Father alone Who is always the sender and never the One sent, and always has the higher rank.

What does all this tell us? In the Book of John, Jesus is revealed functionally as a *servant*, as *one who is sent* and, therefore, of lower rank. The attribute of being sender is always associated with the One True God. The Book of John also reveals Jesus as having the *nature* of the Father (John 1:1), as the agent Who created all things (John 1:3), and as One to be honored just as much as the Father (John 5:23). Do these revealed concepts contradict each other? No, the functionality the Son has is a distinction within the Ontological Trinity. The Son has the *nature* of *Godness*, but He does not always *function* as the Father does. The Father *always* functions as the One with the highest rank—as the One Who sends; while the Son is the *servant* Who is sent.

Thus in prayer in John 17:3, Jesus distinguishes Himself from the Father *functionally*, not *ontologically* (in *nature*), and He identifies the Father alone Who epitomizes *Godness* as the One Who is the *true* God Who sends; while He (Jesus) is the One Who is sent. John 17:3 does not say the Father *alone* is the "*only true God*" (excluding the Son and the Holy Spirit). The Father is the "*only true God*," and Jesus is also the "*only true God*" (in *nature*).

We can see this in 1 John 5. Before we do, note that 1 John is like a theological synopsis of the Book of John. If you compare both books and remove the historical narrative from John, you will see the parallels with 1 John. For example:

¹That which was <u>from the beginning</u>, which we have heard, ... concerning <u>the word</u> [Greek: logos] of life—²the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you <u>the eternal life</u>, which was <u>with the</u> Father and was made manifest to us—(1 John 1:1, 2)

Compare this to the opening words of John 1:1-4, and you will see the parallels.

There is a statement in 1 John 5 that parallels John 17:3. We saw above where John 17:3 says "eternal life" is based on knowing "the only true God, and Jesus Christ ..."

Now compare 1 John 5:11-13, 20:

life, and this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life. ... 20And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

John is teaching that "eternal life ... is in his Son" (1 John 5:11) and this life "was with the Father and was made manifest to us" (1 John 1:2). This "eternal life" is a clear reference to Jesus. Now note the parallels between John 17:3 and 1 John 5:

eternal life is knowing the only true God and the—Continued on page 22

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Son ... we can know we have eternal life (1 John 5:11,13)

- the Son was sent ... the Son has come (1 John 5:20)
- we can know the only true God and the Son ... we can know him who is true (1 John 5:20)

Then 1 John 5:20 says, "... we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."

So "in" whom are we? The text answers: We are "in" "Jesus Christ." It further says, we are "in" "him who is true." Thus, Jesus is "him who is true." Then the verse continues: "He is the true God and eternal life." Who is the "eternal life?" As we saw above, this is Jesus. Who is it that is "him who is true?" Again, we saw this was Jesus. So who is "the true God and eternal life?" This, again, must be Jesus.

The references here to God and the Son make no distinctions between any functionality or rank. So the identity of "*true God*" can apply to either person: the Father or the Son.

So to summarize: When referring to the "only true God" in John 17:3, there is a clear distinction between the One Who sends and the One Who is sent; so the Father is identified functionally as the "only true God." But in 1 John 5:20, the distinction between sender and sent is not in focus, but rather "eternal life" is the focus. This "eternal life" is in the Son Jesus Christ, Who in nature is "true God."

Is God all-knowing?

But concerning that day or that hour, <u>no one knows</u>, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but <u>only the</u> <u>Father</u>. (Mark 13:32)

We typically say an essential attribute of *Godness* is being *all-knowing*. Yet this text says Jesus—or some part of Jesus—is NOT all-knowing, because He does not know the timing of His Second Coming. How do we explain that some part of Jesus' mentality is not *all-knowing*? Throughout history, the majority of theologians have given an answer that explores the union of the two natures of Jesus: *Godness* and *humanity—humanness*. I think a better answer is found in exploring the meaning of the word *knowing*.

This same Greek phrase "no one knows ... but ..." is found in two other places in the Bible—both in Revelation.

... To the one who conquers ... I [Jesus] will give him a white stone, with a new name written on the stone that no one knows except the one who receives it. (Revelation 2:17, the NLT says, "no one understands;" the NET says, "no one can understand")

So other than this person, does anyone else *know* (or *is aware of*) this name? Is this name known only to Jesus (the giver) and the recipient? Does the Father know it, too? Since the Father is all-knowing, we would expect that He does. Yet the verse says, "*no one knows except the one who receives it.*" How is it true then that no one knows the name except the recipient and Jesus?

¹²His [Jesus] eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. ¹³He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. (Revelation 19:12, 13)

So other than Jesus, does anyone else *know* (or *is aware of*) this name? Is this something only Jesus knows and not the Father? If we compare Mark 13:32 with these two verses in Revelation, it seems there are things only Jesus knows and there are things only the Father knows. Then Who is *all-knowing*?

The answer is that this phrase, which occurs these three times in the NT, "no one knows ... but" has a special meaning other than "no one is aware ... but." This knowledge is not an awareness of information; rather it is something very personal and experiential.

Consider this: Did the Father experience death on the cross? No. Does the Father know the cross in the same way and to the same extent as the Son does? No. The Son knows the cross in a way the Father will *never* know it, because the Son alone experienced the cross. So when Mark 13:32 says the Father knows that day and hour, and the Son does not; that—like the two examples in Revelation—means the Father alone has some kind of special, personal knowledge regarding the Second Coming.

⁶So when they [the disciples] had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority." (Acts 1:6, 7)

Here the disciples again are asking about the timing of the same event as in Mark 13:32—the Second Coming of Christ and the restoring of the Kingdom. Jesus' answer here is that it is not for the disciples to know when this will be. He gives no further reason why they cannot know it other than to say it is because the Father has decided the time on His Own authority. This response is also similar to the answer Jesus gives in Mark saying that others do not know the timing, which belongs to the Father alone. The *knowing of the time* as mentioned in both accounts is restricted to the Father alone. The *knowing* of the time in Acts refers to the authority the Father has in setting when it will occur—an authority no one else has, not even the Son. Between Mark 13 and Acts 1, we see the same question and nearly the same response.

Putting these together shows the *knowing* of the time is not about an intellectual awareness, but rather it is about *the decision-making* that is in the Father's jurisdiction alone. Mark 13:32 is not saying the Son has no *awareness* of the time, but rather He does not have a share in *deciding* the time. No one but the Father has this.

*The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTBTS) is the legal corporation and the directorship over the Jehovah's Witnesses

All verses are quoted from ESV—English Standard Version of the Holy Bible. Underlines are added for emphasis.



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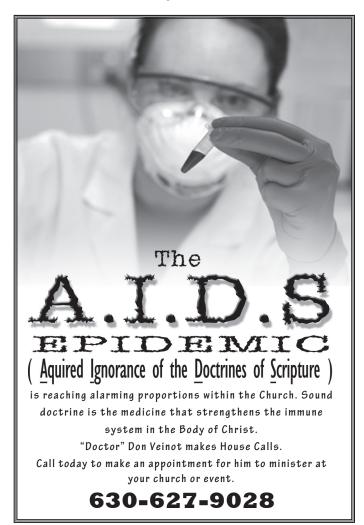
ENDNOTES:

1 Complementarian view - Within the Trinitarian relationship are three distinct persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory. Further, the Father has the highest rank and the Son and Holy Spirit are both eternally functionally subordinate to the Father.

2 Egalitarian view - Within the Trinitarian relationship are three distinct persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Each is an uncreated person, one in essence, equal in power and glory. Further the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are always equal in rank even though the Son was temporarily subordinate as part of the redemption of man

3 Binitarians - those who view the Father and Son as two distinct persons equally divine in nature but being the One True God. The Holy Spirit is something of God related to the mind or power of God but not a distinct person like the Father and Son.

4 Ontology - The study of a being's nature and existence. The Ontology of God is the study of the nature of God, the being of God, the attributes that constitute the nature of being God.



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The take-away lesson is multifaceted and includes the fact that the Bible clearly explains its own symbolism in this matter; and when confronted by these parables, other texts, and especially statements pieced together from one verse here and another there, you are now equipped to discern that which the Bible's contents, concepts, and contexts are truly telling us about the SSS issue.

As has been demonstrated repeatedly, the Bible, in its historical-grammatical context tells us exactly how and why some are referred to as pertaining to a separate seed. The good news is that since the issue is not genetics, if one finds themselves within the ungodly seed, one can repent.

All Bible quotes are from the KJV—King James Version of the Holy Bible. Underlines are added for emphasis.



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ENDNOTES:

1 For some details on this, see my "Serpent Seed of Satan Theory Promulgators" http://www.truefreethinker.com/articles/serpent-seed-satan-theory-promulgators

2 For a consideration of such grammatical issues, see my "Reply to Zen Garcia on the Serpent Seed of Satan Theory" http://www.truefreethinker.com/articles/reply-zen-garcia-serpent-seed-satan-theory and "Clifton A. Emahiser's 'Two Seedline' racism, part 2 of 2" http://www.truefreethinker.com/articles/clifton-emahiser%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Ctwo-seedline%E2%80%9D-racism-part-2-2



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