



Reachout Trust is an international Christian ministry that equips the church, upholds evangelical biblical truth and builds bridges to people in the cults, occult and new age.

We aim to:

Examine in the light of the evangelical Christian gospel the beliefs and spirituality of people within the cults, occult, new age and all not upholding evangelical biblical truth.

Train and equip Christians to explain the evangelical Christian gospel in a relevant way.

Provide a complete service of advice and help to all enquirers.

Present the evangelical Christian gospel.

Work with organisations who will help achieve these aims.

A detailed information pack that shows how you can be involved in this ministry is available from head office.

All unassigned articles are the responsibility of Doug Harris, Director of Reachout Trust.

Other articles may not necessarily represent the Trustees' belief in every small detail.

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CELEBRATING 22 YEARS OF MINISTRY REACHOUT QUARTERLY

Summer 2004

Issue 76

Where are you now?

REACHOUT TWENTIETH ANNUAL CONVENTION



12-14 November 2004

Pioneer Centre Cleobury Mortimer - near Kidderminster

As this is the 20th Reachout Annual Convention we want to invite all who have attended the other 19 to return to be with us for this special weekend. If this is you please book, or if you know of any who have been please will you pass on the invitation.

At the same time we also want those who have never been before to attend so that we can prepare and look forward to the next 20 years!

As far as the teaching goes the weekend will include 4 in-depth workshops and 4 seminars - full details will be available in Spring 2004.

Apart from these teaching sessions, there will be other times together for prayer, discussion, singing, testimonies etc. Above all, we will also provide time for the mutual fellowship and encouragement of each other as we feel this is a vital part of the weekend. There will also be a full range of resources for you to purchase.

Accommodation is en-suite. Married couples will obviously have their own rooms but others may need to share up to 4 in a room.

See enclosed brochure for booking details.

Page 2 - Communicating ~ ~ ~ Page 2 - Diary

Page 3 - Phil Pullman's Subtle Lie

Page 5 - Watch The Tower 2004/2 ~ ~ ~ Page 8- Truth Restored - 39

Page 10 - Apologetics - 18 ~ ~ ~ Page 12- The Passion

Page 14 - Feedback ~ ~ ~ Page 16—Giving



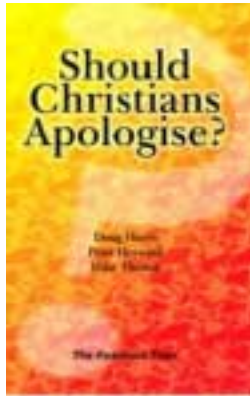
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With our new book on apologetics, released at CRE Sandown in May (see the enclosed sheet for a Special Offer), our thoughts are again focused on communicating properly with others, especially those who come from a different belief system.

Do they make sense of what we say or what we write? Do they 'receive' the same meaning of the words we use, as we gave them?

With these thoughts of being understood properly, I found the following sent to me by Mike Thomas, a perfect 'sermon illustration.'

Aoccdnrig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttar in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a total mses and you can sill raed it wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lterer by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

I don't know about you, but I found I could read that paragraph, straight through, first time, without any problem of non-comprehension. This set me thinking and so here is the 'sermon for the day!'

First, it seems to indicate to me, that it is possible to have a blind spot. We look at the word and do not pronounce it the way it is written. I did not read 'frist' but 'first,' and the reason appears to be because of the context of the sentence. It gets hidden within other issues.

I feel an example of this is the current debate on 'The Passion' (see p.12.) We can get so involved with the non-biblical side of this that we forget that there will be some people who will want to talk about the 'real' Jesus after seeing the film. The people who want to find Christ because they have had a visit from the Jeho-

vah's Witnesses or Mormons; do we just bad-mouth the group that inspired them to think about religion?

In our desire to show what is wrong, please don't let us see the wider setting and realise that the context is one of being positive to show who Jesus really is - risen indeed!

I am sure, in the past, Reachout, and may be you too, has looked at the same issue and 'read' the same thing for years, without seeing that there was a different context. We do need to be aware of other people showing us that different context and adjusting what we do and how we react.

Second, I think that small paragraph teaches us something a little more worrying - that we could be deliberately blinkered and will not see what someone else says.

One of the central pillars of apologetics is our willingness, as Luke says, "to investigate everything carefully." Do I? Or are there certain areas that I do not want to investigate because honestly I do not want to change. I don't know about you but as I have grown in the Christian Life, certain beliefs that I would be totally dogmatic on needed to be looked at again; why was I dogmatic on them?

For some of those areas, as I "investigated everything carefully," I became more sure of my foundation and thus found I did not have to 'shout' quite so much over the issue, but could make a reasoned defence from solid ground.

However there were other issues that I found out why I was 'shouting' - there was no evidence! May God help us to be willing to take the blinkers off where necessary.

Third, this paragraph also shows that it is possible, over a period of time, that we have grown spiritual 'cataracts.' Whatever the reason for their existence, we need the Lord's 'operation,' to remove them.

Cataracts, these days, are not the cause of permanent blindness and they can be easily removed with laser surgery. If man can do that, and bring back clear eyesight, where before there was haziness and confusion; how much more can the Lord give fresh spiritual vision to those that ask? ☐

Doug's Diary

Confirmation has been received that Doug Harris will be involved in training at the following seminars.

Other sessions are in the process of being arranged and an updated list can be obtained either on the web site or by ringing Head Office for further details.

Those marked * may have a restricted attendance.

If there is not a venue near you but you feel that your area would benefit from a seminar, contact Head Office to talk about organising one.

JUNE

- 5-6 Leyland
- 10 Moorlands Bible College *
- 18-20 Liverpool
- 25 YWAM - London *
- 27 Dagenham

JULY

- 11 Wellington
- 17 Tunbridge Wells
- 20 Battersea

SEPTEMBER

- 19 Lincoln
- 26 Oakham

OCTOBER

- 9 Amesbury
- 10 Dagenham
- 12 Battersea
- 16-17 Deal
- 23 FEBV - Norfolk *
- 25 Perth
- 26 Danbury, Essex

Philip Pullman's Subtle Lie

Ann Thomas

In December 2003 Philip Pullman's *His Darkest Materials* came third in the BBC's Big Read behind *The Lord Of The Rings* and *Pride And Prejudice*. *The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy* and *Harry Potter And The Goblet Of Fire* made up the top five. Here is part two of this very relevant article.

The Republic of Heaven

In doing away with heaven, Philip Pullman recognises that people still need hope for the future.

"We all need some sort of myth,' he has said. 'Some sort of over-arching narrative to live by. For hundreds of years in the West, this need was fulfilled by the Christian story, but that is now either dead or dying.'" - Robert McCrum, Sunday January 27, 2002, *The Observer*.

He told an Oxford literary conference in August 2000:

"We're used to the Kingdom of Heaven; but you can tell from the general thrust of the book that I'm of the devil's party, like Milton. And I think it's time we thought about a republic of Heaven instead of the Kingdom of Heaven. The King is dead. That's to say I believe the King is dead. I'm an atheist. But we need Heaven nonetheless, we need all the things that Heaven meant, we need joy, we need a sense of meaning and purpose in our lives, we need a connection with the universe, we need all the things the Kingdom of Heaven used to promise us but failed to deliver." - Peter Hitchens, *Mail on Sunday*.

Lord Asriel, in the books, sets out to destroy the kingdom of heaven because it is a dictatorship and a fraud. This is clearly Philip Pullman's view, and once again is very sad.

"And is he going to attack the kingdom of heaven?"

"Ogunwe looked at her levelly.

"We're not going to invade the kingdom,' he said, 'but if the kingdom invades us, they had better be ready for war, because we are prepared. Mrs Coulter, I am a king, but it's my proudest task to join Lord Asriel in setting up a world where there are no kingdoms at all. No kings, no bishops, no priests. The kingdom of heaven

has been known by that name since the Authority himself first set himself above the rest of the angels. And we want no part of it. This world is different. We intend to be free citizens of the republic of heaven.'" - *The Amber Spyglass* p.222.

Philip Pullman offers no hope for the life to come, and no power to cope with the trials of this life, except the idea that if mankind 'gets it together' we can create a better world here. Like most humanists he has an inflated idea of mankind's potential.



Philip Pullman was asked in an interview with the *Mail on Sunday*, "What are the key values in the Republic, rather than the Kingdom, of Heaven?"

"Firstly, a sense that this world where we live is our home. Our home is not somewhere else. There is no elsewhere. This is a physical universe and we are physical beings made of material stuff. This is where we live.

"Secondly, a sense of belonging, a sense of being part of a real and important story, a sense of being connected to other people, to people who are not here any more, to those who have gone before us. And a sense of being connected to the universe itself.

"All those things were promised and summed up in the phrase, 'The Kingdom of Heaven'. But if the Kingdom is dead, we still need those things. We can't live without those things because it's too bleak, it's too bare and we don't need to. We can find a way of creating them for ourselves if we think in terms of a Republic of Heaven.

"This is not a Kingdom but a Republic, in which we are all free and equal citizens, with – and this is the important thing – responsibilities. With the responsibility to make this place into a Republic of Heaven for everyone. Not to live in it in a state of perpetual self-indulgence, but to work hard to make this place as good as we

possibly can." - *The Mail on Sunday*, 27 January 2002, p.63.

The Fall

As mentioned above, in *His Dark Materials* the Church is convinced that if a second Fall can be prevented, and Dust can be destroyed, the whole universe will be freed from original sin.

"... The child, then, is in the position of Eve, the wife of Adam, the mother of us all, and the cause of all sin.'...

"Please remember – the alethiometer does not *forecast*; it says, 'If certain things come about, *then* the consequences will be – " and so on. And it says that if it comes about that the child is tempted, as Eve was, then she is likely to fall. On the outcome will depend ... everything. And if this temptation does take place, and if the child gives in, then Dust and sin will triumph.'" - *The Amber Spyglass* p.71.

"And finally,' said Father McPhail, 'the child. Still just a child, I think. This Eve, who is going to be tempted and who, if precedent is any guide, will fall, and whose fall will involve us all in ruin. Gentlemen, of all the ways of dealing with the problem she sets us, I am going to propose the most radical, and I have confidence in your agreement.

"I propose to send a man to find her and kill her before she can be tempted.'" - *The Amber Spyglass* p.74-5.

In the books, the Church is wrong about Dust, and wrong about the Fall. When Lyra does actually 'fall' it is the salvation of the universe. Pullman has the Church believe the Fall to be all about sex, and the loss of innocence, and God's disapproval. In this he is wrong – the Fall was about rebellion. In this way, as in many other places in the books, he is setting up a straw man to knock it down. He then wins merit for his own view, as opposed to that of the Church, by seeing sex as good, the culmination of a loving relationship, which of course it is. When this happens to Lyra and Will, it attracts the Dust back into the universe.

"Like Mary said –' he whispered, 'you

know straight away when you like someone – when you were asleep, on the mountain before she took you away, I told Pan –'

"I heard,' she whispered, 'I was awake and I wanted to tell you the same and now I know what I must have felt all the time: I love you, Will, I love you –'

"The word *love* set his nerves ablaze. All his body thrilled with it, and he answered her in the same words, kissing her hot face over and over again, drinking in with adoration the scent of her body and her warm honey-fragrant hair and her sweet moist mouth that tasted of the little red fruit.

"Around them there was nothing but silence, as if all the world were holding its breath...

"In the beanfield, drowsy in the late afternoon heat, Mary heard Atal's voice, and she couldn't tell excitement from alarm: had another tree fallen? Had the man with the rifle appeared?

"Look! Look!' Atal was saying, nudging Mary's pocket with her trunk, so Mary took the spyglass and did as her friend said, pointing it up to the sky.

"Tell me what it's doing!' said Atal. 'I can feel it is different, but I can't see.'

"The terrible flood of Dust in the sky had stopped flowing. It wasn't still, by any means; Mary scanned the whole sky with the amber lens, seeing a current here, an eddy there, a vortex further off; it was in perpetual movement, but it wasn't flowing away any more. In fact, if anything, it was falling like snowflakes...

"The young ones,' said Atal.

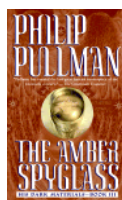
"Mary turned, spyglass in hand, to see Will and Lyra returning. They were some way off; they weren't hurrying. They were holding hands, talking together, heads close, oblivious to everything else; she could see that even from a distance.

"She nearly put the spyglass to her eye, but held back, and returned it to her pocket. There was no need for the glass; she knew what she would see; they would seem to be made of living gold. They would seem the true image of what human beings always could be, once they had come into their inheritance.

"The Dust pouring down from the stars had found a living home again, and these children - no longer children, saturated with love, were the cause of it all." - *The Amber Spyglass* p.492.

Philip Pullman falls down on two counts: first he has totally misunderstood basic Christian theology –

although since his grandfather was a clergyman, perhaps misunderstood is too lenient a word – and pandered to the idea that the first Fall was about sex and God's disapproval; secondly he portrays two twelve-year-olds falling in love in the way that two adults would. He never actually says they have sex, so younger readers need not be offended and can imagine what they like, but it is obviously implied. Jacqueline Wilson, who writes best-selling books for young people of a similar age, would never portray such a love scene – it is not the way twelve-year-olds think and behave.



Conclusion

My first conclusion is echoed from someone who has said it better than I can:

"Of his three famous children's books, the first two, *Northern Lights* and *The Subtle Knife*, are captivating and clever, but the third, which took the *Whitbread* prize, is a disappointing clunker with some gruesome and needlessly nasty scenes. This is probably because *The Amber Spyglass* - in which God dies - is too loaded down with propaganda to leave enough room for the story." - Peter Hitchens, *Mail on Sunday*.

Once he gets into his philosophy, it gets pretty deep, and I did wonder how many readers would have got bogged down trying to get their heads round the ideas about the Authority and the Metatron; the world of the dead; pre-emptive penance and absolution; the connection between people and their daemons (the animal embodiment of their inner nature); and the whole business about what Dust is and is not. You really have to concentrate to keep up with him.

It has been said that 80% of people have admitted that they believe what they read in the newspapers. Since many more people read newspapers than will read *His Dark Materials*, and since newspapers are more directly concerned with real life, I think this should be a greater area of concern. If that statistic is even partly true, then there will be some people who will

adopt Philip Pullman's version of things quite easily.

The ideas about God, faith, and heaven, being woven into the atmosphere of the story and the characters that we come to know and relate to, could be absorbed by some, especially if they reinforce any vague ideas the reader may already have. So few people today think seriously about these sorts of issues.

On the other hand, those who are willing to think seriously about his ideas may well be provoked to think about how plausible they are and whether there are any alternatives. His portrayal of the Church is so out-of-date and extreme, I find it hard to believe that anyone would seriously believe that the Church in the books bears any resemblance to the Church today. And the thought of a life without hope of heaven, and relying on mankind to discover a selfless love for one another to make things better is not very attractive or plausible.

So we come to the question about whether or not to read the books. I couldn't put it better than the following:

"Would I try to prevent children reading Pullman? No - but I wouldn't encourage it either. There is too much which could confuse. Should adults working with children read it? Absolutely. Partly because it's a good read which will enrich and provoke you and inspire you to want to engage your children's imaginations and hearts with truth. But also because we need to be able to talk with those we're working with about what they're watching, hearing and reading.

"So set the video too, for *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* or the *Teletubbies* (or both!) according to what age you work with. Find out what your children are reading; and read it as well. Talk with them about the good things you and they have enjoyed, and what, if anything, you found at odds with your Christian faith.

"Put God on the agenda of your conversations with them about their world rather than trapping Him in your teaching sessions. Encourage them to be thinking consumers of culture, who notice values in what they see and read, and who are able to say for themselves, 'I don't agree with that.' 'I wouldn't do that' or, of course 'That's really good.' And thank God for it. - "How Are They Reading?", website of The Church of England Diocese of Chelmsford. ☐

WATCH THE OWER

2004/2

THE WATCHTOWER MEMORIAL

Every year the Jehovah's Witnesses celebrate Jesus' death with what they term, the Memorial Meal. This year (2004) it was held after sundown on Sunday 4 April.

Also every year *The Watchtower* (see 15 March 2004, pp.4-7) carries an article designed to prepare people for this evening. It explains what happens and shows the correct procedures to be carried out.

Is the teaching of the Watchtower Society on this subject compatible with evangelical Christianity? Does the Watchtower interpret Scripture in context and correctly? In this article I want to check some of the teaching about this very important event and maybe give some ideas as to what to talk about with the next Jehovah's Witness you meet.

A PERFECT HUMAN

"Jesus died as the foremost upholder of Jehovah's sovereignty. He thus proved Satan to be a liar for charging, that humans serve God only with selfish motives. (Job 2:1-5; Proverbs 27:11) By means of his death as a perfect human, Jesus also 'gave his soul a ransom in exchange for many.' (Matthew 20:28)" - p.4.

I do not remember seeing the phrase, 'foremost upholder of Jehovah's sovereignty' in a Watchtower publication before and it grates on me.

'Foremost,' means that there are others that do a similar job besides this one, Jesus is just better at it. What can the Watchtower be referring to here? I find no other reference or explanation in the article but I think it is a question that should be asked of every Jehovah's Witness.

'Upholder of Jehovah's sovereignty.' Is it falling down? Does it need holding up? Is there a danger that Jehovah might lose His sovereignty to someone else? Again please do ask the Jehovah's Witness you meet and let me know any answers because I would say that this phrase is just not compatible with any true Christian belief.

However, there are other aspects to the quote above that are a problem. The Society states that Jesus' death proves Satan a liar because he charged that 'humans serve God only for selfish motives.' The Watchtower is calling Jesus just a human, like you and me! I have some difficulty in understanding how Proverbs 27:11 fits in here but it is obvious that Job was just a human and thus Jesus, to the Society, is just human.

That means, of course, that He cannot be the Son of God, even according to the Watchtower definition. For Jesus to be the Son of God, Watchtower style, He must be a unique, special creation - not just like any other human. We should also point out that, when the unique, special creation would come to earth, He would not just be like any other human because of the life He has lived in heaven so far. How can God's claimed mouthpiece to this earth, the Watchtower Society, equate Jesus Christ to just being a human?

This is further complicated by the next sentence when they talk of Jesus being a 'perfect human.' The failure to think through the theology here is evident. When did Jesus become the perfect human, that is, one that did not sin at all? Was it at the end of His life when he made it through 33 years without sinning? Or was it, the only other possible time, when He was born?

Whichever way you look at it there are problems. The Scriptures say that, "ALL have sinned" - Romans 3:23. Indeed, at the end of this paragraph from which we are quoting the writer quotes the 'companion' verse, Romans 6:23, which says that, "the wages of this sin is death."

Now Paul says quite clearly in Scripture that ALL have sinned, every human being that ever walked this earth has sinned. Not one has ever managed not to! Yet we have just been told that Jesus is a perfect human! There is no such thing. If Jesus is perfect He is not just human and if Jesus is just hu-

man he sinned! As we agree with the Society that Jesus did not sin then we have to see that Jesus was not just human, there was a quality in Him, different from every human - that was the only quality that is not tainted by sin - God!

The Society wants to conclude that, just as Adam, through his disobedience, "forfeited perfect human life," so Jesus restored perfect human life. But if that was all then He could only do it for Himself. One man can lose and one man can gain. However, what Jesus did was for all men that they could have everlasting life and know sins forgiven. That goes beyond one 'perfect human being' because the achievement of this one cannot lose its power over time. We are talking about something that God does, not that just a perfect man did.

We also must consider when do we have this eternal life? If I do not have life that goes beyond the grave - eternal life - before I die; if I do not know my sins forgiven, before I die - then, surely, it is too late. Without my sin forgiven and without eternal life, before I go into the grave, I can never come out, because I would be under the jurisdiction of death.

It is also interesting, from the viewpoint of the Watchtower's theology, that they quote John 3:16, which clearly shows the promise of this quality of eternal life is for 'everyone'. Not a selected few but everyone. How relevant in the context of those who take the bread and the wine and those who just let the emblems pass them by. If I know I have this eternal life I will take the emblems; if I don't take the emblems I am saying that I do not have life beyond the grave.

NEW COVENANT

"...so Jesus' blood poured out in death made the new covenant valid... To identify who properly partake of the Memorial emblems, we need to understand what the new covenant is about and who are party to it. The Bible states: "'Look! There are days coming,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'and I will conclude with the

house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant ... I will put my law within them, in their heart I shall write it. And I will become their God, and they themselves will become my people.... I shall forgive their error, and their sin I shall remember no more.' —Jeremiah 31:31-34. The new covenant makes possible a special kind of relationship with Jehovah God. By means of this covenant, a certain group of individuals become his people and he becomes their God." - p.5.

We are told here in the article that to understand those who are allowed to partake of the emblems, we need to understand the new covenant. Those who are in the new covenant can take the emblems and those who are not, must allow them to pass by.

Later we are told,

"On his last night with his disciples, Jesus himself also made a different covenant with them. "I make a covenant with you," he told them, "just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom." (Luke 22:29) This is the Kingdom covenant. The number of imperfect humans taken into the Kingdom covenant is 144,000." - p.6.

If you are not part of the 144,000 you cannot take the emblems. If you are not part of the 144,000 you are not in the new Kingdom covenant. Whereas the leaders of the Watchtower Society probably see this doctrine as a way to keep the majority of its members dependent on a relationship with the organisation, and away from a direct relationship with Jesus; they are in fact keeping their members away from any hope of eternal life.

To see what really is happening in Biblical terms we need to understand what the Bible teaches about covenant.

The Greek word for covenant is *diatheke*. Greek scholar, W.E. Vine tells us this is:

"a disposition of property by will or otherwise... it is the rendering of the Hebrew word meaning... agreement... it does not in itself contain the idea of joint obligation, it mostly signifies an obligation undertaken by a single person." - Vines Dictionary of New Testament Words, p.251.

As such we can see that we need to know *personally* the one who is making the covenant. Benefits via a third party are just not sufficient. However, this personal relationship is not true of the 'great crowd',

which is clearly evidenced by the fact that they are forbidden to take the emblems at the Memorial Meal.

The tragic result for each 'great crowd' member is that they have never known for themselves that Christ took away the guilt and power of their sin at Calvary and that in Christ they are new beings. (See 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and Colossians 2:8-15). If someone is not in the new covenant then none of the benefits of that covenant are theirs. There is no possibility of this being passed on, second or third hand, because you have a relationship with an organisation that has some in this covenant. The Biblical conclusion is that the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses on this earth today have **no** eternal hope whatsoever because they are not in a covenant relationship themselves.

If the 'great crowd' or 'other sheep' are not in the new covenant which one are they in? They cannot be in the old because that has ended. So, where are they? In no relationship at all with Jehovah God and without hope in this world or the next.

Note clearly the Scripture

"But you have come... to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood ..." - Hebrews 12:22-24

Without coming to Jesus there is no mediator and no new covenant.

HOW OFTEN?

In wanting to show further differences between their teaching and that of evangelical Christianity the Society say on p.6.

"Should Jesus' death be commemorated weekly or perhaps even daily? Well, Christ instituted the Lord's Evening Meal and was unjustly put to death on Passover Day. Held only once a year, on Nisan 14, the Passover commemorated Israel's deliverance from Egyptian bondage. (Exodus 12:6, 14; Leviticus 23:5) So the death of "Christ our passover" should be memorialized only once each year, not weekly or daily. (1 Corinthians 5:7)"

The verse that they quote here - 1 Cor.5:7 - has, in fact, nothing to do with how often we are to celebrate this meal, it simply says that Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed. However, there are other verses in the same letter to the Corinthians that are totally ignored. 1 Cor.10:25-26 for instance talks of,

"as often" as you do it. Not in your annual celebration! It is clearly giving the Christians opportunity to take the meal on a more regular basis. This is further emphasized in 11:17-22, where Paul talks about eating the Lord's Supper on a regular basis in the church meetings.

IS IT NECESSARY?

"Is it necessary to partake of the Memorial emblems in order to be covered by Jesus' sacrifice and receive everlasting life on earth? No. Nothing in the Bible suggests that after they are resurrected on earth, such God-fearing people as Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Joseph, Moses, and David will ever partake of these emblems." - p.7.

This is rather putting the cart before the horse because, although we would agree that it is not necessary to take the emblems to ensure that you receive eternal life, nevertheless we take the emblems because we have that close relationship with Jesus and know that we have eternal life.

Also, of course, the emblems are only taken till He comes. Even if these ones were to be resurrected on the earth, it would be after Jesus comes, and so no one would take the emblems. However, unless I know the reality of what the emblems speak of, I will never have the chance to be involved in any future eternal life.

"Suppose a person is not absolutely sure that he is in the new covenant and the Kingdom covenant. What if he also lacks the witness of God's spirit that he is a joint heir with Christ? Then it would be wrong for him to partake of the Memorial emblems. Indeed, God would be displeased if a person knowingly represented himself as one called to be a heavenly king and priest when he did not really have such a calling." - Romans 9:16; Revelation 22:5. - p.6.

If such a person is not sure then we would encourage them to see that they have no relationship with the One who died to save them. Instead of being encouraged just not to partake, I believe they should be encouraged to check out their spiritual life and hope. Instead of being told that God would be displeased if they partake, it seems to me that the Bible encourages them to test themselves - 2 Corinthians 13:5 - until they know they have such a relationship and then partake with joy and confidence.

"The apostle John emphasized the importance of Jesus' sacrifice when he said: "I am writing you [fellow anointed ones] these things that you may not commit a sin. And yet, if anyone does commit a sin, we have a helper with the Father, Jesus Christ, a righteous one. And he is a propitiatory sacrifice for our sins, yet not for ours only but also for the whole world's." (1 John 2:1, 2) Anointed ones can say that Jesus' sacrifice is a propitiatory cover for their sins. But it is also a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, making everlasting life possible for obedient mankind!" - p.7.

We would claim that the Watchtower Society has been non-Biblical throughout this article, but this paragraph near the end shows it even more clearly. Where does the Bible have the words, "fellow anointed ones"? The writer of this article has added words that are not in the Greek to seek to show that there are two classes of salvation. But there is nothing in the original to show this, John was writing to every Christian; not making a distinction between two classes. How tragic that the Society that claims to be God's mouthpiece is putting words into His mouth that change the meaning of Scripture. More than that, it means that many will be kept in the dark as to what the Memorial meal really is all about.

Evidently, only anointed ones can say that Jesus' sacrifice is a propitiatory cover for their sins. Is this not something that we all need to know? Indeed it is. This propitiation is likened to the 'Mercy Seat' in the Old Testament Tabernacle, it is the place where a sinner can come and receive mercy from God and know one's sins are forgiven.

It is not enough for the 'great crowd' simply to have head knowledge that it is "a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, making everlasting life possible for obedient mankind." It is not to do with just being obedient to man or an idea of man. It is to do with entering, personally, before the New Testament Mercy Seat and knowing one's sins forgiven and thus entering into a true relationship directly with Jesus Christ.

Without such a relationship we have no hope and if we have such a relationship our spirits within will gladly, and with certainty, take of the emblems of bread and wine in remembrance of what Jesus did for

us, and in glorious hope of our eternal future.

THE WATCHTOWER AND THE UN

In the 15 January 2004 Watchtower, the Society mention The United Nations in an article entitled, "Whose Promises Can you Trust?" Of course, the article reveals that it certainly is not those of the UN.

This attitude of the Watchtower Society to the UN is nothing new as the following quotes show:

"Like the symbolic 'scarlet-colored wild beast' of Revelation chapter 17, upon which the old harlot, 'Babylon the Great,' has seated herself, the League of Nations went into 'the abyss' at the outbreak of World War II in 1939... After the close of World War II in 1945, the United Nations was set up as the successor to the ill-fated League of Nations. It has far more members than the League had, so it should be a stronger organization and deserving of more confidence on the part of the world of mankind. Thus it was in 1945 that the symbolic 'scarlet-colored wild beast' ascended 'out of the abyss,' and the symbolic harlot, 'Babylon the Great,' again climbed onto its back, where she shamelessly sits to this day. (Revelation 17:3, 5, 8)... The United Nations is actually a worldly confederacy against Jehovah God and his dedicated Witnesses on earth." - The Watchtower, 1 September 1987, p.20.

As is evident from this quote, in September 1987 the Society was aware that the UN was the, "scarlet-colored wild beast" and that it was, "a worldly confederacy against Jehovah God."

"However, back in 1919, before the League's Covenant had ever gone into effect, Jehovah's Witnesses (then known as Bible Students) declared publicly that the League must fail... Later, at their 1926 convention in London, England, it was pointed out that according to Revelation 17, the 'eighth king' appears as a finale to the line of world powers. As the speaker pointed out, 'the Lord foretold its birth, its short existence, and its everlasting end.' ... From the mid-war year of 1942, Jehovah's Witnesses realized that the then dormant peace and security organization would ascend out of its abyss of inactivity. That year the president of the Watch Tower Society told an audience in 52 cities: 'Though forty members still profess to adhere to the

League, the League is in effect in a state of suspended animation... It "is not." But would it 'ascend out of the abyss?' Basing his words on this Bible prophecy, he declared: 'The association of worldly nations will rise again.' As the prophecy had stated, this eighth king 'was' from 1920 until 1939. It 'was not' from 1939 until World War II ended in 1945. Then it ascended 'out of the abyss,' reactivated as the League's successor, the United Nations... The UN has not succeeded" -The Watchtower, 1 June 1988, pp.27, 28

Thus, we see that in June 1988 the Society were aware that the United Nations was an, "association of worldly nations" and that it was a failure or certainly that it had not succeeded.

"Christendom rested her hopes in the League of Nations, but it was overturned even without the coming of Armageddon. Now she has transferred her allegiance to the United Nations. But it will soon have to face 'the war of the great day of God the Almighty,' and it will not survive. (Revelation 16:14) Even a revived UN can never bring peace and security. God's prophetic Word shows that the United Nations organization with its member nations 'will battle with the Lamb [Christ in Kingdom power], but, because he is Lord of lords and King of kings, the Lamb will conquer them.' -Revelation 17:14. Jehovah's Witnesses confidently say that there is no salvation for Christendom in her alliances with Satan's world." - The Watchtower, 1 June 1991, p.19.

In 1991 therefore they declared that the nations that had given allegiance to the UN had given allegiance to "Satan's world." This is a very interesting comment because it was during this year that the Watchtower Society applied for association to the Department of Public Information (DPI), an association which was granted in 1992.

At first glance that may not seem to be very dramatic but as the official letter placed on the United Nations Website shows, such association was accepted on the basis that the Society agreed to,

"Support and respect the principles of the Charter of the United Nations..."

The letter also states that association would mean that the Society,

"Share the ideals of the UN Charter..."

(Continued on page 14)

TRUTH RESTORED - 39

BY MIKE & ANN THOMAS

DEFENDING MORMONISM

...OR IS THAT CHRISTIANS?

We don't usually carry stories concerning Utah culture and politics in these pages, and for a very good reason. It is simply a question of relevance. When writing, we ask the questions "Will this be a doorstep issue?" and "What aspects of Mormonism are readers most likely to meet in their lives?" We have, however, commented on some such things that seem to bring a greater understanding of the Mormon worldview and how we should approach our witnessing.

In the Winter 2002/3 issue of the Quarterly (Truth Restored 33) we reported on the purchase by the Mormon Church of a one block stretch of Main Street, SLC, and the controversy that ensued when the Mormon Church began to restrict rights of access and free speech (or create a peaceful public space, depending on your viewpoint).

In a recent move, reported in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, plans are now afoot to create a buffer Zone to keep Mormons and Christian street preachers apart during conference times. In the middle of March the paper reported,

"Fearing that increasingly provocative anti-Mormon protests will incite violence among some Mormons attending the LDS Church's world wide conference next month, Salt Lake City police say they want to protect protesters by limiting their physical contact with conference-goers. As the LDS Church had earlier requested, the city will create buffer zones during the April 3 and 4 conference in downtown Salt Lake City."

This development was brought about by an incident during the October 2003 conference when some protesters demonstrated with Mormon temple garments. Understandably, two Mormons took exception to this, tried to take the garments, and were consequently arrested.

It is reported that,

"Protesters still will be allowed to spread their message by walking with church members on public streets and sidewalks as people enter and exit the Conference Center...But those who want to stand still and speak or hold signs must remain in nearby designated areas."

Police Chief Rick Dinse is quoted,

"Our job here is to provide protection of the protesters and the conferees from themselves, if you will,"

In a later report Ron McRae, director of the national Street Preachers Fellowship, based in Pennsylvania, protested that his preachers were not involved in October's incidents. He doesn't believe the new speech regulations should be applied to his preachers.

"They can't constitutionally box us in anywhere based on the conduct of the Mormons. They need to deal with the criminal element and leave the street preachers alone."

The authorities, however, are concerned about 'offensive' behaviour and speech and come down hard on what they call 'fighting talk' and seem determined to avoid trouble.

One Christian group, *Standing Together Ministries*, a collection of Utah evangelical churches, planned to show support for Mormons attending the April 2004 Mormon conference by lining parts of North Temple with 300 people. Their declared aim was to take up space to prevent anti-Mormon street preachers from using it. However, due to time restrictions and an inability to organise enough people to cooperate the plan has been shelved. The group has spoken out against the behaviour of street preachers before and their director, The Rev. Gregory Johnson, said that, while disagreeing with Mormon teaching,

"We wanted to just acknowledge you have the right to attend your meetings without being yelled at or offended".

Another group, the *World Wide Street Preachers' Fellowship*, has sought a temporary restraining or-

der in asking a federal judge to bar the city from establishing physical zones where preachers must stand while preaching during the most crowded times of conference week-end.

"We're prepared to go to jail if we have to," street preacher Lonnie Pursifull said. "We're not going to be put into a box."

More troubling is his frank admission that,

"Mormons just happen to be one of the people on the hit list. We preach Catholics, we preach Jews, we preach Muslims. We preach bars and concerts and evangelicals"

and that he and his fellow preachers will probably offend Latter-day Saints by holding up copies of the Book of Mormon or garments — shock value, apparently, being part of their style of preaching.

What are we to make of all this? We can't pretend to know what it's like in Salt Lake City and so we might feel it is not for us to judge. That would be a mistake. To be Christ-like is to be like Christ whatever the circumstances. We fail, of course, and often. However, that is the call and that should be our aim. I always ask myself, if the Mormon I have been witnessing to turns up at my church one Sunday would he be happy to sit next to me in the pew? Would he be glad to see me at all? If I have harangued him as he entered his place of worship last week I doubt it. When we are witnessing it is a mixture of winning and warning. Are we as winning in our ways as we are warning in our preaching? What is your message, "turn or burn", or "look and live"?

ON ANOTHER PLANE

One should have sympathy for the Mormon who has to put up with the kind of conduct described above. One can also understand the frustration of Christians as they encounter Mormon intransigence that sees mischief in every question and base scheming in every attempt at intelligent discussion. There has, however, always been an element

in Mormonism that has tried to engage with what they see as "anti-Mormon" criticism in an intelligent and constructive way. One Christian writer, recognising this, has alerted the Evangelical world to the need to respond in kind and rise above the all-too-familiar exchange of texts, taunts and epithets. In a paper in 1997, found at — <http://www.apologeticsindex.org/cpoint10-2.html>, — Carl Mosser, with his colleague Paul Owen, draws attention to the robust and growing scholarship brought to bear by Mormon apologists and calls on Christians to engage with Mormonism at the same level. He makes a good point although, in my view, the recently qualified (1) Mosser and yet to qualify Owen seem rather too easily impressed by Mormon erudition. Mosser also seems to take his argument too far in insisting that Christians should focus primarily on Mormon scholars. His Christian critics point out that the large part of witnessing to Mormons still takes place in the prosaic landscape of missionary discussions, doorstep dialogues and casual conversations that are so familiar to us. In this arena, they insist, the "sayings of the prophets" and familiar doctrinal issues must be addressed, the received wisdom of everyday Mormonism challenged, and the Bible reinforced as our primary textbook.

Nevertheless, Mormonism has been challenged and, in turn, responded on the level of scholarship and inevitably this scholarship does trickle down to the average believer. Here, and in future articles, I want to look at some of the issues that have featured prominently in recent years and test the claim that, as Mosser and Owen wrote in 1997, Evangelicals are "losing the battle and not knowing it".

BOOK OF MORMON SCHOLARSHIP

The first time we meet Mormonism we usually encounter the Book of Mormon, "a volume of holy Scripture comparable to the Bible". (2) The eighth article of faith of the Mormon Church tells us the comparative worth placed on the Bible and the Book of Mormon. "We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God." The Book of Mormon, then, takes precedence, as is confirmed by the

following statement from Joseph Smith, Mormonism's founding prophet.

"I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book." (3)

A remarkable book that it should be more reliable than the Bible be more correct than any other, and that it should be man's surest way to God bar none.

CORRECTING THE "MOST CORRECT BOOK"

It is common knowledge that there have been upwards of 4,000 changes made to the text of the Book of Mormon. Most have been grammar, punctuation, spelling etc. although some much more serious changes have been made. It does cause one to question the boasting of Joseph Smith in 1841, especially in light of the account of the translation work by Joseph's scribes. In 1848 Oliver Cowdrey, chief scribe for the Book of Mormon, testified:

"I wrote with my own pen the entire Book of Mormon (save a few pages) as it fell from the lips of the Prophet as he translated it by the gift and power of God by means of the Urim and Thummim, or as it is called by that book, holy interpreters. I beheld with my eyes and handled with my hands the gold plates from which it was translated. I also beheld the Interpreters. That book is true. ... I wrote it myself as it fell from the lips of the Prophet." (4)

In a letter to the *Deseret News*, Edward Stevenson, who is regarded as "the person who best reflects Martin Harris", (5) wrote:

"Martin Harris related an instance that occurred during the time he wrote that portion of the translation of the Book of Mormon which he was favored to write direct from the mouth of the Prophet Joseph Smith. He said that the prophet possessed a seer stone by which he was enabled to translate as follows: By aid of the seer stone, sentences would appear and were read by the prophet and written by Martin, and when finished he would say, 'Written,' and if correctly written, that sentence would disappear and another appear in its place, but if not written correctly it remained until corrected, so that the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates precisely in the language then used." (6)

A book "translated by the gift and power of God". A book not considered "written" until every sentence was confirmed as correctly transcribed so that "the translation was just as it was engraven on the plates precisely in the language then used".

Faced with all the changes made in the text, however, Mormon "scholars" have come up with a rather different account of how the translation work was done. They quote Doctrine and Covenants 1:24,

"These commandments are of me, and were given unto my servants in their weakness, after the manner of their language, that they might come to understanding."

It is argued that God showed Joseph the *meaning* of the text and Joseph had to cast about within his own vocabulary, and whatever resources he had about him, to find a way of expressing this meaning "after the manner of their language". This, it is argued, is why we find excerpts from the Westminster Confession and Shakespeare, as well as popular books and the local press of the time, in the Book of Mormon.

When Lehi and his family fled Jerusalem, we are told, they took with them Laban's brass plates, which contained "the record of the Jews".⁷ It is from these the Book of Mormon people quote, thus explaining the presence of so many lengthy Bible texts in the book. There are over 400 verses in which the Nephite prophets quote from Isaiah, and half of these appear precisely as the King James version renders them. Daniel H Ludlow explains this as follows:

"There appears to be only one answer to explain the word-for-word similarities between the verses of Isaiah in the Bible and the same verses in the Book of Mormon...if his translation was essentially the same as that of the King James version, he apparently quoted the verse from the Bible." (8)

Commenting on this in the *Ensign* magazine, Richard Lloyd Anderson wrote,

"Thus the Old Testament passages from Isaiah display a particular choice of phraseology that suggests Joseph Smith's general freedom throughout the Book of Mormon for optional wording." (9)

There are, in other words, two conflicting accounts of how the Book of Mormon came to be translated. It was either a word-for-word "translation", correct in every part,

or it was a paraphrase "made after the manner of [Joseph's] language". Do we rely upon the accounts of those best placed to tell us what happened, or do we depend upon Mormon scholars to "interpret" events in light of later developments? Of course, given the growing distance in time, Mormon scholars are more able to put this disparity of accounts down to poor reporting on the part of those privileged enough to act as scribes to the prophet. However, since the scribes quoted above were also two of the three key witnesses to the Book of Mormon, it does not help the Mormon scholars to impugn their trustworthiness or their memory.

IN THEIR WEAKNESS

It is a curious phrase to find in a work purporting to be Scripture, "in their weakness". It suggests room for error, allowance for human failings. There is a similar phrase in the title page of the Book of Mormon:

And now, if there are faults they are the mistakes of men; wherefore, condemn not the things of God, that ye may be found spotless at the judgement seat of Christ.

It seems that Joseph Smith al-

lowed for every eventuality in bringing forth "the most correct book of any book on earth" - just in case. Just as well. It has been observed that there can hardly be any book published in the nineteenth century that has had as many changes made to it as the Book of Mormon. There cannot be many anyway. If there are you will probably find in them a publishing history showing that what you have in your hand is not the original but a revised edition. You will find no such candid admission in the front of the Book of Mormon. The unsuspecting "investigator" will be led to believe that this is what came "from the lips of the Prophet as he translated it by the gift and power of God by means of the Urim and Thummim". Such equivocation shows why scholars are necessary to "explain" the Mormon message when prophets, seers and revelators are meant to be bringing the plain and unequivocal meaning of the gospel purported to have been lost in apostasy in the first century.

2 Timothy 3:16

(1) At the time of publishing the paper - Carl Mosser was a recent

graduate of Talbot School of Theology in La Mirada, California, where he earned masters degrees in Theology, New Testament, and Philosophy of Religion and Ethics. Paul Owen was a Ph.D candidate at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland, where he is studying in the department of New Testament Language, Literature, and Theology.

(2) Introduction to the Book of Mormon.

(3) History of the Church Vol.4,p.461 (1841).

(4) "Journal of Reuben Miller," 21 Oct. 1848, quoted in "By the Gift and Power of God," Ensign, Sept. 1977, 79

(5) "By the Gift and Power of God," Ensign, Sept. 1977, 79

(6) Quoted in "Where Does It Say That?", Bob Witte

(7) 1 Nephi 3:3-4

(8) Daniel H. Ludlow, A Companion to Your Study of the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), p. 141.

(9) "By the Gift and Power of God," Ensign, Sept. 1977, 79. ☐

APOLOGETICS - 18

IS THERE A SECOND CHANCE?

I recently saw a letter from a well-known evangelical preacher and was amazed at what he wrote after someone challenged him about a message he had broadcast on the radio.

He reasoned that some may be redeemed from hell as follows, "My biblical basis for making the claim I did about the possibility of people receiving the gospel and being delivered from hell after death comes from 1 Peter 3:19 and 1 Peter 4:6. Also, look to Ephesians 4:7-12."

If as evangelical Christians we preach this, surely we are agreeing with groups such as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society and the Latter-day Saints who both teach the possibility of salvation after death? Where, then, is the difference?

GENERAL VIEW

Before we look at the specific verses mentioned above, it would be helpful to take an overview of the

Biblical message of the death of man and what happens at that point.

1 Corinthians 15:26 informs us that death is an enemy, indeed the last enemy that will be abolished. Death, therefore, has power over us without the work of Christ. This is seen in verse 56 of the same chapter which tells us that the sting of death is sin - in other words it is not death that we should be concentrating on but sin.

Romans 5:12 informs us, further, that death entered the world as a result of sin. And, because everybody sinned, all came under the power of death. In Genesis 3 we see that Satan said, in the Garden of Eden, you will not die! But this was only a half truth because, through sin, death did enter in but there are two levels to that death. Yes there is physical death but, beyond that, there is spiritual death.

In other words, we will die physically but it is the spiritual death that we should be concerned about.

When we go into the state of death and enter its realms, unless the power of death has been broken, unless the power of sin has been broken there is no way that we can rise out of death - we will be captured.

The reason that Jesus' death and work on the Cross is available for us today is not simply because He died, but because death could not hold Him. Death looked for sin (the sting in the tail) but because no sin was found He rose triumphant from the grave.

What are we saying? The Bible seems to give a clear message that unless sin is dealt with BEFORE we go into death there is no escape!

Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible put it like this,

"The sting of death - The sting which death bears; that with which he effects his purpose; that which is made use of to inflict death; or that which is the cause of death. There would be no death without sin. The apostle here personifies death, as if it were a living being, and as making use of sin to inflict death, or as being the sting, or envenomed instrument, with

which he inflicts the mortal agony. The idea is that sin is the cause of death. It introduced it; it makes it certain; it is the cause of the pain, distress, agony, and horror which attends it. If there had been no sin, people would not have died. If there were no sin, death would not be attended with horror or alarm. For why should innocence be afraid to die? What has innocence to fear anywhere in the universe of a just God? The fact, therefore, that people die, is proof that they are sinners; the fact that they feel horror and alarm, is proof that they feel themselves to be guilty, and that they are afraid to go into the presence of a holy God. If this be taken away, if sin be removed, of course the horror, and remorse, and alarm which it is suited to produce will be removed also... Paul here shows that it is the law which gives its chief vigor to sin, and that it does not tend to subdue or destroy it; and that power is seen most strikingly in the pangs and horrors of a guilty conscience on the bed of death. There was need, therefore, of the gospel, which alone could remove the cause of these horrors, by taking away sin, and thus leaving the pardoned man to die in peace"

Matthew Henry says,

"The foundation for this triumph is here intimated, (1.) In the account given whence death had its power to hurt: *The sting of death is sin*. This gives venom to his dart: this alone puts it into the power of death to hurt and kill. Sin unpardoned, and nothing else, can keep any under his power. And the *strength of sin is the law*; it is the divine threatening against the transgressors of the law, the curse there denounced, that gives power to sin. Note, Sin is the parent of death, and gives it all its hurtful power. *By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin*, Rom 5:12. It is its cursed progeny and offspring."

SPECIFIC VERSES

This being the case, already it would appear that there is no second chance! However, what about the verses that were quoted at the beginning – 1 Peter 3:19; 1 Peter 4:6 and Ephesians 4:7-12?

1 Peter 3:18-21

"For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the just for the unjust*, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the water*. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you--not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience--through the resurrection of Jesus Christ"

That these verses are hard to understand is not in question, however, what you will notice is very clear is that NO ONE is seen being released from the 'prison' and having eternal life. Indeed, even though

we may not all be able to agree on what these verses exactly mean, I believe there is enough clear evidence to show that it cannot mean someone having hope to leave hell and enter into God's presence.

First, there is no mention of hell, (Gk. *gehena*) in these verses. The word used is prison, (Gk. *phulake*).

Second, it refers to one specific group of people - those in Noah's day who were disobedient. So even if it could be construed that they were to be released, there is no way you can extend this promise to anyone and everyone.

Third, everyone else in Noah's day was destroyed and so these spirits referred to here have no future hope.

I believe this shows clearly that these verses cannot be used to preach a second chance.

1 Peter 4:6

"For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to *the will of God*."

Again, we have to look at what is definitely in this verse and not what we would want to read into it.

First, as before, there is no mention of hell only the dead (Gk. *nekros*). This word appears to derive from the word for corpse and is used in Scripture for the dead both literally and figuratively.

There is, therefore, nothing to say that these people are literally dead and in hell, but it is more likely, when we look at the rest of the verse, that it is talking about those who are 'dead in trespasses and sins.'

Second, note the order of the verse - first they are judged as men, and only then is there the possibility of being alive in the spirit. Judgment takes place in the flesh, therefore on this earth before they enter into a spiritual realm.

Third, even if we were to allow for the fact that it might be physically dead, they are still accorded the judgement of their life before they died. There are no works in hell and so the judgement would be according to the state that they were in when they left this earth. In other words, their situation could not have changed and so there is no possibility that they were in hell by mistake and have now had their case re-

viewed and won their appeal.

Once again I believe that this verse and the context of this verse gives no hope of a second chance.

Ephesians 4:7-12

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, "WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN." (Now this *expression*, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;"

There are two distinct ways that people look at these verses and we mention them below but either way, for the third time, we have to say that hell is not mentioned. This time a phrase, 'the lower parts of the earth.'

Second, these verses begin with talking about those in the church in Ephesus, and other churches coming after them. It is not talking about anyone finding themselves in hell but it is talking about those who are saved and in the church of Christ.

Third, it was at the point of the ascension of Christ that this event took place. Then in His ascension He literally, 'led captivity captive,' and this is where there is a difference of opinion. Some say, and I have to admit I believe this, that those that were in bondage to sin and captive to the ways of this world were released and the bondage broken. He then poured out the Holy Spirit and gifted men. These were then led in His victory parade with all those He has set free (See 2 Corinthians 2:14). He went down into death but He arose to the highest place.

Others would see that those that are being led are the defeated 'soldiers' of Satan's armies (See Colossians 2:15).

Either way of course, it lends no evidence to the assertion that we can be set free from hell.

I believe that we must conclude that neither this, nor any other verse, teaches the doctrine of the second chance and we, as God's people, whether great or small, should not be teaching it either. ☐

THE PASSION OF THE CHRIST

Mel Gibson's film, "The Passion of the Christ," was officially released in Britain on 26 March. In the weeks prior to his and since we have received a number of emails and there has been some discussion on our website forum. Should you go to see it, if you have not already? Many will give you specific and indeed conflicting advice on that but I feel you must make your own decision before the Lord. You should not go just because the rest of your fellowship is going, especially if you have doubts. However, seek to find out some facts and make an intelligent decision before the Lord.

As I said, I will not give you specific advice but I do want to share my feelings on the subject. I was invited, by Premier Radio, to a preview on Thursday 18 March and so I can comment from first-hand experience. I realise that, although I am writing this before Easter, many will not read it until May or June. However I feel that some of the issues are wider than the film itself and feel the article is still relevant.

I have to say, I wonder if some of those sending comments have taken the trouble to actually go to a viewing, or whether they have simply gone on what others have said. Before I, therefore, share my own feelings I want to address some of the criticisms that have been sent to me about the film. There may be others but I feel the six headings below sum up most of the main ones.

SOME CRITICISMS

1. Extra-Biblical Material

I would not try to defend this as there is, as in any Hollywood Film, extra material. I am told that some of this comes from a Catholic book and this may be so. I would certainly say that this is one of the real drawbacks of the film to me. I found myself again and again thinking - that is not in the Bible!

Of course, we need to say that not everything that happened to Jesus in these hours is recorded in

the Scripture, but surely the question one needs to ask in the end, is, do these 'extra' events, that are not recorded in the Bible, cut across and deny Scripture? On the whole I think not, but for serious Bible Students I would suggest that this is one factor that they need to seriously take into consideration before going to see the film. I will also take up later the question of whether those who know the Bible and those who do not will look at this film in different ways.

The film begins with a clear quotation from Isaiah 53 and during the film there are a number of clear, Biblically accurate, quotations concerning Christ and His ministry. I didn't feel that the extra-Biblical material drowns out this message.

2. Portrayal of Jesus like this is wrong.

I will deal with the performance aspect of this later but I find it difficult to make a clear Biblical presentation of why it is wrong. Each one of us, as we read the Bible, puts our own graphics on what we read. Here we have the graphics of Mel Gibson. Not always true to Scripture but I did find that one or two scenes gave me a fresh insight into what happened. The opening scene with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is a case in point. The Saviour is burdened almost to crushing when a snake slithers across the ground from Satan to Jesus, who is bowed in prayer on the floor. As Jesus stands up, the battle over, the snake cannot bite and Jesus stamps on it. That, to me, showed the triumph of Calvary there in the Garden.

I believe the graphic incidents in the film are made even more powerful because of having to read the sub titles as it is translated into English.

3. It is Anti-Semitic

Having seen the film I can understand why some Jewish communities might be concerned but as far as the part played by the

Jewish leaders is concerned it is no different in the Bible from how it is portrayed in the film.

However, I believe to answer this issue I will quote from a Jew, Cheryl Hauer who puts a different perspective on things:

"Is the movie anti-Semitic? Will it engender hatred and destroy all of the work Jews and Christians have done in recent years to build bridges of understanding? Might it foment violence against Jews in other less secure parts of the world? Here, I begin to feel sad for Mel Gibson. I don't believe he is an anti-Semite, nor do I believe there was any malevolent intent in the making of the film. I believe he is a victim, as is much of the Church today, of an overriding ignorance of history and a non-scriptural, and certainly unrecognized, arrogance that somehow makes it all right to ignore two thousand years of Christian anti-Semitism because we've got the 'real scoop.' If the movie had been made two years after the incident, this would have been an in-house discussion, and it may well have gotten the award for best picture. But it wasn't. It was made two thousand years after the incident, and as such, there is a responsibility to tell the story honestly yet with sensitivity to what has happened to Jesus' descendants, the Jews, during the ensuing centuries. I don't think Mel Gibson understood the history or the responsibility."

4. Mel Gibson's beliefs and life

No one is perfect in this life and Mel Gibson may well have appeared in violent films and, indeed, his theology may not be that of evangelical Christianity. However I don't think that should automatically make us react against the film and not watch it. To me there are weightier matters that should be brought into focus to decide what we do with this film.

5. It is a money spinner

Well so is the Bible! The fact that something makes money, and is popular, does not make it either right or wrong. Mel Gibson will make much money out of this

film, the most successful film in history so far, when measured by box office receipts, and the amounts have probably been increased because of the way so many have reacted to the film.

Again, I do not believe that is a basis for not seeing the film.

6. Catholic Propaganda

I just did not come away with that impression by looking at the film. Yes, the man who made it is a Catholic, and there are aspects of tradition added. Teachings from some of the Stations of the Cross are shown in the way Jesus climbs up to Calvary; Mary does keep appearing, although there is no attempt to give her a place above Jesus.

It seems to me that anyone seriously affected by this film would not immediately feel they need to go to a Catholic Church, they would probably go to whatever church they had had links with in the past. I happen to know some of the teachings of the Stations of the Cross because of previous research but there will be many a 'man-in-the-street' who would not associate the events of the film with Catholicism.

One area, that has been claimed is Catholic inspired is where the nails are put in Jesus' hands. Is the fact that the nails were hammered in to the centre of the palms inspired by the stigmata experience of some Catholics? I cannot say what the basis is for this portrayal but I know when Thomas and Jesus were talking about the nails in John 20 the phrase used is "in my hands" and so this seems Biblical to me.

MY IMPRESSION

Apart from the constant nagging I have talked about - that's not in the Bible - there was one other main issue that concerned me. My overall impression was not of the greatest film I had ever seen but of the impossibility of portraying what Mel Gibson was trying to bring to the screen. I talked earlier on about criticism and the question of whether or not anyone should play such a role, but whether they should or not, the one playing the role will be a human being and that to me is the biggest problem.

All the way through I was conscious of a human Jesus. Yes, Jesus was human, but the Bible clearly portrays Jesus as both man and

God. The way Jesus acted in the film was the only way it could be written and directed by human beings - the human Jesus. This I feel leads to a misunderstanding of Jesus and who He really was. Maybe, for that reason, people are right when they say that no one should play such a part.

Nowhere in the film, as far as I could detect, was there any attempt to show that Jesus was not just man, and a human Jesus is just not sufficient. This human Jesus actually leads on to my second great problem, that of the resurrection.

The Bible, again, shows that unless there was a glorious resurrection then all the suffering of the past hours and final death on the cross would have been a waste. If the last enemy, death, could have at that point swallowed Jesus then it was all null and void. If Satan could have stopped Jesus rising from the dead, he would have won! The resurrection is, therefore, vital. Here, apart from the soundtrack that built to the usual crescendo for the end of a Hollywood film, I felt deflated.

Jesus is seen still in the tomb, with the grave clothes in the background, simply walking out of shot - and roll titles. What happened to the disciples who ran away? What happened to the soldiers who saw the events? We are not even given a small glimpse.

I'll never forget the first time I saw Ben Hur in 'Cinemascope'. With the blood and the water running down through the street and the leper who was desperate to see Jesus, but had come too late, healed, you knew the Cross was a triumph. Not, unfortunately, in Mel Gibson's film - Jesus is very much the one on the cross not the one rising from the dead and able to change lives.

CONCLUSIONS

Let me then try to share in closing my personal thoughts and seek to bring a balanced perspective to what is being said.

Did it personally change my life? No - although how can you not be affected emotionally by the scenes of the flogging, etc? The fact that, as the film ended, everyone sat quietly watching 3 minutes of credits is witness to the fact that this

film has an emotional effect and you do not want quickly to move and start conversations.

Would I recommend everyone to see it? As I said, I think that is up to you and the Lord and, of course, the censors who have said, because of the violence, only those over 18 can see it. However, I would have to say that I feel some would not react well to the graphic content of the whipping, etc, and this is a point you should take into consideration when deciding if you are going to see it.

However, when all is said and done, I am left with the distinct feeling that the film will be watched very differently by those who already are Christians and know Christ as their Saviour and those who at present have no allegiance to Christ at all. That is why I do not feel we should be totally against it.

Yes, let us be aware of the failings Biblically of the film, and you may feel that this will cause you to come to the conclusion not to see it. However, the 'man-in-the-street' is not going to use theology to decide whether they are going to watch it or not.

Many non-believers are going to watch this film and, whatever our feelings may be, it does give us the opportunity to talk about Christ. If your next-door neighbour sees the film and wants to start talking about it, the last thing to do is to tell them all the things wrong with it - start talking about what is right with Jesus!

Someone said to me recently, who had not heard me speak for several years, you've mellowed! I think I have in that now I am more concerned with what is right, when talking to cult members, than what is wrong. This, I believe, is the wider issue that we need to look at in our evangelism.

We are here to reveal Jesus to others. And as Paul said, "by all means to save some" (!!!) The film, as I have said, has many errors, but it can be used, without compromise, to share the real Jesus with people who desperately need to know. If we allow ourselves to ignore such an event then we are not in touch with the people of today.

No compromise indeed but plenty of Godspromise (you work it out!) ☐

(Continued from page 7)

WATCH THE TOWER

So we would therefore expect, having undertaken such a commitment, that their attitude to the UN would change between 1992 and 2001, when they finally terminated their association with the DPI. Maybe we would expect that but we would be disappointed. Just one further quote from a fairly extensive article in The Watchtower, 1 October 1995 shows their attitude continued to be the same.

"Today, with 185 member States, the United Nations is stronger than ever. Why, then, has the most powerful international organization in history failed to accomplish its noble objectives fully?... One major complication is the role that religion in world affairs... Referring to its 50th anniversary, Pope John Paul II spoke of the United Nations as 'the instrument par excellence for promoting and safeguarding peace.' His sentiments are shared by a global community of religious leaders. But this tactful liaison between religion and government cannot hide the fact that religion has been a hindrance and a nuisance to the United Nations... A prophecy in the Bible book of Revelation provides the answer. It speaks of

a symbolic 'great harlot' that sits as 'a queen' and has 'a kingdom over the kings of the earth.' This harlot lives 'in shameless luxury' and has relations with the world's governments. These governments are depicted as 'a scarlet-colored wild beast,' upon which the harlot rides in comfort. (Revelation 17:1-5, 18; 18:7) Known as 'Babylon the Great,'... Appropriately, today the harlot represents all the world's religions, which have mingled in with the affairs of governments... Thus Jehovah God himself will have taken the initiative by maneuvering powerful nations into a campaign to remove false religion. The worldwide religious system, with its luxurious temples and shrines, will be completely devastated... Is there any guarantee that eliminating religion will really clear the way for a world without war? No. The United Nations will continue to face an ironic situation. On the one hand, people want peace and security. Yet, on the other hand, it is people who pose the greatest threat to peace and security... Clearly, the United Nations does not have the ability to bring world peace. Its members and supporters are all imperfect humans... God warns: 'Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs.' ... In Bi-

ble prophecy, human governments are often symbolized by wild beasts. (Daniel 7:6, 12, 23; 8:20-22) Hence, for many decades the Watch tower magazine has identified the wild beasts of Revelation chapters 13 and 17 with today's worldly governments. This includes the United Nations, which is depicted in Revelation chapter 17 as a scarlet-colored beast with seven heads and ten horns." – pp.6-7.

All this leaves us wondering just how, "God's Truthful mouthpiece", as the Society believes they are, could have been party to such deception for 10 years. How can you sign an official document saying you will share the ideals of the UN Charter but write articles showing exactly the opposite?

How can you keep such an alliance quiet and then when it becomes public, not even hold your hands up and say sorry. That however seems to be par for the course for the leadership of the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society. Surely this shows that they are not God's only and truthful mouthpiece on this earth? ☐



I can't thank you enough for the "Quarterlies" that I have been receiving for some time now, they have been essential for my witnessing. They have provided me with knowledge not only about the door-to-door cults, but have given me insight into many other teachings that are not biblical. Once I have read them, I leave them on the information table at my Church, knowing that they will bless whoever takes them home to read. I also leave them on buses, in Doctors' surgeries and Hospital waiting rooms, etc; there is a big wide world out there that needs to be made aware of the deceptions of the evil one. Due to illness reading has become a difficulty just lately, so it would be a good idea

to remove me from your mailing list. I enclose a small gift of appreciation. May God continue to use you and your amazing team to win for Him the lost and the vulnerable. - Shirley - London

I must share the following with you and your team... today our Lord's Ministry through Reachout did exactly that; it reached out to the Jehovah Witness community.

I had made up my mind today would be the day I would write to you and nothing was going to stop me, so I thought. As I got halfway upstairs to the office the door bell rang, I turned to face the front door and through the glass panels I saw two shadowy figures - guess what? On opening the door a voice said "Good day, sir, are you concerned about the terrible state of the world today?" "Yes I am. Are you Jehovah's Witnesses?" "We are" they replied. "Please come in out of the cold" I said as I showed them into the front room.

After about 20 minutes... the door bell rang again... Guess

what...? I saw two shadowy figures... I showed them into the front room.

Over the past 10 or 12 years I have had literature from Reachout and... I have now learnt to take the initiative and ask them questions... They left after about 45 minutes, during that time I shared with them that I was saved and asked them "Are you saved?" They replied "No but we hope to be on judgment day."

My reply as they left was "This is why I can't follow an organisation called the Watch Tower; I need the person Jesus Christ in my life."

I returned to my seat feeling battered, chewed up and pulled through the ringer. Please thank all your team for putting Christ first in your ministry and equipping Christians who have a heart for the cults to boldly go where others fear to tread... next time my doorbell rings pray for me to be in so I can hear... "Good day, sir, are you concerned about the terrible state of the world today?" - Martin - Kent. ☐

CHEERFUL GIVING

Since April 2000 it has been possible for us to reclaim any tax that you may have paid on the amount of your gifts to Reachout Trust no matter how small providing you instruct us to treat them as "Gift Aid Donations."

WHY SHOULD I DO THIS?

1. It is good stewardship – your gift is increased by over 20% without you giving anything extra.
2. It helps us to be able to plan the work ahead more effectively.
3. It enables us to accomplish many of the projects that we believe that the Lord would have us undertake.

WHAT SHOULD I DO NEXT?

Consider whether you feel the Lord wants you to make a **regular donation—this is especially very helpful for us and we make special offers under our Action Pack scheme for such people** (ask for leaflet) - or a once-off gift. Fill in the form below and send it with the gift. We will receive it with great appreciation and do everything else that is necessary.

WHAT WILL YOU SPEND IT ON?

Obviously there are the normal overheads of the Trust – wages, rent, advertising etc. These costs are kept to a minimum. We then have a Reachout Development Plan, which is a priority list of what we would want to undertake in the next year. At present we are looking to **publish** further material. We've completed the update of our **computer programme** that runs our database, invoicing etc and need to pay the invoice of around £5,000. After this we will update our **information programme** and install it on a new computer making it more searchable.

If you are eligible please could we encourage you to complete the form below (you can photostat the page) by ticking the appropriate boxes, deleting the * inappropriate words and sending it with your gift to **REACHOUT TRUST 24 ORMOND ROAD RICHMOND SURREY TW10 6TH**. Do not worry if your circumstances might change in the future because you can withdraw this authority at any time by simply writing to us. Many thanks.

Authority to reclaim tax on a gift *(Please complete in BLOCK LETTERS – Thank you.)*

Title and Full Name: _____

Address: _____

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I wish to make a one-off gift by cheque (enclosed)/my credit card * of £ _____ for Reachout Trust which along with any other gifts made by whatever means should be treated as Gift Aid donations on which tax can be reclaimed.

I enclose a gift/wish to make a gift via my credit card * of £ _____ for Reachout Trust which along with any future gifts made by whatever means should be treated as Gift Aid donations on which tax can be reclaimed. This is the first of a regular monthly/quarterly/yearly * gift which I wish to pay by cheque/standing order/credit card *

My credit card number is _____ expiry date _____

By signing this form I declare that I have paid an amount of income tax or capital gains tax equal to the sum of 28p for every £1 given.

I further agree to inform you if my tax circumstances change or I wish to withdraw this agreement.

Signed _____ Date _____