

Behind the Curtain of Exclusivism

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Articles (1-4 Pages Long)

Behind the Curtain of Exclusivism

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Few Attitudes that Churches employ Inhibit Fellowship to the Degree as does the Characteristic found in the WCG Genre. Under the Guise of Preserving Unity, the Church STILL continues to Promote a very Detrimental Posture among Members.

It doesn't take long, when among congregations made up of people having a former Worldwide Church of God

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background, to experience subtle and not so subtle pressures upon the membership to distance themselves from contact with or inter-action with or even reading the literature of any other ‘brother’ organization. Though the ‘*not a dime’s worth of difference*’ assessment is often cited by objective observers of their various doctrinal positions, yet a barrier exists, one jealously guarded by the ministry, especially those that are of the ‘one-man’ orientation. That barrier accounts more to political considerations than any real doctrinal difference, for the most part, yet it’s often touted as though it were express Biblical doctrine.

Though this has long been and is still a prevalent characteristic, it isn’t exhibited to the same degree in every organization. Some are more extreme in their intent to repulse others of like persuasion. But even in those not seen as being so extreme, a certain degree of the characteristic often remains stamped indelibly within the operational psyche.

Identity Challenged

Nowhere does this peculiarity stand out more strongly than in those congregations that once embraced (and perhaps still embrace) the Philadelphia / Laodicea contrast. During the political turmoil of the two decades beginning in the late 1970’s, a super interest developed in which a certain ‘main body’ represented itself as being the loyal, exemplary “Philadelphian” Church, spoken of in Revelation 3, while those who found themselves in disfavor, for a variety of reasons, were regarded as wayward, rebellious, and lukewarm “Laodiceans”. This “doctrine” gained considerable purchase among members and ministry alike during the final years of the Worldwide administration, prior to its wading out into the swamp of ‘apostasy’, after which **that** “Philadelphia” became regarded as “Laodicean” and some previously regarded “Laodiceans” claimed to be **the** “True Philadelphians”!

This odd premise found easy adaptation within a mindset that had already been primed for it. In its early years, and particularly as the exponential growth pattern developed after the mid 1960’s, the Church, due to its unorthodox doctrines, found certain safe sanctuary in being exclusivist and isolationist. With so many new converts, and with so few really strong in the Faith themselves, (being new after all) it facilitated the situation well to have little or no direct interface with ‘outsiders’, at least as it might involve a discussion of ‘religion’! The approach isn’t unique, as many groups still use it. At least, it protects the novices, of which there are too many even yet.

You see, ‘outsiders’ pose challenges, outsiders ask sometimes ‘tough’ questions. Outsiders can see things that would ordinarily be obvious, that for some reason had become unthinkable! Outsiders can sometimes rattle certain comfortable assumptions, and if the member is weak, his faith may become undermined unless someone is right there to walk them through the correct considerations and toward correct answers. But of course, that would put massive demands on the ministry, making it nearly impossible. So, better to keep the member somewhat isolated, at first, until his faith is more fully and deeply rooted! It makes good practical sense.

So, we can see in this a certain amount of justification for keeping ones’ self isolated from other like-believing competing persuasions.

Ever Shielded

The problem comes when the situation never ends: When the member or membership never attains the personal growth level to be able to directly face into the challenges of Christian Life, most obviously, to ‘*give answer to that hope that lies within*’.¹ How could a person profess to ‘give answer’ if he never is exposed to any source of question, whether posed inquisitively or derogatorily?

What is unfortunate is when the membership becomes content to let the minister be the **only** ‘front line’ individual, deferring all questions to him, and more than happy to not have to face the challenges of having to think and answer questions themselves. We’ve nourished a whole generation of Christians who rather enjoy being spoon fed nearly every answer: Their ‘study habits’ being superficial if engaged in at all! Babes still, when they themselves by all that time they’d been ‘in the faith’ **ought** to be teachers. (Heb. 5:12) Paul’s comment regarding this situation in some congregations shows us that it isn’t a new thing. Nor is the situation commendable!

Laid Up in a Napkin

But an even more unfortunate situation is when a Church Administration **imposes** the condition. When personal growth

¹ 1st Peter 3:15

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is discouraged, at least as it finds its way out into any form of expression, some administrations see need to put the clamps on it, lest it diminish the pre-eminence of their ‘leader’ or his authorized appointees. In other words, these various separate ministries work to maintain the situation appropriate to newly converted Saints perpetually!! This is something we all should carefully consider. What is appropriate? How should we be applying what we know? What limitations on our expression of Faith should we allow to be imposed? What does it mean to live **by** faith, to walk **by** Faith? In other words, is the content of the Bible our guide for active expression, or is it the culture within the particular organization we’ve chosen to affiliate with that we allow to impose its own particular limitations?

The Nabal Approach

An interesting event found in 1st Samuel 25 poses some considerations regarding this matter. The name of the man means ‘fool’,² which we all too easily can become at times if we’re not careful. The passage reads in part: (1st Sam. 25:3) *“Now the name of the man was Nabal; ...the man was churlish and evil in his doings; ...5: And David sent out ten young men, and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him **in my name**: 6: And thus shall ye say to him that **liveth in prosperity**,³ Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. 7: And...now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. 8: Ask thy young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes: for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David. 9: And when David's young men came, they spake to Nabal according to all those words in the name of David, and ceased...”*

The point here was that in living in the proximity of Nabal’s shepherds, he suffered no losses, neither from David’s men nor from area bandits. David was under the impression that the respectful regard shown Nabal would put him in good stead with this **exceptionally** rich man.

Just Another Dissident!

10: *“And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, **Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now a days that break away every man from his master.** 11: Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be? (What their loyalty status is?) 12: So David's young men turned their way, and went again, and came and told him all those sayings.”*

What is usually overlooked here is that despite his other negative qualities, Nabal is here shown to be to some degree a political **loyalist**. He regarded David as just another ‘split-off’ upstart, broken away from the ‘legitimate’ political authority of Israel’s king. He felt no obligation to offer support to such people, despite the obvious consideration David had already shown him! Making an oblique comparison with the modern situation, Nabal saw no need or obligation to share the provision God had given him with any of these ‘split-offs!’ **Not all that dissimilar to what some of our modern Nabals do as it regards sharing the spiritual provision God has given them!**

David’s reaction was understandable. 13: *“And David said unto his men, Gird ye on every man his sword. And they girded on every man his sword; and David also girded on his sword: and there went up after David about four hundred men; and two hundred abode by the stuff...”* David then mustered two-thirds of his force intending to wipe out Nabal, his entire family and business operation! We can get some indication of the size of Nabal’s business operation by the size of the force mustered to deal with them!

14: *“But one of the young men told Abigail, Nabal's wife, saying, Behold, David sent messengers out of the wilderness to salute our master; and **he railed on them.** 15: But the men were very good unto us, and we were not hurt, neither missed we any thing, as long as we were conversant with them, when we were in the fields: 16: They were a wall unto us both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep. 17: Now therefore know and consider what thou wilt do; for evil is determined against our master, and against all his household: for he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him.”*

18: *“Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on*

² Strong's #5037: “Wicked, foolish, vile or dolt!”

³ Revelation 3:17

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asses. 19: *And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.*” Abigail, at least, wasn’t as hard-headed as her husband.

21: *“Now David had said, Surely in vain have I kept all that this fellow hath in the wilderness, so that nothing was missed of all that pertained unto him: and he hath requited me evil for good. 22: So and more also do God unto the enemies of David, if I leave of all that pertain to him by the morning light any that pisseth against the wall.*

23: *“And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, 24: And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid. 25: Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even **Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.**”*

Nabal didn’t bother to regard David’s protection nor the substance of David’s issues with his former master. He was smug in his own self-sufficiency using a ‘convenient’ regard for his current king to in-part justify despising David and his situation.

Diotrephes’ Pre-Eminence

A primitive example of how ugly things can get in the Church is related in the epistle of 3rd John. There, a case of self-elevation by the local minister became increasingly untenable, to the point that the elder Apostle John and others were denied access to his congregation, and those who were amenable to John’s epistles and personal presence were forced out of the congregation. 9: *“I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not. 10: Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, **prating against us with malicious words:** and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and **casteth them out of the church.** 11: Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”* The situation, though not new, is no less condemnable in any age! So, why do we allow such situations to continue? Why do we support those who are like this?

A recurring phenomenon, where the local minister, or the pre-eminent leader of an organization, sees himself in possession of the ‘anointing of God’, on Earth second in authority only to Christ, thinking of themselves ‘*more highly than he or we ought to think*’ as so many are inclined to do. (Romans 12:3) *“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man **the measure of faith.**”* The suggestion here is that one with a super-elevated self-opinion is not thinking soberly! Yet, how many of these see themselves at the helm of different authoritarian ‘Works’? The real issue at hand isn’t **authority**, as most prefer to allege, but the measure of **faith!**

And it’s these self-elevated types which are invariably the ultra-exclusivists! It’s a natural consequence of that way of thinking.

Messages to Exclusivists

At least two noteworthy situations regarding those not fully amenable to or assimilated within His emerging establishment are posed by Christ to His disciples. Both are somewhat at odds with how we typically would operate among ourselves or would posture toward others. We are remiss to the degree we disregard these relevant instructions.

“I have sheep which are not of this fold” is the first operational hurdle. (John 10:16) The reference isn’t to potential converts, but rather to those within God’s greater flock who for whatever reason aren’t directly encompassed within any narrowly defined congregation. Why they are not is not stated. The reaction of some, that only their own flock or organization is worthy of their interest, leaves the question unsatisfied. How can we even conceive of such a situation, given that way of thinking? How could God possibly have Saints who are not exclusively affiliated with us, some would ask?

One would wonder how the zealous exclusivist would react to that statement of Jesus. *“I have sheep which are not of this fold”*. Would they deny it? Would they say in their mind, What are you telling me this for? I don’t care. They aren’t of us!

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Then, considering the ill treatment some have experienced, rightly or wrongly, some have needed to seek affiliation elsewhere. The record isn't always good with respect to our human interactions.

But Jesus said they were His sheep, though not of a particular fold. In order to be, they would have to have God's Spirit. From where did they receive it? Not thru any organization. Christ sees who is His and who is not using different criteria than do we at times. Another mental obstacle for an exclusivist.

Wheat and tares: “*Let both grow together!*” (Matt. 13:29-30) Another situation that would grate against the exclusivist ‘purist’ is the thought of allowing questionable members to enter among the congregation, let alone stay on. The big problem is our standard for defining a ‘tare’ might differ from God's. We could strive to make the congregation **pure** of all ‘disagreeing types’, but in the process would likely do more damage than it's worth. In our perceptual ineptitude, we'd rip out some good along with the bad and likely end up with a smaller congregation, but one with the same relative percentage of tares still within it! Such is the nature of the best of man's intentions. That's the under-lying point with Matthew 13:30. Only God has the perceptual skill to discern the heart's intent.

We have our Nabals, we'll have our Diotrepheses. So shall it ever be, it seems.

There is a natural tendency toward exclusiveness built into the hearts of mankind. In our defensive posture against the world, we often seek the embrace of those of like mind. This has a degree of understandability but can also be detrimental to the degree we let it generate contempt for others. In this situation, it's easy to settle into alignment behind a singular leader or leadership, generating a refusal to have proper regard for our fellows in the Faith. If they have God's Spirit, there is only one source by which they could have received it!

Exclusiveness can be another expression of organizational self-righteousness, similar to the smug self-sufficiency found in true Laodiceans! It can express our carnality: The carnality of personal favoritisms, as is described in the first three chapters of 1st Corinthians. Paul makes it clear, that our aligning ourselves with or behind a favorite leader is little more than an expression of carnality! Relative to that, he uses the word four times in as many verses! (1st Cor. 3:1-4) In pursuing organizational ‘unity’ this way we can effectively **promote** divisions of another sort!

We need to recognize exclusivism for the detrimental component it can be. The general attitude of contempt toward others of like Faith exposes a flaw in our own faith. “*He that loves his brother abides in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.*” (1st John 2:10, John 13:35)

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Which Galaxies Are Mentioned in Scripture? **(Copyright) by BibleStudy.org (Farmington, Michigan)**

What does astronomy reveal about God? Which planets, stars and constellations are found in the Bible?

The first words found in the Bible introduce us to the Creator of all things through astronomy when it states, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” (Genesis 1:1, HBFV). They boldly declare that sometime in the distant past an all-powerful Being created all the celestial objects we view at night. This article will look at references to astronomical phenomena found in God's word.

Astronomy, in general, is the study of celestial bodies and the universe as a whole. It includes the study of stars, planets, galaxies, and other objects that are beyond the atmosphere of earth. God's word does reference several objects, such as planets and constellations, found in what we today call space.

For example, the most studied star in astronomy, the sun, is mentioned at least 160 times in the King James Translation, with the moon referred to 51 times. During Biblical times, the only planets viewable from the earth were Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn. Some of these can be found in Scripture but only by the false gods which were associated with them.

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The brightest object

The planet Venus is the brightest object (next to the sun and moon) we can see in the night sky. Its ability to reflect light is due to its close proximity to the sun and the highly reflective clouds of sulfuric acid that shroud it. Many times, it can easily be seen just before sunrise, hence its reference in astronomy as the "morning star." It can even be viewed during the day, lending to it also being called the "day star."



Galaxy NGC 6946

There are allusions in Scripture to Christ being the morning star. Since Venus was the brightest of all the points of light in the sky the analogy would be that Christ would be the brightest (or have the preeminence) over the other heavenly bodies, which are the stars that correspond to angels (2Peter 1:19, Revelation 2:26, 28, 22:16).

The planet Saturn

According to a 1913 Catholic Encyclopedia article on Astronomy, the planet Saturn is directly referenced in the book of Amos. This Encyclopedia states, "Saturn is no less certainly represented by the star Kaiwan (called "Chiun" in the King James Translation), adored by the reprobate Israelites in the desert (Amos 5:26)."

A [1906 Jewish Encyclopedia article](#) on astronomy also offers hints where Saturn might be referenced in the Old Testament.

"At the head of this starry host stands a "captain of the army" (Joshua 5:14, Daniel 8:11); according to the passage in Daniel, he was the star highest in altitude as well. By this designation probably Saturn was intended, the farthest removed from earth and therefore the highest in the heavens . . ."

In Stephen's discourse just before his martyrdom, he mentions God's condemnation of ancient Israel's idolatrous worship of "your god Remphan" (Acts 7:43). Remphan was the Egyptian name for Saturn (JFB commentary on Amos 5:26).

Allusions to Jupiter, Venus

Isaiah 65:11, according to the JFB commentary, alludes to Jupiter and Venus. The verse itself states, "But you who forsake the Lord, who forget My holy mountain, who prepare a table for Fortune, and who furnish the drink offering to Fate" (HBFV). The Hebrew word for "fortune" is *Gad*, which is an astronomy reference to the Babylonian god linked to Jupiter. The Hebrew word for "fate," which is *Meni*, is linked to the planet Venus.

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Constellations

Scripture also contains several other astronomy related references to constellations or groupings of stars. The book of Job mentions space related phenomena more than any other book. Constellations such as the Bear (Arcturus), Orion, and Pleiades are written about in Job 9:8 - 9, 38:31 - 33 and also in Amos 5:8.

Modern astronomy informs us that the number of stars in the observable universe that exist (all objects whose light and other signals can reach the earth) is 300 sextillion (that's 3 followed by 23 zeros)! A 2016 study, published in "The Astrophysical Journal," estimated that, at a minimum, 2 trillion galaxies exist in the observable universe.

Given all of the above, it should therefore not be surprising that God, who created everything we find in space, mentions some of them in the Bible. He has graciously allowed us, through astronomy, to witness his handiwork and the power he lovingly wields.

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How to Clean Your Filthy Conscience **(Copyright) by Nathaniel Burson (Big Sandy, Texas)**

Your conscience is FILTHY! IT, and IT ALONE, is what is keeping God from working with you! You CAN fix that, but only IF YOU WANT TO... and I mean REALLY want to! More than you want ANYTHING - more than you want your friends, your family, your habits, your money, your music, MORE THAN YOU LOVE YOUR OWN LIFE!

Do you even know what your conscience was designed to do? Why God invented it in the first place? It is designed to interpret the law of God! YOUR CONSCIENCE was supposed to tell you whether or not it was wrong to steal.... that is, once it had been given the right information.

When you were born, you knew nothing. Your conscience was blank, so to speak. But as you grew, you adapted your conscience to your society's standards. Your conscience learned, for example, that murder is wrong. It didn't always know this.

The only problem was, your conscience wasn't based on truth - it was based on the collective consciences of your family and friends. Because of this, it was of little real value.

Romans 8:7 *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.*

Because in order for your conscience to be of any value, it must be based on the LAW of GOD. When you take that same carnal conscience, and educate it with the ten commandments, it can learn to apply those to individual circumstances. For example, Yes, stealing is wrong. But is it wrong to eat my neighbor's cow if he wanders onto my property?

Your conscience should be able to tell you, based on the information you have available, that yes, it is wrong. And most of the time, in circumstances like this, your conscience does whisper? "Yes, it is wrong".

HOWEVER - then YOU say "Oh, it's not really that bad, after all, he'd steal from me... and anyway, I need it more than he does..." etc.

Then your conscience says "Come now, you know better" ... then you respond "Oh, it's not that big a deal - I think it's OK.". If you'll think about what I've just said, I'm sure you'll be able to think of a time, not too long ago, when this happened to you. This scripture describes this process perfectly.

Romans 2:13-15 *(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their*

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thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)

Your thoughts are constantly accusing or else excusing one another. The one says, "You shouldn't eat your neighbor's cow". This thought accuses you. The next thought says "Well, it's not so bad! And after all, he hates me so it's ok!" This thought excuses you. And the process goes on, until you reach a decision. AND IT IS HOW HONESTLY YOU MANAGE THIS PROCESS THAT DETERMINES WHETHER OR NOT GOD HEARS YOUR PRAYERS!

This process goes on in the mind of every man on earth. But only those who OBEY their conscience, and not their carnal reasonings, will have faith. Because the only thing - the ONLY thing - that can prevent you from HAVING POWERFUL FAITH is a DEFILED CONSCIENCE!

1 Timothy 1:18-19 *This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having PUT AWAY concerning faith have made shipwreck:*

Some - that is, practically everyone on earth - have lost the connection between FAITH, and a TRULY PURE conscience. By doing that, and disobeying their conscience, their faith is destroyed. Because faith consists of THREE things, as I've said often in other articles...

Hebrews 11:6 *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

You must believe ALL THREE of these things:

- A.** Believe that God exists... like practically everyone on earth does...
- B.** You must believe that God is good to those who do good... again, like practically everyone on earth already believes...
- C.** You must believe that YOU are doing good! And that is where your conscience comes in! And that is where the utter LACK of faith on earth today is EXPLAINED! NO ONE BELIEVES THAT, because NO ONE IS DOING IT!

Proverbs 20:27 *The spirit of man is the candle of the LORD, searching all the inward parts of the belly.*

Your conscience is your "candle" that God uses to see if you are obeying him! He checks your conscience, examines it, and if you are doing what you KNOW you should be doing, then your conscience is clean. But on the other hand, when your conscience says, "Don't do that - don't go there - don't eat that..." and the dozens of other things that it tells you daily, IF YOU IGNORE IT, shut it down, override it and silence it, God knows that YOU AREN'T DOING WHAT YOU KNOW YOU SHOULD DO! AND YOU KNOW IT TOO!

1 Timothy 4:1-2 *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;*

When you do that often, you get CALLOUSED to disobeying God. You get HARDENED to the voice in your head. And that is your conscience being SEARED with a hot IRON, and that means you CANNOT HAVE FAITH! You have "PUT AWAY" your conscience, as 1 Timothy 1:19 says, and your faith, and your SALVATION, has been SHIPWRECKED!

Romans 10:6-8 *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above:.) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach;*

The purpose of your conscience is to interpret the law of God. To tell you right and wrong in every circumstance. The purpose of this life you are living now, is to TEACH it to interpret the law of God CORRECTLY.

Again, your conscience, by itself, doesn't know up from down. It can only work on the set of parameters that it has picked up from friends, family, and its own experiences and desires. But to LEARN THE TRUE MEANING OF RIGHT AND

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WRONG, to teach your conscience, you need a PATTERN.

Which is where the spirit of God comes in. When God begins to work with you, and places His spirit with you, He has placed HIS CONSCIENCE in your mind. A perfect pattern for your conscience to follow!

1 Corinthians 2:10-12 *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.*

Verse 16 *For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But WE have the MIND of Christ.*

THAT is why God gave you the holy spirit - to TEACH your conscience right and wrong! Because your conscience - or your spirit, if you prefer - KNOWS what you think, and what you would do in any given situation. Even so, GOD'S CONSCIENCE, OR HIS SPIRIT, knows what HE would do in any given situation!

And so when you have these two Spirits, or consciences, living together in your mind, you have a TRUE PATTERN to follow. When YOUR conscience says "I want to steal that!", God's conscience says "No, that is wrong!". In this way, your conscience LEARNS TO DO RIGHT, By constantly comparing it to the MIND OF CHRIST!

This is that process of **Romans 2:15**, of your thoughts accusing or else excusing one another. YOU MUST DECIDE whether to OBEY the promptings of that spirit and adapt your own spirit to do that which is good and right, or to REJECT that prompting and follow your own way.

1 Thessalonians 5:19 *Quench not the Spirit.*

And when your conscience - (or God's conscience) - says "That is wrong!", and you argue it down and ignore it, that is QUENCHING the spirit, and that DESTROYS your faith, and that ultimately will lead to God LEAVING YOU FOREVER!

1 Corinthians 2:14-16 *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.*

Your carnal spirit will NEVER know the true set of rules, without the spirit of God teaching him! And if you have the spirit of God, YOU HAVE THE MIND OF CHRIST! And you know WHAT HE WOULD DO IN ANY SITUATION IMAGINABLE!

And if you OBEY that spirit, YOUR CONSCIENCE WILL BE CLEAN! Because again, you will KNOW that YOU are DILIGENTLY SEEKING GOD! The MISSING PIECE of your FAITH!

And when you OBEY the spirit always, and when you KNOW that you are diligently seeking God, your sins of ignorance will be overlooked by Him, because YOU ARE DOING EVERYTHING YOU KNOW, and ARDENTLY SEEKING TO DO MORE!

Galatians 5:16-18 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: [Here is that battle again!] and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

If the spirit WINS that battle - If you are obeying everything you know - REALLY obeying, not just convincing yourself, and arguing the spirit into submission, and QUENCHING it, until one day your heart is so calloused you don't KNOW what it is saying anymore - If you are obeying God with a PURE conscience, then you are not "under the law".

No, I don't mean that the law is done away. I mean that anything else you might be doing wrong, God will show you in time - if you continue searching. Meanwhile, He considers you as perfectly clean, because YOUR HEART is perfectly clean!

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Romans 8:1-2, 6-9 *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. [That is, those people who obey the CONSCIENCE OF GOD WALK AFTER THE SPIRIT] For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death....*

...For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

At last! Some of the most confusing scriptures in the Bible make sense! Being “Spiritually minded” isn't a fancy, confusing, hard-to-understand goal - it is simply obeying the conscience, that is, the SPIRIT of God that is in YOU! If you are “Spiritually minded”, and OBEY that spirit always, there will be no condemnation for you, because you don't walk after the flesh, but after the spirit!

I'm going to stop at this point and explain, in simple terms, what exactly happens in your head when you walk after the spirit, as opposed to walking after the flesh. Before the spirit of God was working with you, you could watch a certain TV show - Charmed, for instance - and it didn't bother you at all. Your conscience had no problem with it, because according to the list of parameters you had grown up with, this wasn't wrong.

Then one day, God begins working with you. Then for no apparent reason, when you sit down to watch Charmed one evening as you always do, you have a twinge of guilt in the back of your mind. At first, this makes no sense to you - haven't you watched this hundreds of times before? And after all, it's not such a bad show. The good witches always win, right?

But the nagging sense of guilt remains. Now, to be carnally minded means to argue it to silence, quench that spirit, and force yourself to think about something else. But your conscience would then be defiled because you KNEW the right choice, and you disobeyed it.

The other alternative of course, was to simply say to yourself “Hmm. If I feel guilty for watching this, I just won't watch it” and change the channel. If you do THIS, then you are walking after the spirit. If you act that way in everything you do, every time you feel that twinge of guilt, you will have ENORMOUS faith, because you will be CERTAIN, beyond ANY DOUBT, that God is pleased with you - because you haven't done anything to disappoint Him!

And by this process of accusing, and excusing your thoughts in your mind, and comparing your mind to the mind of Christ that is in you, His own conscience living in your mind, you will learn the TRUE right and wrong, as God and His law defines it.

Romans 12:2 *And be not conformed to this world: but be ye TRANSFORMED by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

This will TRANSFORM and RENEW your mind so that you can prove WHAT IS THAT GOOD, ACCEPTABLE, and PERFECT WILL OF GOD! Now you KNOW the mystery of FAITH! HOLD ON TO IT!

1Timothy 3:9 *Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience.*

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Thank You!

What is Right or Wrong with this Article and Why?

(Be sure to tell us if you want your name on your comments or not.) Learn to Give an Answer!

Was Our Savior Created?

by James Steidle (Swanville, Minnesota)

This question is one that has different understandings by many in the various assemblies over the years. There are a number who believe Yayshua or Jesus did not exist until he was born of Mariam. I believe the Scriptures both old and new uphold and support that he was in existence before the existence of anything else. However, I do not believe he was eternal as the Father was until he was given life eternally after coming down from Heaven and sacrificing his life for ours. Here is my understanding about this often quietly talked about topic.

In Revelation 3:14 John wrote the message that came from the Father who gave it to His Son (Rev. 1:1), "And unto the angel [messenger] of the assembly of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning [G746, the ar-Kay or arche] of the creation of God [Yehovah]." It is my belief this "beginning" is talking about Yayshua the Son as the very beginning of the Father's creation as I believe Proverbs chapter 8:22-31 describes in more detail.

WISDOM WAS BROUGHT FORTH

Proverbs 8 talks about wisdom and verse 12 says, "I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions." Going on to verse 22, "Yehovah [the LORD] possessed [H7069 erect, create, procure are some of the meanings], me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. 23 I was set up [H5258 pour out, to cast as in metal] from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was. 24 When *there were* no depths, I was brought forth" [H2342; born, to be in labor (childbirth), amongst other meanings].

For an example of being brought forth, we find in *Isaiah 66:7-9*: "Before she travailed [H2342], she brought forth [H3205 to act as midwife, to beget, show lineage]; before her pain came, she was delivered of a man child. 8 Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall the earth be made to bring forth [H3205] in one day? *or* shall a nation be born at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children. 9 Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth, saith Yehovah? Shall I cause to bring forth [H3205 to bear young, beget.], and shut *the womb*? saith thy God."

Continuing now in Prov.8:25, "when *there were* no fountains abounding with water. 25 Before the mountains were settled, before the hills was, I brought forth [H2342]: 26 While as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world. 27 When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass upon the face of the depth: 28 When he established the clouds above: when he strengthened the fountains of the deep: 29 When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth: 30 Then I was by him, as one brought up with him: and I was daily *his* delight, rejoicing always before him; 31 Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth; and my delights *were* with the sons of men."

Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 1:24, "But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Messiah the power of Elohim [God] and the wisdom of Elohim."

Do the above readings in Proverbs 8 sound like it is only an inanimate wisdom, which a person would think the Father had from eternity? It reads like an individual being that was brought forth in some way or other. I believe it would more likely be the Son Yayshua describing his beginning.

Here is another example of the word 'formed' [H3335] (which is also in Isaiah 43:10 discussed further below) in Deuteronomy 32:18 "Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee." Formed is H2342. Job 39:1 "Knowest thou the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth [H2342]? or canst thou mark when the hinds do calve?" Calve is also H2342.

IN THE BEGINNING

John 1:1 "In the beginning [what or which beginning?] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made

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that was made. 4 In him was life; and the life was the light of men.”

Paul says in Colossians 1:15 talking about Yayshua, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: 16 For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: 17 And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. 18 And he is the head of the body, the Ekklesia [assembly, called-out-ones, commonly aka church]: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”

John 8:42, “Yayshua said unto them, If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I proceeded [G1831 issued] forth and came from God; neither came I of myself, but he sent me.” Might this include Yayshua’s original beginning and also his physical beginning?

Yayshua added a little more information in John 17:5 & 8, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was [appears two beings involved prior to the start of the world]. 8 For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received *them* and have known surely that I came out [G1831 to issue, literally or figuratively] from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me.” He himself said he was the Son of his Father (John 10:34-35).

BUT WHAT ABOUT ISAIAH 43:10?

“Ye are my witnesses, saith Yehovah [the LORD], and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed [H3335], neither shall there be after me. The above verse certainly appears to be a difficult one in regard to the question, was our Messiah created? In trying to understand any hard scripture, we always want to compare that with other ones that are not hard to understand.”

In searching for an answer to Isaiah 43:10 I came across what Adam Clark had to say in his Commentary.

Adam Clark says regarding Isaiah 43:10. “Ye (the Israelites) are *my witnesses* - *and my servant* (the prophet) *whom I have chosen*, that whatever has been said before concerning Sennacherib has been literally fulfilled. The *prophet* had predicted it; the *Israelites* saw it accomplished.” **“Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.”**

This is a most difficult place. Was there a time when God was not? No! Yet he says, *before* me. Will there be a time in which God will not exist? No! Yet he says, *after* me. Are not all these words to be referred to his creation? Before me, no god created anything, nor was there anything pre-existent but myself. And *after* me, i.e., after my creation, such as now exists, there shall be no other class of beings formed. This mode of interpretation frees the passage from all embarrassment, and the context perfectly agrees with it. The words *my servant*, in this verse, the *Targum* understands of the *Messiah*.”

So, we see even theologians like Adam Clark had to think hard with this verse.

CONCLUSION

It is my belief Yayshua was the Power and the Wisdom who was brought forth in Proverbs 8 and that he was the Son of the Father even before he came to earth. Proverbs 30:4, “Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell?”

These and various other scriptures are why I believe as I do, that Yayshua the Son was somehow brought forth by the Eternal at some point prior to the creation of time and had his part to play in creation itself.

For any reading this explanation of my belief, I don’t expect this to change any person’s mind; but at least it hopefully helps others to understand why there may be a different understanding as to whether Yayshua the Messiah was created or not.