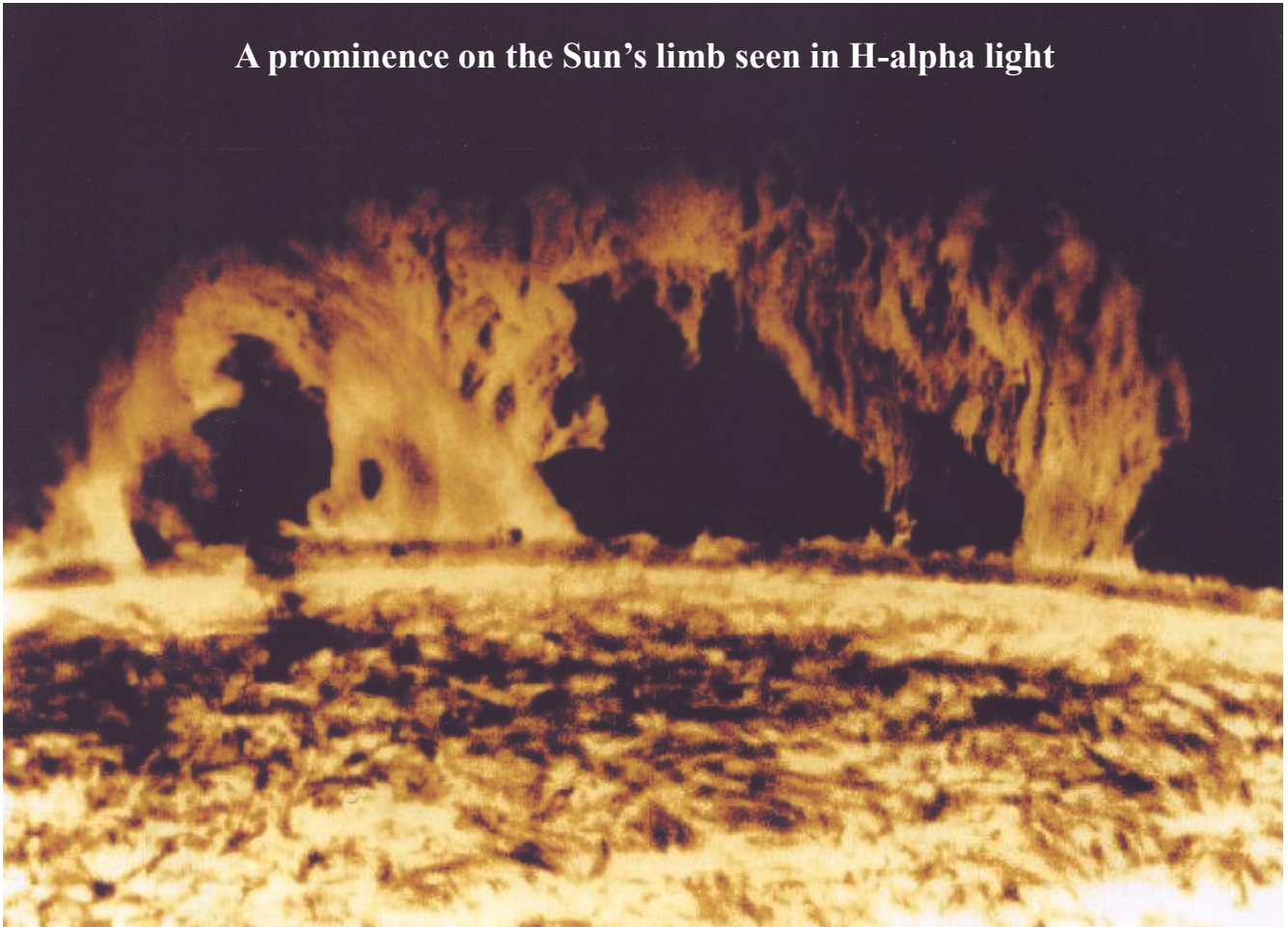


GENESIS ACCEPTED

A prominence on the Sun's limb seen in H-alpha light



NUMBER 2

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M u s i n g s

In November 2003 we bought a puppy, a Jack Russell, for Arthur and he named him Cerberus. 'Cerberus' in Greek mythology was the hound who guarded the entrance to Hades, presumably to



The Fisher 'Hell Hound'!

keep souls from escaping rather than preventing them from entering. Thus 'Cerberus' is the 'Hound of Hell' and our poor little dog is stuck with the name.

Jack Russells can be feisty dogs at times. Ours is a sweetheart for most of the day but does get grumpy and aggressive late at night when he often objects to being moved from the settee, or armchair, or other comfy spots, into his basket for the night. They say that dogs don't bite the hand that feeds them. Well, Jack Russells will. I have the marks to prove it. He was still a whole dog when he bit me but subsequently we made sure he was well and truly 'castigated' to keep him more docile, if you get my drift!

Since getting him he has acquired two ticks. The first time, in our ignorance, we didn't know what it was and took him to the vet. The second one has been immortalised in photographic storage specifically for this



Cerberus's Tick

article. You see, I got to musing as to why God created ticks in the first place. Frankly, I don't have a clue, because I can see absolutely no point in them but thinking these thoughts lead on to all sorts of other interesting questions about which I might have some bright ideas but no definite answers.

Information about ticks

The *Encyclopædia Britannica* (2001) has this to say about ticks:

'Hard ticks, such as the American dog tick, *Dermacentor variabilis*, attach to their hosts and feed continuously for several days. When engorgement is complete, the female drops from the host, finds a suitable site to rest, lays her eggs in a mass, and dies. Six-legged larvae hatch from the eggs, move up on blades of grass, and wait for a suitable host (usually a mammal) to pass by. The odour of butyric acid, emanated by all mammals, stimulates the larvae to drop on to and attach to a host. After filling themselves with the host's blood, the larvae detach and moult, becoming eight-legged nymphs. Nymphs also wait for a suitable host; after they have found one and engorged themselves, they fall off the host and moult into adult males or females. Adults may wait for a host as long as three years.'

Creation problems with ticks

When it first happened we didn't know what it was that Cerberus had acquired because we are seeing the rear side of the tick. Its head is buried in the poor dog's flesh so it can feed off his blood. As you can see from the *Britannica* article, ticks live in a vitally necessary relationship with their hosts. In other words they are parasites and cannot exist independently on their own. Did God make parasites? If not, how did they come into being? Satan cannot create life, he can only manipulate what God has created. Could he mess about with the gene-pool to produce ticks? I would think not because, if he could, he would have done far worse things than we see in the world today, bad though some most definitely are. So we probably can't directly blame him this time.

Creationist stance on death

Modern Creationist organisations and publications maintain that death and disease came in only after the Fall. This is because they want to maintain that death of any sort was not a part of God's perfect creation. It's a sensible thing to maintain. Before the Fall, so they say, the animal kingdom, as well as the human one, did not know death. We know that God told Adam that the ground would bring forth 'thorns and thistles' (Gen. 3:18), so we know that He did create some nasty things for man to contend with after the Fall. Maybe parasites, like ticks, were a part of this second wave of Creation designed to introduce death and disease into the world. The problem then is that we have to put the blame directly on to God for creating such evil things.

This Creationist position, however, presents us with some contradictions. One of the strongest arguments for the existence of God is the wonderful design found in the natural world. All around us we see marvellously intricate mechanisms perfect-

ly designed for their tasks. Even our tick falls beautifully into this category. We may not understand it but its lifestyle is wonderfully designed to fit into its niche in the ecological pattern of life. Consequently Creationists maintain that even small creatures show intricate design demonstrating the hand of the Creator in their origins. Defence mechanisms in beetles, like the Bombardier Beetle, are trotted out as having to have been in place from the beginning or the creature could not have survived. This is correct.



Spiders' webs picked out by frost

Also the wonderful web of the spider is shown as a miracle of creation. The spider needs it to catch its prey. Without their webs being fully functional from the beginning, spiders would have died.

The problem of the spider

The usual assumption made for the diets of all creatures, human and animal, before the Fall is that all were vegetarians. Thus lions and badgers, dogs and dinosaurs were all herbivores. Genesis 1:29-30 would certainly indicate this. These were the air breathing creatures who had lungs. Did such instructions from the Creator include insects and those creatures who do not have 'the breath of life' in them in the same way? This distinction may well be important when considering the Flood and just what creatures were preserved in the Ark. Insects, and such, can survive in all sorts of ways and for long periods of time, for example by clinging to bits of wood which would float in the Flood. (Our ticks can wait for up to three years to find a suitable host.) Noah probably did not specifically have to take them into the Ark at all, though some might well have hitched a lift on host animals whom he did.

Were spiders, therefore, vegetarians until after the Fall or were they designed to catch flies and eat them from Day Six, the Day they were created? If they were vegetarian before the Fall, did God have to modify them afterwards so they could become predators, or did He create them with a dormant ability to spin webs whilst waiting for the Fall to occur? If the latter is the case, it calls into account the nature of God's creation. Did He so create with the foreknowledge that the Fall would occur and thus all His animals, who now are predators, were given latent abilities to become predators? That might indicate that Adam effectively really had no choice about the Fall. If so, God

created in bad faith since His 'very good' of Day Six was effectively no such thing. It is one thing to have a plan of salvation in place before the creation of the worlds (cf. 1 Pt. 1:20, Rev. 13:8) and create in good faith believing equally that Adam would not sin, and an entirely different thing to create a world inevitably doomed to fail. A world predestined from before the act of creation to be doomed could hardly be said to be 'very good' once it was in place. And if Adam had no option but to sin, it seems somewhat unfair to blame him once he fulfilled his divinely appointed destiny.

But if spiders and the like were predators from before the Fall, then death must have occurred before the Fall too, albeit death on a low animal level. The Second Law of Thermodynamics, which teaches that the world is slowly winding down and decaying, i.e. moving from order to chaos, is said to have been triggered by the Fall. Romans 8:20-21 is usually cited as indicating this. However, decaying **had to be** present even in a perfect world. If Adam ate a banana, he would throw away the skin. It had to rot. Animals all have regular bodily functions and there had to be some means of breaking down waste solids returning them to the ground. Insects, including flies, play a significant rôle in this process. You could hardly have a perfect world where nothing rotted and returned to the ground because it would soon be not quite so perfect!

The Question of Death

The question we must ask at this point is: 'What if Adam, or anybody else for that matter, had never sinned?' For Creation to have been 'very good', and for Adam to be genuinely blamed for sinning, this situation had to be a true and real possibility. Let us imagine for a moment that this scenario is exactly what happened.

Death, we know, was the punishment meted out on mankind once Adam sinned. Thus Adam was actually created to be immortal. He lost this status for himself and for all of his children for ever.

Were animals created to be immortal too? I think not. They were not made in the image of God, as man was. Immortality is a characteristic of the nature of God and He

gave our original parents this privileged part of His 'image'. He has never removed the privilege from us. Our souls are immortal and cannot be annihilated. They either live for ever with God (heaven) or apart from God (hell). The death Adam gained was twofold: primarily it was spiritual death but now it is to be preceded by physical death. Jesus came to restore us once more to spiritual perfection so that we might spend eternity with God. He conquered death on the Cross but we still have to die physically like it or not. The effects of the curse are still with us and always will be as long as the world endures. Failure to accept this offer of grace means that we will exist for ever in a state of spiritual death away from the perfection God always wanted for us.



Skull of a Tyrannosaurus Rex, now thought to have been a scavenger. (New York)

If animals were not given immortality and were never intended to be in heaven, even in a perfect and sinless world, death ultimately must have been their fate. So the perfect world God had created by Day Six definitely must have had death built into it at some level, if not for man then for the animals. We'll pick this idea up again a little later on.

What would have been Adam's fate?

If Adam had not sinned, would he have still been living on Earth today? Well we know that there is tremendous pressure on the Earth's resources today but if nobody had ever died we would definitely have been more than a little crowded! Estimates lead us to believe that the world's population would now be somewhere around 75,000,000,000. It is only actually about 6,000,000,000 thanks to death.. Humans were not created for this Earth; '[we're] just a passing through', as the spiritual tells us. Our true home is in heaven with God.

It's the animals which were created for life on Earth. Adam, I believe, would not have been living on Earth today.

I am convinced that in the case of Enoch we have a window to see, however fleetingly, what God originally intended to happen. The genealogies in Genesis 5 conclude each biographical snippet with the words, 'and he died'. With Enoch, however, we read: 'Thus all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.' (5:23-24). This remains enigmatic until we read the Book of Hebrews. Here the writer explains what happened. 'By faith Enoch was taken up so that he **should not see death**, and he was not found because God had taken him.' (Heb. 11:5, emphasis added). Enoch did not taste death but was smoothly translated from this life into the next by God when his time had come.

In a sinless world there would have been no death for we human beings but rather when our time came as God determined, we would have moved effortlessly from this life to the next without passing through the curse of death. It would have been a beautiful and an anticipated-with-joy event. We would not have feared it and our families would not have been devastated by it but would have genuinely rejoiced for us. Yes, we would have aged slowly but surely. Our lifespans would have been similar to those early patriarchs, whose average at death

was 912, if we leave Enoch out of the equation. God would not have had to rescind His command to us to 'be fruitful and multiply' (Gen. 1:28), which He most certainly would have had to do once the Earth was filled up with people if Adam had not sinned and nobody ever departed from this life because of it.

Thus two things changed at the Fall with regard to the leaving of the Earth for our spiritual world with God: it came via physical death and not via translation and it was accompanied by sorrow and mourning not happiness and joy.

Death and the animal kingdom

Animals were never destined for spiritual existence in heaven. They were put here as a part of the created Earth which God prepared for Adam, and, just like the physical Earth, they were destined to perish when their time came. For some there was to be only an ephemeral lifespan. For others, it

would have been much more human-like in length.

Once we view death as a curse, we cannot comprehend the notion of a perfect world with death for animals built into it. The existence of death seems to rule this out; however, it is part of our fallen nature to view it this way. Also we have been raised with too large a diet of films like *Bambi* and think that animals have a human understanding of death. It's true that they have an instinct to survive, and therefore try to avoid death if they can, but they most certainly do not see death as we do.

What may have altered at the Fall

The animals were given vegetation to eat just as we were in the beginning. However, as we have pointed out, there had to be some mechanism for recycling things like solid

waste products and such. If animals were eventually intended to die, scavenging must have been necessary. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to suggest that, amongst the higher animals at least, those who now are predators were once intended to live not only on vegetation but also to scavenge. It is interesting to note that *THE* archetypal prehistoric predator, in the minds of modern man, was Tyrannosaurus Rex. The latest thinking is that he was not a predator at all but simply a scavenger!

Conclusion

If these musings are anywhere at all along the right lines, we will need to come to a different understanding of death and the nature of the perfect world which God created. It is easy to think that, when God told Adam that the punishment for disobedience would be death, he, Adam, had no

notion of what death might be. This need not be the case, though, of course, he had no notion of what it would mean in the human world as opposed to the animal kingdom.

I still have to return to my admitted ignorance concerning just what purpose ticks serve in the ecology of the world and why God created them. Maybe they were part of a second phase of creation to help introduce physical death into the now fallen world, or maybe, like the scavengers turned predators, the nature of parasites also changed as a result of the Fall. It may not be possible to find absolute answers; however the search for them can make us examine carefully some of the concepts involved. If so, that will have made it a very worthwhile exercise.

CREATION MATTERS

In the Beginning

There was a beginning! There may be many conflicts between the biblical account of Creation and the currently acceptable scientific one but on this they both agree—there was a beginning. The Bible opens with a majestic pronouncement: *'In the beginning God created...'* (Gen. 1:1) and all else falls into place from that axiom. It neither argues the case for a beginning nor for the existence of God but links them unequivocally together. The current scientific theory of origins is the 'Big Bang Theory' and that too had a beginning at a point in time, in the minds of the scientists who accept it.

The Steady State Theory

In the 1950s there was a rival theory to the Big Bang and that was called the 'Steady State Theory'. It was philosophically more acceptable to the atheistic position because its main platform was that the universe has always been. It accepted that galaxies were finite but the universe itself has no beginning and no end. It has always existed and is therefore infinitely old, if the concept of 'old' has any meaning in this situation. The question, therefore, of how the universe started does not arise, under this scenario. In other words, the universe itself has taken on some of the properties of God.

According to this theory an observer in any part of the universe would always think he was at the centre and would find all galax-

ies streaming away from him with velocity everywhere proportional to distance. Although change is going on everywhere, the general overall situation always remains the same, rather like a stretch of river where every part is moving and will disappear from us, only to be replaced and invisibly resupplied so that the river seems virtually the same at any one time. A Steady State universe has to have some means of creating matter constantly so that the supply which is lost is replenished. (Information on the Steady State Theory from *The Modern Universe*, Raymond A. Lyttleton, Arrow books, 1956.)

The Steady State Theory was always more of a scientific religious hope than a scientific reality. It defied both the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics and, even if we have not got a clue what they are about, that doesn't matter; we just have to know that both are very well attested scientifically by experimental observation. The First Law, in fact, says that matter can neither be created nor destroyed. The Second Law says that entropy will increase with time; in other words the universe is moving from order to chaos and is suffering heat death. This means that given time it will cool down to a uniform temperature which is just marginally above Absolute Zero; and Absolute Zero is -273.15°C . If the universe has always existed, and the Second Law has always been true, it



Stars in the Andromeda Galaxy (*Britannica 2001*)

should always be permanently close to Absolute Zero. The unevenly distributed hot spots within it show that it is not in a steady state at all. The distribution of the galaxies too should be even but we know that they are clumpy and far from being evenly distributed across space.

Since the Steady State Theory defies empirical observation despite its appealing philosophy to many minds, it has reluctantly been forced into retirement. It is mentioned because the present great creation hope of the scientific world, the Big Bang Theory, is now coming under increasing attack and not just from scientists who believe in God and the Bible. Many atheistic scientists are now raising serious objections to it, though, of course, they are not turning to the Genesis account of origins as an alternative! If it

begins to crumble on a serious scale, I have no doubt that a modified form of Steady State Theory will be introduced again to occupy the philosophical void. It was, after all, the discovery of background radiation in 1964, predicted by the Big Bang Theory, which spelt the death knell of the Steady State Theory in the first place. As we mentioned above, the option that ‘in the beginning **God** created’ would not readily be accepted as the true alternative not just by unbelieving scientists but by most people. Those who are biased to believe that there is no God cannot ever entertain the ‘God hypothesis’ in their thinking. The bias they are biased with will not let them.

The Big Bang Theory

Astronomical observation of the universe seems to indicate that the galaxies are moving apart, rather like one would observe dots moving apart if painted on the surface of a balloon which was being inflated. The apparent rate at which this inflation is moving can be calculated. By assuming that this expansion has always operated at those speeds throughout time, the process can be reversed in theory until all matter comes back together again. Indeed, scientists bring this extrapolation back to a time when it was supposedly condensed into a dot no bigger literally than a full stop on this page! This they call a ‘singularity’.

They are not quite certain as to when exactly this singularity existed; however the best estimates lie in the region of 15 billion years ago (scientists follow the American billion of a thousand million rather than the British billion which is a million million; we would call this fifteen thousand million but we have to comply with the accepted definition in a scientific context). Some would like to move it back to 20 billion years ago. At that time it exploded, with all sorts of interesting physics supposedly taking place during the first microseconds of time, and eventually the gases cooled and coalesced into galaxies, stars and planets. The scientific community usually puts out these sorts of data as if they are rock solid facts and proven beyond any doubt, rarely, if ever, explaining the underlying assumptions on which they are based.

Some of these assumptions

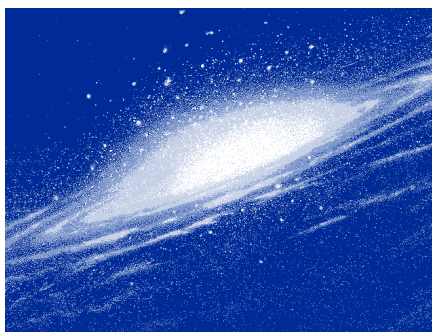
There is no way that the Big Bang Theory can be tested in a laboratory. Mathematical models can be created to explain what *might* have happened but they must remain as speculation. They are theories of creation and, since they are not falsifiable, are not truly scientific at all.

- 1) It is assumed that the scientific laws we observe on Earth operate uniformly throughout the universe and back in time. (There would be no science of the past at all if this were not so.)
- 2) It is assumed that the speed of light has been constant throughout time.

- 3) It is assumed that the interpretation of the Red Shift of light in the spectra of wavelengths from the galaxies is an indication of the distance of the galaxies and that they are expanding; the shift away from the normal position towards the red end being produced by a ‘Doppler Effect’ as the galaxies recede. (This effect can best be illustrated by the sound of a siren coming towards you, passing by and then going on. The change in pitch is caused by the compression and stretching of its sound waves. The greater the Red Shift is seen to be the more stretched the light has become and it is assumed that the galaxies are moving away. The further they are away the faster they seem to be receding.)
- 4) It is assumed that it is legitimate to extrapolate backwards in time indefinitely.

Problems

There are various problems emerging with the Big Bang Theory.



Typical Galaxy

- 1) If the universe is expanding, the deeper you look out into space the further back in time you are looking. Light from the edge of the universe—as we can observe it with our instruments today—must have taken billions of years to reach us. We are not therefore seeing the galaxies as they are now but as they were all those billions of years ago. We should therefore be seeing young galaxies at these edges. The Hubble Space Telescope is now looking with greater clarity deeper into space than ever before and is finding not proto-galaxies deep in space, as theory would suggest, but mature ones. Indeed some star clusters seem to be older than the universe itself, hence some scientists want to move the singularity back to 20 billion years ago to accommodate this phenomenon. The extrapolation factor won’t allow for an age for the universe this old.
- 2) Leading on from the last point is the problem of galaxy formation and the time it should take. There is not sufficient time in the model for galaxies to

form, yet we know they are here and some on the edges are mature as we look back in time at them. How could they have formed so quickly, unless they were created as mature features? A galaxy with an observational age of 12 billion years, which is not now uncommon, simply should not exist at that time in the universe’s development, according to the theory.

- 3) In the first microsecond of the Big Bang, matter and antimatter should have been created in equal amounts. They should instantly have annihilated each other, turning the Big Bang into a Big Puff!
- 4) The background radiation, which was acclaimed as proof of the Big Bang, is now under question. It is extremely smooth and entirely uniform. It does not reflect the lumpiness of the universe and therefore cannot be the ‘echo’ of the Big Bang start of the universe. (To account for this lumpiness, some scientists now propose the existence of Cold Dark Matter (CDM), which does not behave like normal matter, to plug the gaps. This has not been detected and anyway would not account for the superclusters, filaments and voids now revealed.)
- 5) The Red Shift has other explanations, e.g. galaxies approaching us would also produce a Red Shift if they had a transverse motion, or were spiralling towards us at high speed.
- 6) A catastrophic explosion should not produce order from chaos in defiance of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Entropy should increase not decrease. Chaos does not produce order unless somebody imposes order on it.

Conclusions

Dr. Will Saunders of Oxford University said, ‘We are now left without a single best-buy theory, for the first time in a decade, to explain the whole of cosmology.’ (*Nature*, 3rd January, 1991) He was making reference to the background radiation problem mentioned above.

As we mentioned in Number 1, when considering the theories surrounding the empty tomb where Jesus had been placed: ‘When you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, *however improbable*, must be the truth.’ (Sherlock Holmes in *The Sign of the Four*.) Scientists are running out of options on origins. Naturalistic explanations, without reference to God, are being eliminated rapidly but many refuse to accept the ‘improbable truth’ which is strongly suggesting itself to them.

The Christian is biased in favour of God; the atheist is not. But which bias *is* the best bias to be biased with?

Why Judah?

Judah was the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, not, you might think, the natural choice for being the one from whom the Messiah would eventually come but nevertheless he was the one chosen. After all Reuben, the firstborn, should have been the automatic choice for that honour but then God did have a habit of not always finding firstborn sons worthy of His highest blessings. Cain seems to have set a pattern, though few firstborn sons 'rose' to his level of infamy. David, Israel's greatest king, was the seventh and last son of Jesse. Jacob himself was the second son, albeit by only a few minutes however, when twins are in the offing and inheritance in the air, those minutes can make all the difference in the world. So, why Judah?

The Women in Jesus' Genealogy

They say that if you want to delve into your family tree be prepared to be shocked. We all have some very doubtful characters lurking there, probably not too far in the past. Jesus was no exception. If we examine His genealogies as listed in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, there are definitely some dodgy characters in them. Matthew is the only one who mentions a few women in Jesus' ancestry and most of them had a certain amount of 'colour' in their biographies. The listed five are: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba (identified as 'the wife of Uriah', rather than by name: vs. 6), and, of course, Mary.

Mary is the only one over whom there is no kind of question mark at all. She was a pure and righteous woman, and we should not under-estimate her worth just because some in Christendom over-estimate it. What a remarkable and wonderful lady she was. Then there's Ruth, the Moabitess. Now what possible questionable thing could we say about her? Her story is one of the most beautiful love stories in the Bible? Well, in chapter 3, just what was going on that night on the threshing floor and what was she offering Boaz in verse 9? Boaz, to my mind one of the unsung heroes of the Bible, does not take any sort of advantage of Ruth but does then, and continues to do, the godly and honourable thing by her.

Rahab, as we all know, was a Canaanite prostitute, who lived in Jericho and obviously turned good, marrying into the Jewish

nation. And then there's Bathsheba! She was nothing if not an ambitious and politically manipulative woman. Poor old David rightly gets the lion's share of the blame for that unsavoury incident involving her and her husband, Uriah, but what was she doing bathing where she could be seen from the palace? She must have known that David had an eye for the ladies, and that he had not gone out to battle this time as he should have done, so why place herself in a position where she knew she could tempt him if he happened to see her? She was hardly heartbroken over her virtuous husband's death and, king or no who summoned her into his presence, it takes two to tango. I think of her as the Princess Diana of the Old Testament. I don't think she was a very nice woman at all but rather was a conniving, ruthlessly ambitious, manipulative minx! Then as for Tamar, her story almost beggars belief, but we will return to that later as we consider the story of Judah in a little more detail.

A short summary of the 12 sons of Jacob

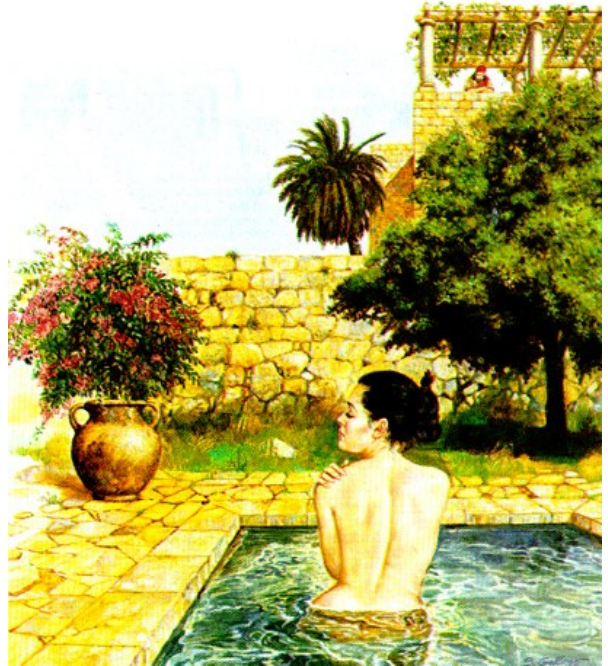
Of the 12 lads born to Jacob, as he set about with a will to become the father of a nation, six were nonentities in the biblical account: Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar and Zebulun. These were the children of his two concubine wives, Bilhah and Zilpah, and Leah's last two boys. Leah's first four sons we certainly know a little more about since there is some biographical detail given about them, and, of course, Rachel's two at the end of the list, namely Joseph and Benjamin.

The last two, though favoured by Jacob because they were born to his beloved Rachel, did not get the big prizes from God in the history of the nation: the kingly and the priestly lines. They went to Judah and Levi respectively. It's almost as if God honoured the first marriage of Jacob as the truly legitimate one despite the fact that he was tricked into it by Laban. God's intention for marriage has always been one man to one woman, once, unless a death occurred and there could be a perfectly correct remarriage of the bereaved. Though He accepted our human weaknesses at times and in the Bible blessed men with multiple wives, there is no equivocation about the institution of marriage, which goes right back to Eden, and God's original intention is quite plain. Jesus seems to give the one legitimate ground for divorce as being adultery (Mt. 19:1-9), however,

even that is contentious in its interpretation as to what He actually meant. God wants, and always wanted, there to be just one man to one woman for life.

How Judah rose from fourth to first

As far as being the father of the tribe from which the Messiah was to come is concerned, the first three of Leah's sons managed to blot their spiritual copybooks quite spectacularly. Reuben took an incestuous fancy to Bilhah, Jacob's concubine, and slept with her. Jacob, by then renamed Isra-



David and Bathsheba

el, got to hear of it and apparently did nothing (Gen. 35:22). However, when it comes to the blessings which he was to give to all of his sons at the end of his life, he has this to say about Reuben:

'Reuben, you are my firstborn, my might, and the firstfruits of my strength, pre-eminent in dignity and pre-eminent in power.

Unstable as water, you shall not have pre-eminence, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it — he went up to my couch!'" (Gen. 49:3-4).

Exit Reuben from the frame.

Simeon and Levi were also eliminated because they were men of violence, and in their violence they greatly upset their father. The story is one of rape followed by treachery and wholesale murder. It's one of the Bible's least uplifting and edifying incidents and it is told in Genesis 34. It surrounds the rape of their sister Dinah by a man called Shechem and how they exacted a terrible revenge, not only on him but on his people, by a slippery, devious act of treachery and murder. Jacob wasn't too pleased with what they had done because it was politically



Joseph sold into slavery by his brothers

inexpedient for him at the time. He was quite prepared to sacrifice honour for a quiet life but the lads were not. So, exit Simeon and Levi too, leaving Judah, though only the fourth son, as the front runner.

The character of Judah

When you read the blessings which Jacob heaps on to the head of Judah in Chapter 49, you realize what a remarkable man Judah was. Jacob goes into even greater raptures about his favourite, Joseph, however the prize goes to Judah who was a leader amongst them and a strong and faithful son, by this time. His tribe was indeed to be the most faithful of all and, combining with that of Benjamin, formed the loyal tribes of the Southern Kingdom of Judæa, which had Jerusalem and the temple there as its headquarters, as opposed to the breakaway tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

Judah enters the lists at three major points in the biblical narrative: 1) Selling Joseph into slavery—it was his idea. 2) The Tamar affair. 3) Acting as surety for the safety of Benjamin when the brothers encountered Joseph in Egypt.

Judah and Joseph (part 1)

Joseph was nothing if not a bit of a brat in his youth. Let's put it down to his age and immaturity but he did manage to get up the noses of his brothers. This wasn't helped by their father obviously making him his favourite. He was actually the son Jacob always wanted and had to wait so long for. Rachel was his mother and she was the girl

Jacob loved and worked 14 years for Laban so he could have her. (It is a common mistake to think that after he was tricked into marrying Leah, Jacob had to wait a further seven years before he could marry Rachel. That was not the case. He had to give Leah a week's undivided attention as his bride but then, after seven days, he was allowed to marry Rachel. The price he had to pay for her hand, however, was to work a further seven years for Laban, his father-in-law. Thus after seven days he was stuck with two wives instead of the one he wanted and poor old Leah was despised. She was obviously simply in the way.)

Joseph, then was not too popular with his brothers and when Jacob foolishly sent him out to check on them they saw an opportunity to rid themselves of him. Judah was part of that pact and it was Reuben who saved the lad's life, not Judah. Now they were stuck with a very frightened Joseph and a

massive problem. What to do? They could hardly let him return home to dad after what they had wanted to do with him and it is Judah who comes up with the solution when he spots a caravan of Ishmaelites on their way to trade in Egypt. Reuben was not present so Judah takes the lead and the others agree with him and the deed is done. We know the outcome, which is a marvelous story, and what a fine man Joseph actually turned out to be.

Judah and Tamar

Genesis 38 is one of those chapters we prefer to skip when it comes to sermon inspiration. From start almost to finish it is unseemly, only being rescued somewhat by Judah's recognition that he is really to blame for the whole mess. It takes a 'big' person to say, 'I am responsible. I am to blame.' Adam failed that test in the Garden and tried to shift the blame on to Eve, and she passed it on to the serpent, who, as they say, didn't have a leg to stand on! Here Judah did not follow in his footsteps and actually grows up and becomes truly the man he always had inside him.

There were, of course, no Jewesses for the boys to marry and keep things in the family, as it were. Consequently they chose brides from amongst the people they came into contact with. Judah visited an Adullamite called Hirah and came across a Canaanite girl with whom he fell in love. Her name was Shua and they had three sons: Er, Onan and Shelah. The first two were significantly older than Shelah, and

therein lies the crux of the problem.

Judah was a failure as a father, at least with his first two boys. Er married Tamar but was so wicked that God slew him. He died childless so, under the levirate marriage law, it was the duty of the next oldest, unmarried male sibling to father a son on behalf of his older brother and thus preserve his dead brother's inheritance. Marriage in those days was certainly conducted under very different circumstances and for different reasons than we do today. The feelings of the couple involved, particularly the woman, seem to be relatively unimportant. It was duty and duty must prevail. Onan, however, knowing that the offspring of such a union would not be his (vs. 9), refused to go through fully with his duty and thereby denied Tamar a son, and his brother an inheritance. God slew him too for his disobedience, not for practising a form of contraception. Tamar was now stuck with Shelah—and he, presumably, was stuck with her—but he was too young to be married. She was therefore packed off home to stay with dad until such time as the lad grew to be a man and could take up the task.

So far so good but now Judah's character defects come into operation. He procrastinated on giving Shelah to Tamar. Meanwhile Shua, his wife died, and he decided to go to visit his friend the Adullamite, which was near to where Tamar was living. She heard he was on the way and decided to take matters into her own hands. She wanted a baby and was upset that Judah had effectively denied this right to her. So, dressing up as a cult prostitute, she waited by a crossroads where she knew Judah would pass. Her plan was to entice him, have him make love to her and thereby give her the baby she deserved, and which he seemed to be denying to her.

He came along and bang on cue it all happened exactly as she planned. She got pregnant by her father-in-law who, on finding out that his daughter-in-law had been immoral and was three months pregnant, in a fit of hypocritical self-righteous indignation wanted her put to death. She, however, had obtained some pledges from Judah at the time of their illicit liaison and on producing them was able to prove to him that he was the father of her unborn babies and had been just as immoral as she was. She, however, had a good reason for doing it; he did not. He was just being impulsively lustful. As we said earlier, he then swings around and becomes honourable and she has twins, one of whom was Perez, who was the ancestor of Christ.

The point about Judah's character in this story is really to ask ourselves, 'What was it about him that made her even begin to think that by dressing up as a prostitute she could ensnare him in this way?' Did he have a

track-record of consorting with prostitutes, especially cult prostitutes? She seemed to know her father-in-law well enough to have the confidence it would work and it did; she'd read him like a book.

Judah and Joseph (part 2)

The final encounter with Judah in the Bible is many years later when the brothers meet Joseph, whom they did not recognize until he revealed himself to them. He played games with them trying to test them to see if they had learned anything as the years had gone by. They most certainly had. Judah, in particular, was now very much the leader. He had come to love his dad so much that he

was prepared to forfeit his own life to spare Benjamin and not break the old man's heart for a second time. This was a very different Judah than the man we encountered earlier.

On reading the account in Genesis 44 of the pleading with Joseph about Benjamin and his father, Jacob, it was Judah who was the spokesman, not Reuben, or Simeon, or Levi. He had become their leader, as we've emphasized. He was now prepared to offer himself as a sort of sacrifice for his brethren. In this he became a messianic figure and by this he showed his right to be the one through whom Messiah

would eventually come.

Jacob, I feel sure, would have wished that this blessing would have fallen on to Joseph's tribe. Great as Joseph was and great as the blessings were which were given to him through the two half tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, Judah—as we noted earlier—was from the marriage to Jacob's legitimate, first wife Leah, and it was to be through her offspring that kings, and thereby Messiah, and priests would come.

And this seems to be the answer to the question posed at the beginning: 'Why Judah?' There really is no doubt about it.

The Amazing Erosive Power of Water

Some people doubt that the erosive power of water is sufficient to have devastated the world in a Flood. The incident detailed below was an insignificantly minor event compared to the Flood but see what it accomplished! Flooding water has amazing power behind it.

'In just two hours on Monday, 16th August 2004, Boscastle was smashed to pieces—not by a hurricane or typhoon—but merely by an extremely heavy downpour. The flooding was caused by an unfortunate combination of events. First, a damp summer meant the soil was waterlogged, meaning its ability to absorb any more rain was limited. The rocks in this area of Cornwall comprise hard, impermeable slate; a flood like this would be almost impossible in a chalk or limestone valley, as those rocks absorb water like a sponge.

'Then there was the sheer volume of rain. A full two and a half inches fell in just two hours, part of a seven-hour series of downpours that saw more than a half a foot of water dumped on this stretch of coast—more than the normal total for a month.

'The rain was funnelled down the extremely narrow channel of the River Valency, causing it to break its banks in minutes. When an uprooted tree and a car blocked a bridge, the water was diverted even more forcefully into the streets where it rushed at up to 40mph. To cap it all, it was high tide which, combined with the flash flood, forced water back up the channel which led down to the port of Boscastle...

'The scenes of cars and vans turning with slow motion grace as they swept down the main street at window height will be familiar now to anyone with a television. They will surely never be forgotten by those who witnessed them.

'But perhaps equally dramatic are the scenes of what remains. Or—more startling still—to realise what is missing. Six buildings that used to stand in the centre of Boscastle now lie somewhere on the sea or river bed. At least eight businesses were sunk—in every sense of the word—in minutes. Among them was the Harbour Light clothes and souvenir shop, one of the most prominent landmarks in the village and among the most photographed in the county. John Acornley, who lives opposite, described how he watched it shudder, collapse and disappear into the torrent of murky water. One of the traditional postcards of Boscastle had shown a red phone box on a roadside near the centre. Now there wasn't a roadside; there wasn't even much of a road.'



Devastation at Boscastle, Cornwall, after the floods of 16.8.04

Photo and quotations from the *Daily Mail*, 18.8.04

Sins of Omission

When the Lord said that ‘many are called but few are chosen’ (Mt. 22:14), I think He was talking prophetically about *Readers’ Digest* competitions. The number of times I have got through the first two stages and only have to pass the third is almost as many as I’ve had hot dinners, and infinitely more than I have had Chinese meals. One of the last times I was ‘called’, and decided to respond, I thought I would maximize my chances of winning by answering in the ‘Yes’ envelope. We might smile at the naivety of their advertising strategy but they would respond with an even bigger smile and tell us that it works!

One of the things I noticed, in the advertising blurb to which I responded with a ‘Yes’, was a fact that I did know but had forgotten for the time being. It was surprisingly that Mount Everest is not the world’s highest mountain. It only takes pole position in that race in that it is the highest mountain to climb.

The actual highest mountain is Mount Chimborazo in Ecuador. If you measure from sea level, it is 2½ miles higher. At one time all people thought, and most people still do, that sea level *is* level but now scientists know that it isn’t. Just how they know this, I’m not quite sure though I believe it is something to do with surveying using lasers and bouncing them off satellites to receive accurate readings. Anyway, no matter how they do it, apparently the sea is 3½ miles higher by the coast of Ecuador than it is by India. If it were lowered to the Indian base level, Chimborazo would be 2½ miles higher than Everest.

Even without this new understanding of sea level, Chimborazo would still be higher than Everest by some 7,050ft if this time you measure from the centre of the Earth. The Earth, you see, is not perfectly round; it is an oblate spheroid—as I never tired of telling my Geography classes when I was a teacher. This means that it bulges out at the Equator and is flatter at the Poles. It’s its speed of rotation which creates this effect. It would only be round if it didn’t spin. The faster it spins the more it bulges at the Equator and goes flatter at the Poles. Theoretically, if it rotated sufficiently quickly, it could turn into a flat disc. Mount Chimborazo, being located on the Equator, benefits from the effect of the bulge by being further away from the centre of the Earth than is Everest and the difference would give it a height advantage of, as we said, 7,050ft. On both counts it is higher. The only way it fails in the ‘highest mountain stakes’ is that it does not stick up out of the sea to the same height so it is significantly lower, and thereby much easier, for mountaineers to climb.



Beware of unquestioned assumptions

Now all of this is very interesting if you like quirky facts. It also serves as a warning not to make assumptions even about facts that seem to be rock solid. The world is not that simple. So, if I were to ask you, ‘What is the highest mountain in the world?’, you might wish to have the question qualified by asking about the base from which the assessment is to be made. Similarly, if I were to ask you, ‘Who was the first Christian to die?’, you would have to ask if I meant ‘faithful Christian’ or ‘unfaithful Christian’ because Ananias was the first, but he died in sin. Sapphira, his wife, was the second, but she too died because of sin, so Stephen—the Christian’s reflex reply to that question—was actually the third. He was, however, the first martyr and the first to die, as far as we are told, in a known state of faithfulness.

The question of the moment

All of this should now have prepared you for the question we are going to consider here. It is one of those quirky ones which seem straightforward but, in fact, is not, and its answer contains a twist or two. It is: ‘Who committed the first sin?’ Let me hasten to qualify the question. I mean the first sin in this earthly realm not in the spiritual. I am not looking for the answer, ‘Satan’. (And anyway it is possible to make out a good case for Satan’s first sin and man’s first sin being simultaneous events, but that is for another study some time in the future.)

The range of choice

The choice is not exactly very wide; it was either Adam or Eve and the ‘credit’ usually goes to Eve. I am going to suggest that it was actually Adam who sinned first and this might help to explain why the blame is always considered to be his. No biblical writer ever blames Eve. The nearest we come to it is Paul in 1 Timothy 2:13

Mount Everest (North Face)

Photo Britannica 2001

-14, where we read: ‘For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.’ This is an interesting argument because, though Eve is credited with being the one deceived—and therefore being the weaker character by implication—Adam is held by Paul in other places, like Romans 5, to be the one who was culpable. It is ‘as in Adam all die’, not ‘as in Eve all die’. This always seemed to me to be unfair, and definitely a case for ‘Men’s Lib’! It appears that though Eve was deceived, Adam was not and therefore his sin was all the greater as a result and thus he carries the blame for the Fall.

Getting to the real point of blame

However, this still does not get us to the point where we can say that Adam was the first sinner, all it does is quantify the blame. Let us therefore turn to Genesis 3 and see what it actually says about the event. Look it up in different translations and you will find that they all say the same thing. The critical verse is 6:

‘So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.’

You could say, ‘There it is; it’s as plain as the nose on your face. She took some fruit and ate it and then she gave some to Adam, who ate it. The sequence is very clear. Eve ate first and so sinned first.’ Let us then re-read the last sentence of that verse again and put some emphasis in:

*‘She also gave some to her husband **WHO WAS WITH HER**, and he ate.’*

Where then was Adam when this sinning took place? He was not at the other end of the Garden digging up his potatoes, or



**Adam and Eve with the Serpent :
a portrait by Guy Rowe**

fast asleep in his hammock; he was right there alongside her watching her do it. He was perfectly aware of what she was doing and why, and he did nothing to stop her. When he noticed that she did not actually drop dead, as the threat of punishment seemed to indicate would happen (Gen. 2:17), he nobly joined in. He may even have been pleased that she tried it out first so he could see what would happen. This would sound like cowardice but, whether that is true or not, **he actually was guilty of sin by omission**. He did nothing to stop her—as he should have done—and his negligence, his omission, had to come before Eve took that fateful bite out of the fruit.

The man's rôle as head of the family

This is the main point of what I am saying. If Adam had been doing his job as husband and head of the family, he would have stopped her from doing what he knew perfectly well was wrong. Eve was let down by the very one who should have been her strength, guide and stay. Adam had a leadership or headship problem at that point and he failed to pass the test. It is significant that when the Lord confronted them with their sin He tackled Adam first, as head, then Eve and then the serpent and punished them in reverse order. Yes, Eve *was* the first to commit a sin of commission, i.e. a positive act of

sin, but Adam actually sinned first by omission, which then allowed Eve to sin by commission. Therefore, I contend that Adam was in fact the first to sin!

The sin of omission

It was James who spelt out the terms of sins of omission when he wrote: *'So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.'* (James. 4:17). This is an important aspect of sin and it is one which so many people forget. Sin is not just doing wrong it is equally not doing what we know is right. If we stand by and watch evil going on and do nothing to stop it—assuming there is something we can do about it, of course—we are as guilty as if we had done the thing itself. The Rich Young Ruler, who came to Jesus and asked what he must do to inherit eternal life, thought that by keeping the Ten

Commandments and by faithfully 'Thou shalt not-ing' all his life, he would be deemed to be 'good enough' for heaven. Such has never been God's accepted route to paradise.

The world's mistaken view

How many people have you heard say

something like this: 'I'm a good living person. I do no harm to anybody.' They then almost stand back and invite you to give them a pat on the back, saying, 'Well, I'm sure you'll be OK in God's sight when you reach Judgement Day.' So many think that all you have to do to reach heaven is to be law-abiding and do no harm to anybody; and maybe even doing the occasional good turn, or lots of good turns. They equate sinning with actually doing wrong things, not realizing that by not doing right things when they know they should, they will be deemed to be just as guilty. They can also sin in the mind and be deemed just as guilty as if they had done the deed (cf. Mtt. 7:21-30). Oddly enough, therefore, omitting to do wrong can sometimes be no more effective in proclaiming our innocence before God as failing to do right proclaims our guilt! The question of sin in complex and definitely not as simple as reducing right and wrong merely to the level of positive actions or not.

Judgement Day according to Jesus

Jesus gave us that graphic picture of the Judgement Day scene when the sheep and goats are to be divided. It is found in Matthew 25. The righteous performed their deeds of goodness and love without even realizing it. They did not keep score and did not know that they were doing them unto Jesus when they did it to His brethren. The guilty, in this scene, were not 'bad' people at all, as men count badness. They were just negligent and were guilty of sin by omission. These are not the Hitlers of this world who are obviously wicked through and through. They are the people who 'do no harm to anybody' but neglect to do good either. They live largely unto themselves and feel that their innate goodness will somehow carry them through in the end.

Other sins of omission!

Sins of omission are not simply restrict-



The awe-inspiring majesty of Glen Coe (Scottish Highlands)

ed to things like feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. It is true that these are the examples Jesus gave in that illustration in Matthew 25 but when you examine the Bible there are many other areas of culpable omission of which to be aware. Jesus said that 'if you love me you will keep my commandments'. One such is that we are to meet and remember Him. How many of the 'I do no harm to anybody' people actually meet to remember Him each Lord's Day?. How many will tell you that they as good-living as any who do go to church? How many will tell you that you don't need to go to church to commune with God; you can do it on a hillside, in the country, watching a sunset, anywhere?

There's a sense in which they are right. Many are as good-living as people who go to church—and some, no doubt, are better. Christians come to church because they know they are not good enough and never will be. They recognize their need to worship God and receive His strength in their lives. You certainly can, and many Christians do, commune with God when they are in situations where the beauty of creation overwhelms them and gives a sense of the might and majesty of God. Praising His goodness and majesty come pouring out then and there. Jesus, however, also asked us to engage in formal worship, meeting Him in taking bread and wine in memory of His death. To neglect this deliberately and per-

sistently is a sin of omission. You can't claim to love God and not acknowledge the Son whom He sent into the world to save the world, or ignore the wishes of the Son. John wrote in his First Letter (1 John 2:23): 'No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.' Loving God the Father and loving God the Son are so inextricably intertwined that they become the same thing. You can't love God and not love Jesus and you can't love Jesus if you don't do as He asks you to. And He asked us to meet for worship. You can't be a Christian if you don't meet for worship and that means attending church.

Salvation

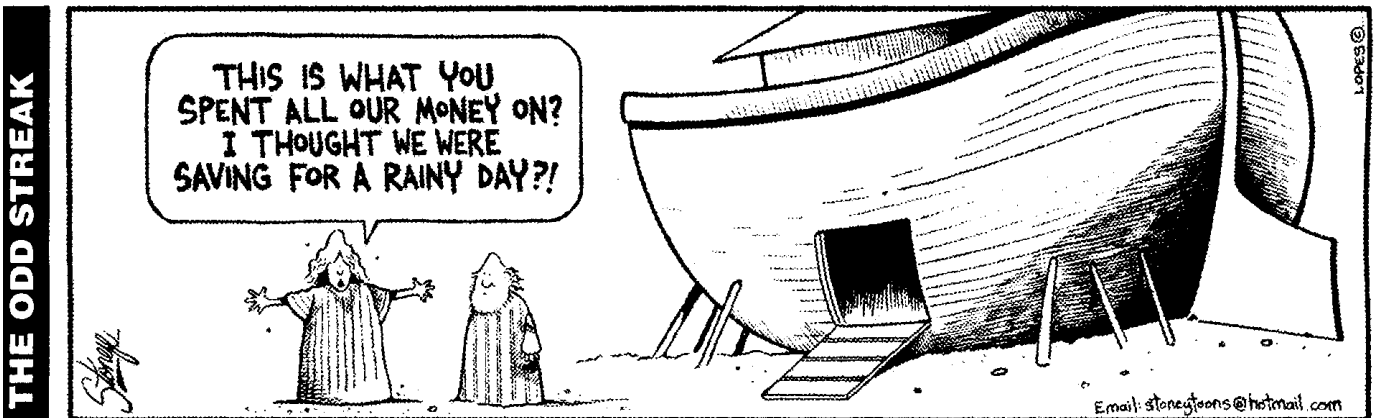
Salvation in Christ is a wonderful mystery. It is not by works but by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). Nevertheless, though we are not saved by works we cannot be saved if we neglect to do as God has directed us to. We do them because we have faith and grace, not in order to gain faith. Neglecting to show the faith we have will cause us to lose the grace we have been given. (Some denominations teach that you cannot fall from grace. Galatians 5:4 says you can!)

Thus many religious people omit to teach that baptism is a necessary part of our response to the belief we have that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living

God. They maintain it has nothing to do with salvation. Peter says it has (1 Peter 3:21, cf. Acts 2:38). Paul says it links and unites us to the death and burial of Christ (Rom. 6:3-5) thereby giving us the certain promise that we will also be untied with Him in a resurrection like His. Nothing to do with salvation? What an omission!

There is such a lot to this. We have only scratched the surface. The first sin was when Adam stood by and did nothing to stop Eve from eating off the tree. He omitted to give her the guidance and help she needed thereby allowing sin to enter the world. To omit to point out that sins of omission are as soul destroying as sins of commission would be a grave omission on our part. People of the world omit to seek out the truth. Some have such a woolly concept of God simply being 'soft love' that they fail to understand that He makes demands on us in all sorts of areas of life. Religious people add to this by failing to teach accurately the whole counsel of God, thereby selling short their contacts and converts by omission at the very points where it matters most.

It's not surprising that this happens for we know that we are all children of Adam and he set the ball rolling so long ago in the Garden of Eden when it really was a life and death matter.



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