

Excerpts from the Apologetics Text

Why We Believe What We Believe

Evaluating the secular modern view of life and faith

Secularists often say that to be a true Christian, one must put his mind in neutral gear and take a leap of blind faith into the dark. They suggest the skepticism of evolution is a more realistic scientific view of life and that conviction on absolute truth is naïve. But it isn't skepticism that puts a man on the moon and provides cures for disease. Objective study shows that true science is on the side of Christianity, and evolution proves to be mere secular religion requiring adherents to put their minds in neutral gear and take a blind leap in the dark contrary to all reason and logic.

True naïvety and blind trust are seen in the basic premise of evolution that the universe produced itself from purely physical chaos with no guiding intellect. All who believe such philosophy should ask how starting conditions like that could produce the mind-boggling order and complexity of our vast universe. Is a fine watch formed by non-living non-thinking atoms that “decide to exercise their intellect” and arrange themselves into metallic parts of precise dimensions and properties, which in turn decide to assemble themselves into the watch mechanism? The universe, from the world of microbes to the furthest galaxies, is far more ordered and complex than any watch, and its intricate design and immeasurable dimensions declare to us its omnipotent, omniscient infinite designer.

And what of the mystery of life energy in living things? How could the intellect of man, so full of desire for order and purpose, arise from a purely physical universe starting without intellect, order and purpose? By what stretch of imagination could a purely physical chaotic universe produce the intellect and spirit of mankind able to reason intelligently and harbor emotions like love, hate, joy and sorrow? Doesn't common sense tell us that behind it all there must be an infinitely intelligent omnipotent Creator who produced in mankind something of Himself?

Should we follow modern philosophy and ignore evidence that we have a Creator who speaks to us about life and eternity? Every person should be acutely aware that we each face consequences for our choices regarding eternity. One day each one must cross the mortality barrier alone and enter into whatever it is that eternity holds for him. Could modern philosophy actually be correct in supposing life is so meaningless that nothing at all awaits us after our brief tenure in this present world? Do we really want to risk our prospects for eternity by living only for this present world and taking the incredible gamble that men's invented theories on life and eternity are correct? Anyone continuing on the popular secular course should do a little objective study on the “science” of evolution. Results will show that evolution is a scientific reality only for those who ignore reason and common sense. As the present volume will show, the invitation to accept evolution as one's guiding star in life is a lot like the invitation to the fly to make himself comfortable in the spider's web.

The Christian faith for life and eternity

On the other hand, biblical Christianity is in full accord with all science and reality and is never a leap in the dark. It is based on the light given by our Creator who provides the best evidence possible concerning ultimate truth, a personal touch from Him. All true

believers are those who begin the Christian life with infallible evidence of truth given by God Himself who imparts the reality of the born-again experience. After experiencing this personal divine touch that imparts salvation and confirms the reality of God, there can never again be any true doubts about the reality of the faith. And for those who receive His salvation, the Creator provides loving guidance into all reality, which is the best news imaginable, being so much like the kind of guidance a loving father provides for his children. All this begins with the scriptures, by which God reveals the path to salvation, and it is mainly by the scriptures that God provides guidance into all the realities of life and His will for mankind.

And the scriptures by which God enlightens and guides us show conclusive technical evidence that they are authored by a God having all wisdom, knowledge and power. The Judeo-Christian Bible provides purely technical proofs in areas such as science and history that illustrate authenticity in wisdom, power and knowledge that can't possibly come from anything but a divine source. With God as its proven author, the Bible becomes the basis for all scientific, social, historical, practical and ultimate reality in life and the basis for all that must be believed about faith and ministry. A primary subject of the present book is the technical evidence for the divine origin, inspiration and inerrancy of true scripture.

In biblical Christianity, reason and logic are very important, and there is much purely technical evidence available to convince those who need to seek God's salvation touch. God's people often deal with questions from unbelievers, and the technical evidence we use can effectively clarify truth in matters of faith for those whose minds are open to reason and logic regarding Christianity. True Christians have experienced the reality of their Savior and earnestly desire to uphold biblical teachings and to bring others into the joy of bible-based faith.

But there's an earthly darkness in which many people live without the reality of God's light. It spreads among us through liberal scholars who say the humanity of scripture penmen negates the concept of divine authorship and inerrancy of the Bible. They loudly scorn the concept of God's use of human penman as His tool to record His Word, and they never advertise aspects of scripture that plainly reveal its ultimate divine authorship. I say "plainly," for God has provided simple means by which we may see His hand at work in the writing of scripture, and that is just what we'd expect of a God who would make Himself real to us.

Yet the power of darkness is immense and should never be underestimated since it's even able to give an imitation of light through man-made world religions, including evolution and other pagan ones, and even some claiming to be Christian. To follow man-made religion does require putting one's mind into neutral gear and taking a blind leap into dark ignorance, for men know nothing of eternity. As A.T. Pierson once noted, blind belief makes bigots that hold fast to their way of thinking, right or wrong, and will not bear with any who differ, and that is so characteristic of evolutionists and all other false religionists.

But religion based on darkness in the souls of many men can't compete with biblical Christianity in minds open to the Creator's light. Darkness can't withstand the smallest light, and one can follow the bright path of scriptural light provided by his Creator. Yet

dark powers continuously attack scripture through those scholars who say copies and translations of the text can't be inerrant, suggesting we can't be certain of God's truth. But Jesus Christ said that God cares for sparrows, and even the hairs of our heads (Mt.10:29), so we can't imagine that He wouldn't preserve His Word with complete accuracy in the many different languages of His people in this world to guide them. The issue is one of faith in God, as Jesus told us when He said to blind men seeking their sight, *According to your faith be it unto you* (Mt.9:29). All who have faith only in sinful man's intellect have eyes only for error, being blind to truth in scripture, but those with eyes for truth can see the reality of the inerrancy of scripture. The present book provides some basic evidence that God has indeed given us His inerrant Word.

The Literal Accuracy of the Account of Jonah and the Big Fish

Are whales fish?

Rather recently in history, scientists restricted the term "fish" to water dwellers that have gills and skeletons of bone or cartilage and move by means of fins. But prior to the imposition of this restriction, the term referred to all creatures living habitually in water, including lung-breathing whales. The more general earlier meaning is still seen today in persistent language convention, scientists themselves using the terms "jellyfish" and "starfish" for creatures with no skeleton or fins and "lungfish" for a creature with gills and lungs.

Thus scholars are hypocritical and obscurantist when they fault the King James Bible for identifying the fish of Jonah 1:17 as a lung-breathing whale in Matthew 12:40. The term in Jonah is simply the more general earlier meaning of the term, and as we'll see, "whale" in Matthew is the correct term for the specific type of large water-dweller.

The identification of Jonah's fish as a whale in the KJV Matthew 12:40 is the crucial matter revealing scientific reality in Jonah's 3-day survival in the fish's belly. This refutes scholars who say the account is mythical, thinking a man swallowed by a huge fish has no air and can only be a meal. Some think Jonah died and was resurrected in the fish, but the KJV text says, *When my soul fainted within me, I remembered the Lord*. This means Jonah's soul was about to part from his body, but he was spared, and that's what the Hebrew text says. Some see the account as symbolic truth, but Christ reveals it as literal reality in Matthew 12:40 (He equates Jonah's 3-day sojourn in the hell-like environment in the whale with His own soul's 3-day sojourn in hell where He descended after the Cross to deal with this enemy). Actually a little scientific bible study reveals the literal reality of the account and shows there's no need to invoke miracles to support it.

Context reveals the fish as a whale in saying it dives to great depths in the sea. Jonah's fish takes him to the bottoms of mountains (and so the sea), and there are submerged mountain ranges in the Mediterranean Sea west of the seaport Jonah sailed from. Whales are the only large sea creatures that dive to great depths in the sea. Sperm whales often exceed 5000 ft, the approximate average depth of the Mediterranean Sea, and have exceeded 10,000 ft. A sperm whale was God's likely choice in that it's the one whale that dives to such depths and is big enough to swallow a man (It has swallowed giant squid larger than a man).

A sperm whale is immune to crushing by deep-sea pressure effects due to incompressible liquid in its body tissues, which is similar to the way a deep-sea bathyscaphe protects men at great depth. The whale's in-compressible body would protect Jonah the way a bathyscaphe would.

A whale resists, and Jonah would resist, bends sickness induced by nitrogen from air in the blood stream during rapid whale ascents from depth. A whale filling its lungs for a dive takes in limited nitrogen, much of which is selectively absorbed by oil in a foam that collects in whale sinuses for discharge in the spout, limiting access to the blood streams of the whale and Jonah.

A sperm whale's teeth are for seizing prey, not chewing. It swallows food and "chews" by crushing agitation in its large first stomach. It eats squid or fish, and the alien taste of a man covered with clothing would not induce the agitation. The first stomach produces no digestive juices, and the opening to the second is too small to admit Jonah for chemical digestion. Jonah would only give the whale an upset stomach, which is why he was later vomited up (at God's command). The whale had to fast 3 days to protect Jonah from stomach agitation, which suits a whale since it often endures famine, living off its own blubber.

While at great depth, the whale eats giant squid that live there, so seawater has only limited stomach access, and the stomach holds air under all conditions. A seawater fish couldn't offer oxygen to Jonah, for gills take in only air dissolved in water, and seawater it often drinks could drown Jonah in the stomach. But a sperm whale, though it breathes through its topside blowhole and usually has its head underwater, forces air into its stomach when it breaches (lunges), coming partly out of the water head-first, and it might do this just before, or while, swallowing Jonah.

But a breach couldn't give Jonah enough oxygen to survive a typical prolonged dive. More would be available if normal stomach isolation from respiratory-system air were somehow bridged, which is what's meant by Jonah 1:17 saying God *prepared* the fish for Jonah (not the NIV or NASV *provided* or *appointed* based on grammar but ignoring context). Jonah's main oxygen supply would be that stored in a whale's blood hemoglobin and muscles as it prepares for a dive, and this source had to be tapped somehow. Possibly, the preparation involved a birth defect allowing blood oxygen into the digestive tract and stomach any-time the whale wasn't eating, which was the case while Jonah was in its stomach. Or it might involve bleeding in the first stomach at a wound caused by mechanical agitation of food for digestion (sharp debris collects in whale stomachs). In any event, carbon dioxide accumulation accompanies oxygen consumption in a whale's blood in a dive, and carbon dioxide releases oxygen from the blood hemoglobin, which could provide oxygen to Jonah in the first stomach. In the process the rich oxygen content of muscles might be tapped. Some carbon dioxide would also be released, and build-up of this and that in Jonah's breath could suffocate him, requiring fresh air and limiting time spent at depth. Whale muscles continue to work well in a dive as oxygen is used up and the remainder is sent largely to the brain. Reduced oxygen to the brain due to Jonah's use would help induce early resurfacing for new air. And a sick whale, while continuing its habit of diving for food, wouldn't eat and wouldn't stay long at depth, as needed to protect Jonah from excessive carbon dioxide. Carbon dioxide would be partially absorbed by natural chemicals in limited seawater normally in the stomach for whale body-fluid needs, helping Jonah breathe. He nearly died, likely by near-suffocation in a deep dive,

but would recover as the whale returned him to land, exchanging old air for new by periodic breaching at the surface due to irritation from the stomach ache and oxygen deprivation at depth. Or, if oxygen flowed to the stomach due to a birth defect, all the whale's surface breathing would give Jonah a steady oxygen supply.

The author of Jonah wrote in full accord with modern whale technology, and the technical validity of his account reveals its reality and confirms the fish's identity as a whale. And how can a bible book written ~2800 years ago reveal how deep whales dive when men didn't discover this until recent centuries? God is the only one who knew such things so long ago and the only one who knew the whale's location at the bottom of the sea and near undersea mountains (not Jonah in the whale's stomach). God is the ultimate writer of the book, the one whose words guided the human writer. God, who knows all about whales, put His signature on a bible book scholars call mythical, but it's erased in the NASV, NIV and NKJV Matthew 12:40 that fail to reveal the fish as a whale.

Regarding the theory that Jonah died inside the creature and was later resurrected, he's alive in chapter 2 as the whale consumes substantial time diving to the bottoms of submerged mountains. And the mountains are located a great distance from the coast Jonah first sailed from and to which the whale will travel to deposit him again, showing he was alive and breathing inside the creature for a long time, the entire 3 days.

It might seem Jonah died and was resurrected due to modern-version word choice in verse 2:6. The NIV is typical saying, *You brought my life up from the pit*, suggesting resurrection from the grave, but the grave was only figurative. *Pit* can translate the Hebrew here but doesn't fit this context. In the next NIV verse, Jonah says, *When my life was ebbing away (on the verge of death, but he was spared)*. The NIV confuses the passage sense with contradictory suggestions. It can even imply Jonah went to hell if *pit* is connected with verse 2:2 where Jonah cries *out of the belly of hell*, or Sheol that's often rendered *pit*. *Pit* isn't adequate here, suggesting a location (grave and hell) when a status on death's ruin or corruption is indicated. The KJV *brought up my life from corruption* is correct, indicating healing from the death process, not the grave.

Jonah crying *out of the belly of hell* (Sheol) denotes a figurative hell in a figurative grave. The whale's stomach would've been like a grave, dark, wet, oxygen-thin and conducive to claustrophobia. The digestive system would emit ghastly food-decay odors, and no stable posture would be possible on the whale's wet stomach lining. Jonah would toss and roll back and forth with every motion of the whale, inducing constant seasickness and vomiting/retching in a hell-like experience.

Affirming Accuracy in Parallel Bible Accounts: Parallel Accounts of an Event with Differing Details Do Not Contradict but Supplement Each Other for Full Understanding

There are parallel passages found in two or more scripture books that each cover a certain event but with some differences in detail. Scholars often say that scripture writers were confused about their facts and contradicted each other. This is entirely the wrong perspective and should never be taken seriously. There would be no point in merely repeating the details of an incident in one book when covering the same incident in another book. Parallel passages illustrate what this writer refers to as "supplementary parallels," which

involve a certain amount of common material in two passages that allows the reader to know that it is the same incident under discussion in both passages. They also include some differences in details that when put together will give a fuller picture of the incident. Supplementary parallels are for the purpose of motivating us to study thoroughly in order to understand everything involved in a given event. If a reader simply settles for the rendering of one passage, he gets only part of the story. If he happens to know of both passages and reads superficially, he may think there is some contradiction. The serious reader begins to look for the ways in which the differences in details of two different passages dealing with the same incident contribute to the total understanding of the incident. In this he is engaging in study by cross-referencing, a very rewarding tool for clarifying details of an incident in scripture.

1. Surrogates in the Bible: God speaks to Moses through an angel in the burning bush: Comparing parallel Bible accounts of an event gives deeper teaching.

Exodus

3:2 *And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him (Moses) in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush.*

3:4 *And when the Lord saw that he (Moses) turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush...*

Deuteronomy

33:16...*The good will of him (God) that dwelt in the bush...*

Acts

7:30...*there appeared unto him (Moses) in the wilderness of mount Sinai an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush.*

The reader might wonder whether it was God or an angel who spoke to Moses in the Exodus account, which indicates both were somehow involved. Cross-referencing in the Deuteronomy and Acts verses further supports the idea that both were somehow involved, showing us that we must explore the concept of supplementary parallels.

The above passages are quite intriguing in that they seem to be an example of a very unique role of angels in God's plans. In this example and in other accounts in scripture, angels are represented as speaking with ultimate authority, conveying the sense that the words they speak are the very words of God Himself. Another example is found in Genesis 16:7-13 which shows us the account of an angel speaking to Hagar saying he will multiply her seed exceedingly in future generations, and, of course, we know that God is the one who will do this. Indeed, Hagar tells us that the Lord has spoken to her, and she calls Him, *Thou God seest me*. Thus it's evident that an angel is somehow the means by which God speaks and represents Himself to people.

In the Exodus/Acts passages above, an angel stands before Moses in the bush, and in the Exodus/Deuteronomy passages God was in and speaking from the bush to Moses. Certain conservative scholars propose that the angel in the bush was the pre-incarnate Christ in

the Old Testament. This is a very plausible interpretation since it provides an orthodox explanation for the representation of an angel in the speaking role of God. But, while theophanies of the pre-incarnate Christ do occur at times in the Old Testament, this writer would propose that when the specific term "angel" is used, the incident is not a theophany of Christ. This writer does not see Christ denoted by the term "angel" since this term normally refers to a common spiritual messenger of non-divine nature. Christ is divine and He is not a common messenger. In Malachi 3:1b He is not called an angel, but is said to be a special "messenger of the covenant" (i.e. He brings deliverance personally and not just the news of it). In passages where it is clearly Christ appearing in the theophany, He has various special names like the *Lord* in Genesis 18:1 or *Captain of the Host* in Joshua 5:14-15 or the *priest of the most high God* (Melchizedek) in Genesis 14:18 (scholars deny this last, but the Hebrews 7:3 language affirms it).

Thus an alternative explanation is proposed in which God speaks through angels who convey His words and presence to people so that God really has spoken to them. This is the meaning suggested by the term "angel of his presence" in Isaiah 63:9. God likely spoke through a living angelic channel to Moses, conveying His Word and Presence through the angel surrogate personage. Alternatively, the angel may have been a surrogate personally empowered to speak God's Word and to convey the glory of God's presence he experienced in standing before the throne. In the latter case, the instructions carried the same authority they would if God had spoken personally, and God would still be present since He is omnipresent. But the first explanation is more likely, judging by the text wording of the complete incident in the Exodus account. Either way, the angel delivered God's Word and Presence, representing Him totally to Moses and filling a role that is the ultimate one for a common messenger. This illustrates the ultimate in surrogate authority based on a trusted relationship with chosen servants.

In exploring the "angel of his presence" concept further, we note that Exodus 33:11 says God spoke to Moses face to face on Mt. Sinai, while Exodus 33:20 indicates that Moses could not have seen the actual face of God and lived. The way this happened at Sinai was that God spoke to Moses through the veil of a thick dark cloud. The way it happened in the burning-bush incident is that God spoke through an angelic channel, as discussed above, but this method was also involved at Sinai. God would have spoken face to face with Moses on Sinai, communicating His Word and Presence through an angelic channel facing Moses, while He was Himself near to Moses' face. But Moses could not have seen God's face, though he may have seen the angel. That an angel was a communication medium here is seen in Acts 7:53 where Stephen says of the council members, *Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it.* In Acts 7:38 Stephen says of Moses...*the angel which spake to him in the mount Sina...*

This concept of the "angel of the presence of God" explains why Samson's father Manoah, who saw the angel of the Lord said...*we have seen God.* (Judges 13:22). The uncapitalized "a" in angel is clearly indicative of a created angel, and indeed, the angel of the Lord in Luke 1:11, proves to be Gabriel in Luke 1:19. In Genesis 48:16 capitalization of "a" in the Angel that "redeemed" Jacob would be indicative of a specific unnamed "angel of the presence," one whose redemption was limited to preventing war with Esau. This would account for Jacob speaking of this same being later in Genesis 32:30 where he said that he had seen God face to face. Of course, these circumstances

involving redemption could also be explained by assuming that the being involved was the pre-incarnate Christ, but Exodus 23:20 further supports the first explanation. In the Exodus 23:20 verse, the term Angel denotes a specific angel that does not forgive the sins of the wilderness wanderers who despise the forgiving grace ministered by the merciful pre-incarnate Christ (see Hebrews 4:8, a reference to Christ as a giver of rest to God's people in the wilderness wandering – This is not a reference to the historical Joshua, contrary to scholars, as discussed beginning on p317 of the present writer's hermeneutics book).

The basic communication principle of the “angel of his presence” is illustrated in a very small inexact way by an American president face to face with the nation through the TV medium. His nature, personality and word would be communicated through the TV medium, but here there would be major differences in that his face would be included, his communication would be impersonal and he would not see his audience.

2. Earthly surrogate authority vested in loved friends parallels heavenly surrogate authority: A Roman centurion's faith recognizes no boundaries of distance

Matthew

- 8:5 *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeking him.*
- 8:6 *And saying, Lord my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.*
- 8:7 *And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.*
- 8:8 *The centurion answered and said, Lord I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.*
- 8:10 *Jesus...said...Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel.*
- 8:13 *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.*

Luke

- 7:3 *And when he (centurion) heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeking him that he would come and heal his servant.*
- 7:4 *And when they (elders) came to Jesus, they besought him...*
- 7:6 *Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends unto him saying unto him, Lord...I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof:*
- 7:7 *Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.*
- 7:9 *Jesus...said...I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel*

At first glance it seems that Luke contradicts Matthew concerning who it was that Christ met and spoke with personally in this incident. Was it the centurion or the elders He spoke with face-to-face? Now obviously, the centurion could not have come personally to Christ since Luke 7 tells us that he did not consider himself worthy to come personally and that he sent the elders to speak for him in seeking healing for a servant. Thus in both Gospels it was the elders who spoke personally to the Lord on behalf of the centurion. In Luke we see Christ speaking directly to the elders, while in Matthew, He is represented as speaking to the centurion, but this would be through the elders. What we learn from

the two gospel accounts is that, in speaking to the centurion in Matthew through elder surrogates, Christ was paralleling the way God spoke to Moses through an angel as a medium of communication in the burning-bush incident, as revealed in Exodus 3:2-4, Deuteronomy 33:16 and Acts 7:30. In both the Matthew/Luke and Exodus/Deuteronomy/Acts incidents, there is a two-way communication between God and man through surrogates, and in both it is authority based on a trusted relationship that is being emphasized. In Christ's earthly parallel to a heavenly surrogate relationship, He shows us that the surrogate relationship is to be esteemed on earth as it is in heaven. And the Matthew account shows us how the surrogate relationship is to function on earth.

From Matthew/Luke comparisons we see that the elders are so trusted by the centurion that they are totally authorized to speak for him, as if anyone speaking to them were speaking to him. This follows the trust God places in holy angels in many scripture accounts where angels speak to men on behalf of God (as in the case of angels speaking for God in announcing the birth of Christ to shepherds in Luke chapter 2). Christ honors this total trust and authorization of the elders fully (to teach a point) by speaking to the centurion through them. However, as we shall soon see, He does not just speak to the centurion symbolically by addressing his like-minded friends. He honors the surrogate friendship by carrying the symbolic speaking a step further, and this is where the parallel to the burning bush incident is fully realized. He actually does speak to the centurion through the elders in recognition of him as the authority who sent them and the one actually seeking help because of his great faith in Israel's God. Thus as God spoke through a holy trusted angel in addressing His excellent servant Moses, so Christ spoke through trusted elders to a man of excellent faith. In this account, Christ shows us that this kind of trusted surrogate relationship among men is the goal for God's people. New Testament believers are to be Christ's surrogates on earth who are recognized with such trust by the Lord and by those they speak to on His behalf. The ultimate intent is that Christ by His Spirit might speak through Christians to others.

From such an incident in scripture, we may come to realize that God deals uniquely with different types of bible students. From either gospel account, a reader learns about God's recognition of great faith. But comparison of these passages can cause confusion for the superficial reader who may conclude there is a contradiction here. Actually, the serious student finds that Matthew has more to teach in this passage, and the suggestion of a contradiction is really a signal that careful study is needed to get all the meaning. It would appear that God is willing to risk confusing the less-serious reader for the sake of rewarding the labors of the more-serious one concerning vital truth. The reward is the additional knowledge of the great value of surrogate relationships. But to see this fully we must consider details that tell us where the centurion's unusual faith came from and just how this relates to God's people in their missionary service. It is to this that we now turn our attention, but in doing so, we must first clarify all details of the two accounts to show the reader that there is absolutely no contradiction between them.

The elders have been instructed to seek healing for the centurion's servant, and they address the Lord on his behalf. They add their own comment that the centurion is worthy of receiving help (Lk.7:4-5). Through the elders, the Lord then addresses the centurion, speaking to him from a distance, saying He will come personally and heal the servant

(Mt. 8:7). We ourselves do things a bit like this when in response to something negative some remote party has said about us, we say to this party from a distance, through the one informing us, "All right mister, I'll give you an answer you won't soon forget." This is an example of use of a figure of speech called "apostrophe" (see p34 of the present writer's book on hermeneutics). But the Lord's words are not an example of apostrophe, for He speaks authoritatively and actually has addressed the man since no man anywhere can ever be absent from the presence of God. It is true, as we have noted, that speaking to the elders is equivalent to speaking to the centurion since they are all of one mind, but Christ honors and reinforces this concept, adding another dimension to it. His words to the elders reach the centurion through the spiritual dimension while the centurion speaks by surrogates. The Lord speaks to the centurion from a distance, and He verifies to us that He has done this by also healing the servant from a distance. Thus we know that the centurion did get the message. This is similar to the way He verified His power to forgive sin by healing after proclaiming this power (Mt.9:2-8). Thus as the Father in heaven speaks and works through trusted faithful angels, so Christ on earth speaks and works through trusted faithful followers of God.

From this perspective, in Matthew 8:8 it might seem that the centurion, through the elders, immediately responds to the offer of a personal visit. That is, the centurion has perhaps previously instructed them to refuse such an offer since he feels unworthy to have the Lord in his dwelling. However, this is not the case as we see by comparison with Luke's account. In Luke 7:6 we see the centurion expressing his own unworthiness sometime later through other newly arrived surrogate friends. Thus Luke tells us there is a time lapse in Matthew between verse 7 where the Lord makes the offer to come and verse 8 where the centurion expresses his own unworthiness for a personal visit. And Matthew verifies this time lapse, showing us that by the time the centurion says this, Christ has already been traveling toward the centurion's dwelling. We see this in Matthew 8:10 where the Lord is said to speak to those that were following Him (in travel toward the centurion) as He responds later to the centurion's testimony of unworthiness and his request for healing from a distance. As Luke 7:6 plainly states, it is when the Lord is not far from his dwelling that the centurion speaks of his own unworthiness and of his request for healing at a distance, and this is through the newly-sent friends. The Lord then instructs the centurion through these new surrogates, saying in Matthew 8:13, *Go thy way, and as thou hast believed so be it done unto thee*. He then heals the servant from a distance, and the centurion gets the rest of the message.

In speaking through two different sets of surrogates, the Lord verifies that His communication is focused on the remote centurion, further emphasizing speaking at a distance. Indeed, the centurion seems to have heard the Lord's distant offer of healing since his request for healing seems to be his delayed answer to the Lord's offer, the delay being due to the centurion's remote location and slow communication mode. Thus a careful comparison of Matthew and Luke supplies all details pertinent to a complete understanding of the incident, and the contrast of the two accounts provides substantial additional teaching. This illustrates yet another example of supplementary parallels. The most important practical teaching of the parallel is to show us surrogate authority based on total trust carried to about the highest level we can expect to witness in this world. It reveals an unusually close relationship between the Gentile centurion and several Jewish friends. Though the Romans have conquered their land, the elders are the true conquerors

as they develop the kind of friendship that persuades all men to join their righteous cause. We see this from the observations that the centurion is unusually concerned about a Jewish household helper, and the elders have an unusual regard for the Gentile centurion, considering him worthy of all honor in their land. This close friendship appears to be the basis for the centurion's faith. Despite his potentially hostile status as a conqueror of Israel, as a close friend he has built a synagogue for the Jews. And in his confession of his personal unworthiness to address the Lord and his sending of elders of Israel to make known his request, he shows total acceptance of Israel's centrality in God's plan and of his own unworthy status. It is certainly the kind of friendship that leads to faith like this that God must desire His people to establish with outsiders that the latter might come to full belief and participation in the work of God. Thus it is likely this deep friendship that produced the great faith of the centurion in the God of Israel, causing him to set aside considerations of his own national identity as a victorious conqueror. And it was the faith produced by this deep friendship that caused Christ to respond to him in an unusual way, speaking to him authoritatively through surrogates at a distance and backing up this authority by granting his request and healing his servant at a distance.

And we should add that Christ responded in His unusually accommodating way to the centurion despite the fact that His personal mission as the Messiah was only to the lost sheep of the House of Israel and not to Gentiles. This shows the careful reader just how unusual and noteworthy the incident really is. One other incident somewhat like it in scripture is that involving healing from a distance given to the daughter of a Syro-Phoenecian (Canaanite) woman (Mk.7:25-30 and Mt.15:22-28). This woman, like the centurion, in humility subjugated her own national identity and recognized the power of the God of Israel through Christ. She showed the highest possible humility and faith when she accepted the Lord's challenge to consider her own godless heritage as that of a dog and was thus fully rewarded. Such examples show that Gentiles will be brought into Israel's Christian spiritual inheritance later through the disciples.

In seeing the deep friendship as the indicated cause of the centurion's great faith, we see that God's people everywhere should seek this type of trusting friendship in their efforts to win outsiders to the faith. The goal of such friendship is still the same today, there being a necessity to show everyone that a worldly heritage is totally unworthy and is to be fully rejected in favor of a heritage among the people of God where God's will and favor are exalted. Clearly, the deeper object lesson taught by Christ in His Word through this example of trusted surrogates is the intent of God that His people develop with outsiders a friendship and trust that leads to their zealous faith and involvement in the work of God. This kind of relationship is highly valued in heaven and should also be on earth for the work of God to go forward among all mankind.

The teaching on surrogate relationships is accented to the reader in an unusual way in the Matthew passage. Such passages are likely intended for God's serious bible students who will know that the suggestion of a contradiction is actually a signal that extra study is needed to reveal the full meaning of the passage. Supplementary parallels are an important concept in bible hermeneutics