



UNTO THEE IN ORDER,
MOST EXCELLENT FRIEND...

THE HOPE OF GLORY
LETTER TO JILLJ

1/25/05 EARLY AM READ JILLJ'S POST ON THE WOW MESSAGE BOARD.
2/13/05 ROUGH DRAFT COMPLETE. BONNIE ANNE REVIEWS.
1/27/05 SENT PROOFS TO ROB AND MILTON THRU 2/5-6/05.
2/3/05 COFFEE AT NORTH STAR WITH BONNIE. MORE EDITS.
2/4/05 LONG TALK WITH ROB FRIDAY EVE. FINAL DRAFT PREPARED.
2/6/05 CHANGED TITLE TO "THE HOPE OF GLORY".
2/21/05 FINAL EDITS OF PAGES FOUR AND FIVE.
2/22/05 EMAILED JILL PERSONAL NOTE WITH PDF FILE ATTACHED.
4/9/05 TCAT FILE CREATED
4/17/05 MINOR EDITS COMPLETE AND REVIEWED

THE HOPE OF GLORY
LETTER TO JILLJ

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"CONCERNING THE RESTORATION OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST"

GENERAL SECRETARY
THE CHURCH AT TROUTDALE

Jillj,

I think that it was early tues morning that I read your posts on the "Heb 6:6 = 2nd baptism?" discussion; and not having time to respond to you then, I began writing a response that afternoon and finally finished today. I have copied the string of posts from the discussion at the end of this email for reference. And of course this is Caleb (the junkyard dog) speaking; and you know, a dog can be a girl's best friend.

Jillj writes in response to a series of posts by EWeiss, DeNovo, and Robinbrooke:

O.K. here's the deal...

I need food to live, I KNOW that. I eat food everyday. I need healthy food to be healthy, I KNOW that, too. I know that my knowing that I need to eat and doing it is all I HAVE to know to stay alive. Now, there is a lot more to this act of eating food than just putting it in my mouth. My body goes through all kinds of processes to enable this food to nourish my body. If I want to, I can learn how this works, but all I have to do to be alive and healthy is eat the food, I don't HAVE to understand EXACTLY how the food does its job inside my body, although I can if I want... I can become an expert on the function of the digestive system, and learn every correct word for every process and chemical reaction and organ involved. Nevertheless...eating is sufficient for my health.

So, this very exacting kind of theological stuff is sort of like that, to me. Unless you want to argue that some Christians are so wrong in their understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ that they are in danger of not really being Christians at all (i.e. they are not even eating!), it is sort of just like taking a course on the human digestive system. Interesting, I guess, but not fundamental to our survival.

So, remember our friend C.S. Lewis "Jesus said, take and eat, not, take and understand".

I'm not saying its not worth a discussion or that we shouldn't strive to get it right completely. But, do you believe these are major issues that would void the authenticity of faith in some, or do you believe these are minors that people of legitimate and pure faith will debate until Jesus returns and conducts his class on Theology 101, The Science of God? I believe the latter.

Major on the majors, minor on the minors. Christ in me, the hope of glory, Christ in us, the hope of glory. That is the food, the important part.

Jillj (pronounced 'Jilly')

Caleb struts thru the junk:

O.K., Jilly, here's the deal...

What's at stake here are Chrys's assumptions regarding his gift and calling; whether or not he had been called by God to be a voice to the church: that the doctrine of the apostles be taught and the gospel of Jesus Christ be proclaimed. Chrys struggled to emulate new testament writings because he didn't have the right stuff. Many are called but few are chosen; and those who fail to receive the substance that the saints carry in themselves, walk in a form of godliness which denies the testimony of the saints.

Such is the case with the pre-post nicene writers. If you could stand back from these pretenders and take the position that their writings were the seeds of the apostasy that Paul warned the church about, then their contributions to western culture, (via their institutions of religion that claimed to be christian,) could be truly understood; namely, that the full force and intent of their doctrine supplanted the very substance of the gospel of Jesus Christ, (which proclaims a new and lively hope to a world lost in darkness,) while they themselves as well as their converts were by works and doctrine in bondage to a perpetual state of sin, guilt, and fear; with their lust for holiness generating conflicting gospels of salvation.

Their lust for holiness was the root cause of their apostasy, which through time has evolved into very sophisticated forms of religion, all deeply embedded in western culture. The outward form of the gospel of Jesus Christ has become a grand backdrop that hangs behind their podiums of institutional truth, doctrinal salvation, holy priesthoods, and sinners being perpetually saved by 'sola scriptura' and Christ's work on the cross...or the ecstasy of the eucharist induced by the eating and drinking of the flesh and blood of Jesus.

Anyway, Jillj, having dispatched the assumed authority of "THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS", I would like to share with you why I truly embrace your affirmation of faith. So let me select some pertinent snippets from your post; and please allow me to transpose certain words of your posts in order to make it crystal clear why I find a great affirmation of faith in your testimony. My spin of your words is as follows:

I KNOW THAT ME KNOWING CHRIST IS ALL I HAVE TO KNOW TO STAY ALIVE.
I DON'T HAVE TO UNDERSTAND EXACTLY HOW CHRIST DOES HIS JOB INSIDE MY SOUL.
CHRIST IN MY SOUL, THE HOPE OF GLORY! CHRIST IN OUR SOULS, THE HOPE OF GLORY!

"THE HOPE OF GLORY!"

You have the right stuff, Jill; (knowing in part while never understanding in full the 'substance' that you have received;) for from the 'substance' itself you know that it is the very substance of God: that here on earth he has made love to you and put his seed into your soul...a seed that will generate a new heavenly body made of flesh and bone and living waters from the very substance of the glory of the Majesty on high: (that the Lord Jesus will be seated upon the throne of God with your soul cradled in his arms, surrounded by the all the hosts of heaven anticipating your new birth; and he will arise and lift you up in the palms of his hands: and the glory of God will burst forth from deep within the Godhead and envelop the King Of Glory; and in the midst of that pillar of fire your soul will be fitted with a new heavenly body made of flesh, and bone, and living waters: made of the very substance of the glory of God; having been generated by and according to the very substance of the Seed that you had received: formed in the palms of his hands to be found in his grip:) and then the unveiling glory of the well-spring of eternal life will recede, leaving you standing beside the Lord God as a daughter stands beside her Father, with your hand resting upon his arm; and he will look into your eyes and call you by your new ineffable name; and then escort you down from the mercyseat and out upon the sea of crystal glass mingled with soft fire; and there you and your Father will dance to the music of eternal life: and in the end you will dance alone upon the stones of fire.

God is not a doctrine. Jesus is not a doctrine. The Spirit is not a doctrine. Grace is not a doctrine. Faith is not a doctrine. Hope is not a doctrine. Love is not a doctrine. Salvation is not a doctrine. The saints are not a doctrine. The new heaven and the new earth is not a doctrine. The dance is not a doctrine.

And those who argue doctrine and dispute the scriptures stand arrested by their own mortality.

May you dance upon the stones of fire!

Caleb
(the junkyard dog)



“THE HOPE OF GLORY!”

YOU
KNOW
IN PART WHILE
NEVER UNDERSTANDING
IN FULL THE SUBSTANCE THAT
YOU HAVE RECEIVED: FOR FROM
THE SUBSTANCE ITSELF YOU KNOW
THAT IT IS THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF GOD:
THAT HERE ON EARTH HE HAS MADE LOVE TO
YOU AND PUT HIS SEED INTO YOUR SOUL...A SEED
THAT WILL GENERATE A NEW HEAVENLY BODY MADE
OF FLESH AND BONE AND LIVING WATERS FROM THE
VERY SUBSTANCE OF THE GLORY OF THE MAJESTY ON
HIGH: (THAT THE LORD JESUS WILL BE SEATED UPON
THE THRONE OF GOD WITH YOUR SOUL CRADLED IN
HIS ARMS, SURROUNDED BY THE ALL THE HOSTS
OF HEAVEN ANTICIPATING YOUR NEW BIRTH;
AND HE WILL ARISE AND LIFT YOU UP IN
THE PALMS OF HIS HANDS: AND
THE GLORY OF GOD WILL
BURST FORTH FROM
DEEP WITHIN THE GODHEAD
AND ENVELOPE THE KING OF GLORY;
AND IN THE MIDST OF THAT PILLAR OF FIRE
YOUR SOUL WILL BE FITTED WITH A NEW HEAVENLY
BODY MADE OF FLESH, AND BONE, AND LIVING WATERS:
MADE OF THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF THE GLORY OF GOD;
HAVING BEEN GENERATED BY AND ACCORDING TO THE VERY
SUBSTANCE OF THE SEED THAT YOU HAD RECEIVED: FORMED IN
THE PALMS OF HIS HANDS TO BE FOUND IN HIS GRIP;) AND THEN THE
UNVEILING GLORY OF THE WELL-SPRING OF ETERNAL LIFE WILL RECEDE,
LEAVING YOU STANDING BESIDE THE LORD GOD AS A DAUGHTER STANDS
BESIDE HER FATHER, WITH YOUR HAND RESTING UPON HIS ARM; AND
HE WILL LOOK INTO YOUR EYES AND CALL YOU BY YOUR NEW INEFFABLE
NAME; AND THEN ESCORT YOU DOWN FROM THE MERCYSEAT AND OUT
UPON THE SEA OF CRYSTAL GLASS MINGLED WITH SOFT FIRE; AND
THERE YOU AND YOUR FATHER WILL DANCE TO THE MUSIC OF
ETERNAL LIFE: AND IN THE END YOU WILL DANCE
ALONE UPON THE STONES OF FIRE.



“THE HOPE OF GLORY!”

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IN FULL THE SUBSTANCE THAT YOU HAVE RECEIVED:
FOR FROM THE SUBSTANCE ITSELF YOU KNOW THAT
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WOW Message Board > Discussions > Doctrinal Discussions > Hebrews 6:6 = 2nd baptism?

EWEISS opens the subject "Hebrews 6:6 = 2nd baptism?"

Here's something to stretch your minds with while I await a response from someone on the B-Greek list (where I posted my question about this).

The Orthodox Church (i.e., the "Eastern" Orthodox Church) understanding of Hebrews 6, if correct, means that Protestant/Evangelical commentators are misguided in their understanding and conclusions about this passage. I know the Early Church often referred to baptism as "illumination" and they called the Eucharist supernatural food.

St. John Chrysostom, in commenting on Hebrews 6:4-6 ("... PALIN ANAKAINIZEIN EIS METANOIAN ("again to renew unto repentance"); crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting Him to an open shame."), writes: "He then that baptizeth a second time, crucifies Him again. But what is 'crucifying afresh'? It is crucifying over again. For as Christ died on the cross, so do we in baptism, not as to the flesh, but as to sin. Behold, two deaths. He died as to the flesh; in our case the old man was buried, and the new man arose, made conformable to the likeness of His death. If therefore it is necessary to be baptized again, it is necessary that this same Christ should die again. For baptism is nothing else than the putting to death of the baptized, and his rising again." (Homily IX on Hebrews)

The notes to the Orthodox Study Bible say: "6:4 The basic sacraments are crucial to salvation: One is ONCE ENLIGHTENED (hAPAX FWTISQENTAS) in baptism, which is unrepeatable and called the sacrament of illumination (see Eph. 5:14). TASTED THE HEAVENLY GIFT (GEUSAMENOUS TE THS DWREAS THS EPOURANIOU) (see 1 Pet. 2:3) may refer to the grace of baptism (Chrysostom says especially of the forgiveness experienced there), but it most certainly refers to the Eucharist as well. BECOME PARTAKERS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT (METACOUS GENHQENTAS PNEUMATOS hAGIOU) refers to chrismation."

(FYI: F.F. Bruce in his NICNT commentary on Hebrews associates the first two participles in Hebrews 6:4 as possibly having to do with baptism and the eucharist, respectively, but he does not make a connection between ANAKAINIZEIN ("to renew") and 2nd baptism. "Chrismation" is the rite/sacrament in which a believer is anointed with oil (chrism) to symbolize/impart the Holy Spirit, a practice which goes back to the Early Church.)

Thus, the Orthodox Church interprets the first three participles in Hebrews 6:4ff with reference to the main sacraments of the Christian faith and life - baptism, eucharist, and chrismation - and in this context, Chrysostom relates the term "PALIN ANAKAINIZEIN EIS METANOIAN" to being baptized a second time. I.e., ANAKAINIZEIN EIS METANOIAN = baptism. BDAG (Bauer-Danker-Arndt-Gingrich Greek Lexicon) says that ANAKAINIZW means "renew, restore" and says nothing about baptism with respect to Hebrews 6:4, but then quotes Barnabas 6:11 and says: "ANAKAINISAS hHMAS EN THi AFESI TWN hAMARTIWN since he made us new by forgiveness of sins (in baptism)" - in other words, BDAG relates the use of ANAKAINIZW in Barnabas 6:11 to baptism, even though neither this verse in Barnabas, nor any of Barnabas chapter 6, makes any mention of baptism or even of water or of illumination.

The Evangelical Theological Society meeting in November had several sessions on Hebrews 6:6, yet I did not hear in any of the sessions I attended "PALIN ANAKAINIZEIN EIS METANOIAN" being equated with being baptized (a second time). However, BDAG's reference to Barnabus seems to allow such an interpretation, and Orthodox theology (whose sacramental understanding of Hebrews 6:4 seems to make good sense) apparently supports this.

(My understanding is that the Orthodox Church does not allow second baptisms if the first one is recognized.)

With the above as background, My Question: Is there a basis for regarding ANAKAINIZW ("I renew") (or A. EIS METANOIAN) as sometimes being a t.t. (technical term) for BAPTIZW ("I baptize")? If so, is it proper to consider that to be the meaning in Hebrews 6:6?

Also, if so, is ANAKAINWSIS ("renewing") sometimes a t.t. for BAPTISMA ("baptism")? (Titus 3:5 seems to possibly suggest this: ESWSEN hHMAS DIA LOUTROU PALIGGENESIAS KAI ANAKAINWSEWS PNEUMATOS hAGIOU.)

[quote=DeNovo,Jan. 18 2005,18:10]You're asking us? :laugh: :laugh: I don't know about the others but that was all Greek to me. DeNovo[/quote]

eweiss responds: That's why I gave translations!! If you are familiar with all the contortions that Evangelical scholars go to in their efforts to explain (or explain away) Hebrews 6:4-6, you'll know that this is a refreshing perspective or explanation that might help solve the problems Evangelicals have had with these verses. They're still stuck with translating the word translated "if they fall away" or "and fall away," though. One speaker at ETS in November says it's best translated "sinned," instead of the usual "fallen away" (which is often taken to mean apostatized). Since many Evangelicals (especially Baptists and Calvinists) do not believe that it is possible for one to lose one's salvation, they have had to explain Hebrews 6:4ff as referring to someone who really wasn't a believer, or have had to suggest that the author is only speaking hypothetically. If, however, it's talking about the inability to rebaptize such people, that solves the Evangelical dilemma. Of course, it then potentially confronts them with the sacramentalism of the Early Church if they research the context of the Orthodox and Chrysostom's remarks!

Robinbrooke responds:

I'm not sure if I really understand the question, but I'll comment on the passage. First of all, why would there ever be a need for re-baptism? I know that Evangelicals usually want someone who has been baptized as a baby to have "believer's baptism," but that's not what you're talking about, right?

And I disagree with my fellow Evangelicals and Calvinists (I disagree with lots of Calvinist doctrine) regarding OSAS. Haven't we all known someone who has turned their back on God? This passage could have been written about my father. He was brought up in the church, baptized, taught Sunday School as an adult, and then decided that Jesus is not the only way to salvation. All paths lead to God. Those who teach OSAS will say that "enlightened" in vs. 4 means that the person has heard the Gospel message, but has not yet believed it. They have "tasted the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, and tasted the goodness of the word of God " by means of Christian fellowship. I disagree. Col. 1:23 says,

"But now He has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in His sight, without blemish and free from accusation - IF you continue in your faith, established and firm, not moved from the hope held out in the gospel." The IF is the qualifier there. We MUST continue in the faith. 1 John 2:24 says, "See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. IF it does, you also will remain in the Son..."

[quote=robinbrooke,Jan. 19 2005,08:18]

Those who teach OSAS will say that "enlightened" in vs. 4 means that the person has heard the Gospel message, but has not yet believed it.

eweiss responds:

A problem with this Evangelical understanding, as I see it, is that "illuminated" and "illumination" has been the church's word for baptism since early in the 2nd century. See Justin Martyr, First Apology:

Chapter LXI.-Christian Baptism.

I will also relate the manner in which we dedicated ourselves to God when we had been made new through Christ; lest, if we omit this, we seem to be unfair in the explanation we are making. As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated. For, in the name of God, the Father and Lord of the universe, and of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit, they then receive the washing with water. For Christ also said, "Except ye be born again, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."¹²⁷

Now, that it is impossible for those who have once been born to enter into their mothers' wombs, is manifest to all. And how those who have sinned and repent shall escape their sins, is declared by Esaias the prophet, as I wrote above;...¹²⁸

...he thus speaks: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from your souls; learn to do well; judge the fatherless, and plead for the widow: and come and let us reason together, saith the Lord. And though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white like wool; and though they be as crimson, I will make them white as snow. But if ye refuse and rebel, the sword shall devour you: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."¹²⁹

And for this [rite] we have learned from the apostles this reason. Since at our birth we were born without our own knowledge or choice, by our parents coming together, and were brought up in bad habits and wicked training; in order that we may not remain the children of necessity and of ignorance, but may become the children of choice and knowledge, and may obtain in the water the remission of sins formerly committed, there is pronounced over him who chooses to be born again, and has repented of his sins, the name of God the Father and Lord of the universe; he who leads to the laver the person that is to be washed calling him by this name alone. For no one can utter the name of the ineffable God; and if any one dare to say that there is a name, he raves with a hopeless madness.

And this washing is called illumination, because they who learn these things are illuminated in their understandings. And in the name of Jesus Christ, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate, and in the name of the Holy Ghost, who through the prophets foretold all things about Jesus, he who is illuminated is washed.

However, Hippolytus, writing about 215 A.D., uses "enlighten," not "illumine," and he uses it differently. Without seeing the Greek texts of Justin Martyr or Hippolytus, I cannot tell if the words "illumine" and "enlighten" are the same or different words.

Chapter 25

- 1 When the evening has arrived, with the bishop present the deacon shall bring in a lamp.
- 2 The bishop, standing in the midst of all the faithful present, shall give thanks. But he shall first greet all by saying, "The Lord be with you."
- 3 And all the people shall respond, "And with your spirit."
- 4 Then the bishop shall say, "Let us give thanks to the Lord."
- 5 And the people shall respond, "It is proper and just. Greatness and exaltation and glory are due to him."
- 6 But he shall not say, "Lift up your hearts," because that is said for the oblation.
- 7 And he shall pray thus, saying, "We give thanks to you, O God, through your Son Jesus Christ our Lord, because you have enlightened us by revealing the incorruptible light.
- 8 Therefore, having finished the length of a day, and arriving at the beginning of the night, and having been satisfied with the light of the day which you created for our satisfaction, and since we now do not lack a light for the evening through your grace, we sanctify you and glorify you,...
- 9 ...through your only Son our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom to you with him be glory and might and honor with the Holy Spirit, now and always, and throughout the ages of the ages. Amen.
- 10 Then all shall say, "Amen."

Chapter 41

- 8 Pray also at the ninth hour a great prayer with great praise, imitating the souls of the righteous who do not lie, who glorify God who remembered his saints and sent his Word to them to enlighten them.
- 9 For in that hour Christ was pierced in his side, pouring out water and blood, and the rest of the time of the day, he gave light until evening. This way he made the dawn of another day at the beginning of his sleep, fulfilling the type of his resurrection.

eweiss continues in another email:

BAPTISM IN THE PATRISTIC PERIOD

Everett Ferguson at <http://dlibrary.acu.edu.au/researc...son.htm> (I've recommended Ferguson's books elsewhere. I've excerpted the paragraphs from this lengthy essay that use the term "illumine." This might also help you, robinbrooke, with your questions a couple months ago about baptism.)

Ceremony

Tertullian of Carthage in the early third century was the starting point for what developed much later as the separate sacrament of confirmation in the western church. He affirmed, "Not that in the waters we obtain the Holy Spirit, but in the water . . . we are cleansed and prepared for the Holy Spirit".

(On Baptism 6). He associated the post-baptismal anointing with entering the priesthood (7) and the laying on of a hand and prayer with the coming of the Holy Spirit (8). He elsewhere analyzed the actions in the initiation by associating the washing with cleansing, the anointing with consecration, the signing (with the cross) with strengthening the soul, and the imposition of hands with the illumination by the Holy Spirit (On the Resurrection of the Flesh 8). In the Greek church, although anointing represented the Holy Spirit, some (most?) identified the actual imparting of the Spirit with baptism. This is true for Chrysostom, who says that you go down into the sacred waters, bury the old person, raise up the new person, and “It is at this moment that, through the words and the hand of the priest, the Holy Spirit descends upon you” (Baptismal Instructions 2.26; cf. Homilies on Matthew 12.4).

Purpose

In extolling baptism patristic authors often give lists of its benefits. Cyril called baptism “a ransom to captives, a remission of offenses, a death of sin, a new birth of the soul, a garment of light, a holy indissoluble seal, a chariot to heaven, the delight of paradise, a welcome into the kingdom, the gift of adoption” (Procatechesis 10; repeated by Basil, Exhortation to Baptism 5).

Gregory of Nyssa says that at the Paschal baptism we “call strangers to adoption, those in need to participation in grace, those filthy in transgressions to the cleansing of sins” (To Those Who Defer Baptism [PG 46.416C]).

Gregory of Nazianzus outdoes John Chrysostom, doubling his total of ten benefits: “Illumination [the baptismal ceremony] is the splendor of souls, the conversion of the life, the pledge of a good conscience to God. It is the aid to our weakness, the renunciation of the flesh, the following of the Spirit, the fellowship of the Word, the improvement of the creature, the overwhelming of sin, the participation of light, the dissolution of darkness. It is the chariot to God, the dying with Christ, the bulwark of faith, the perfecting of the mind, the key of the kingdom of heaven, the exchange of life, the removal of slavery, the loosing of chains, the remodeling of the whole person ... the greatest and most magnificent of the gifts of God” (Oration 40.3).

The significance of baptism was further emphasized by the names given to it. Gregory of Nazianzus follows his listing of baptism’s benefits with a list of its names: “We call it gift, grace, baptism, illumination, anointing, clothing of immortality, bath of regeneration, seal, and everything that is honorable” (Oration 40.4). Favorite terms with him were illumination, grace, gift, and seal.

Gregory of Nyssa in the Catechetical Oration preferred the term bath or washing (loutron), taken from Titus 3:5, “the bath of regeneration.” In his sermon On the Baptism of Christ he preferred regeneration (palingenesia) and new birth (anagenesis), terms which he seems to have used interchangeably, the former derived from Titus 3:5 and the latter from John 3:5 and 1 Peter 1:23.

Jillj writes:

O.K. here's the deal...I need food to live, I KNOW that. I eat food everyday. I need healthy food to be healthy, I KNOW that, too. I know that my knowing that I need to eat and doing it is all I HAVE to know to stay alive. Now, there is a lot more to this act of eating food than just putting it in my mouth. My body goes through all kinds of processes to enable this food to nourish my body. If I want to, I can

learn how this works, but all I have to do to be alive and healthy is eat the food, I don't HAVE to understand EXACTLY how the food does its job inside my body, although I can if I want... I can become an expert on the function of the digestive system, and learn every correct word for every process and chemical reaction and organ involved. Nevertheless.... eating is sufficient for my health.

So, this very exacting kind of theological stuff is sort of like that, to me. Unless you want to argue that some Christians are so wrong in their understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ that they are in danger of not really being Christians at all (i.e. they are not even eating!), it is sort of just like taking a course on the human digestive system. Interesting, I guess, but not fundamental to our survival.

So, remember our friend C.S. Lewis "Jesus said, take and eat, not, take and understand" I'm not saying its not worth a discussion or that we shouldn't strive to get it right completely. But, do you believe these are major issues that would void the authenticity of faith in some, or do you believe these are minors that people of legitimate and pure faith will debate until Jesus returns and conducts his class on Theology 101, The Science of God? I believe the latter.

Major on the majors, minor on the minors.

Christ in me, the hope of glory, Christ in us, the hope of glory. That is the food, the fundamentally important part

Robinbrooke responds:

Does anyone else see that Hebrews 6:4-6 might mean what the Orthodox Church says it means, as opposed to what most Evangelical and Charismatic commentators think it means?

I think that's possible, given the early writings. However, I believe the primary interpretation is that some can fall away = lose their salvation.

And Jill, I agree with you to a certain extent. However, if people didn't obsess over the details, I don't think we'd have the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the deity of Christ, and a closed Canon, just to name of a few! What disputable matters are, are disputable...

The Orthodox interpretation (or the part I focused on) doesn't say anything about whether or not a person can lose their salvation, so while it may solve one problem (i.e., the meaning of "again renew unto repentance" = rebaptize), it doesn't address the other. The Orthodox/Chrysostom statements seem to interpret it to mean that if someone falls away (or "sins," if that's what parapiptô means), you can't rebaptize them, because that would be to recrucify Christ and the baptized person, and you can't do that to one who has already died and risen.

If you read on in Hebrews 6, though, it seems to talk about apostasy leading to ruination (being cursed and burned), not just discipline followed by restoration = eternal security (OSAS). I don't know if the Orthodox Church views the rest of Hebrews 6 that way.

Jillj responds to Robinbrooke:

righty-o! (I'm just so cheerful today with my new computer!)

I didn't mean that the matters are not worthy of discussion... and I haven't gotten to the point, Eric, where I know what my opinion is, exactly, on your first posting. I'm still thinking. I like to analyze and discuss. As a matter of fact, I over analyze just about everything. Ask my husband!! I'm not dismissing discussing, debating or anything like that, or the value of such discussion. I just wanted to understand if you were inferring these matters were of such consequence that a person could be in danger, or do you think there are details of religious prodigal that probably got shifted around in 2000 years but are not actually fundamental to the essence of our faith?

My opinion is, Jesus knows our hearts, so if there is some ritual or manner of baptism that someone who's heart is with Him misses, its not that important. I just start to cringe when there is this legalistic sort of presentation of what a right relationship with Jehovah God is, like a rule book. That seems like the very thing that Jesus came to do away with to me.

Having said that, I will read your original post again, and think about it, and come back later after I've lunched with a girlfriend.

Wow! My new computer is soooooo cool. Whopee! You guys just can't appreciate how beautiful your writing looks to me now. All crisp and clear and BIG!

gotta go! love ya space lady, bye bye! (that's a quote from a cartoon my kids watched, and became a common salutation for "good-bye" in our house!)

jillj responds to Eric:

O.K. Eric. I read all that you posted here on this thread from the beginning. I read Hebrews chapters 5-6 a few times through. I thought about it. I prayed about it. It is a hard passage this Hebrews 6:4-6, to be sure.

I read a few commentaries, and I am going to paste the one that I agreed with the most. I do not see a argument regarding baptism and second baptism in this passage. Who am I, though? My agreement with the article I am going to post here has more to do with a feeling in my heart than an educated knowledge of translations of greek and the early church.

For me, it always comes back to the cross of Christ, and ultimately that is the only place I can turn when I am confused. So, here goes: (I wanted to make bold the last two paragraphs of this article [written by Marc McCulley,] but I din't know how.) Be sure to read to the end. The good stuff is at the end. I read all yours!!)

Mark McCulley writes,...

"Is it impossible to restore again those who have once been enlightened, experienced the heavenly gift, shared in the Holy Spirit, experienced the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the (soon?) coming age..."

So is this talking about what the puritans called "temporary believers," who were not really believers but who were in the covenant and then broke it? John Owen suggests that "better things belong to salvation" (6:9) than the things on this list. A temporary covenant-keeper can understand the gospel without believing it and without ever having her sins forgiven. So those in the covenant should be threatened.

I have to agree that Hebrews 6 is a threat and that the salvation discussed in Hebrews is not simply present but a future reality. Even if it is a future to be soon realized by Jewish Christians in the AD 70 passing away of the Mosaic law and cult, surely we can make applications to ourselves and to our situation, even if we are not Jews tempted to go back into Judaism as a balance and addition to the cross. Can't we? Can't we apply this threat to ourselves? I think we can.

A parallel in Paul is Colossians 1:22-23: "to present you holy and blameless irreproachable before him, provided that you (the "if" should NOT be translated "when" no matter how much I might want to do that!) continue steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel."

Though we may assume that all the elect will persevere, this does not mean we should presume we are the elect. So how can we know we will not be "temporary believers" and covenant-breakers?

A parallel to Hebrews 6 is Hebrews 10:29, "profaned the blood of Christ by which they were sanctified". Can even the reprobate be temporarily sanctified and in the covenant? If so, what does it do for our ideas about a regenerated visible church?

Uh. I had made a vow to stop with so many questions! The parallel that works for me best is Romans 6 (but then I think everything through the lens of Romans 6!) Those who answer "OK, let's sin so that grace may abound" have heard and understood something of the gospel, certainly a lot more than those who think they are saved by works or by keeping covenant!

But to respond to free grace with an "OK, let's sin," shows that we are not yet regenerate: we have not yet experienced what grace is! There are those who hear simply "free from all law." This is something different from grace. Grace teaches us what sin (and law) is, and to hate sin. So I think it is possible to experience the greatness of the kingdom without ever knowing the grace of God.

God uses threats as a means to demand our trust in the cross and not in ourselves. And make no mistake: God does demand that all trust in the cross. This includes us who profess to be Christians! Of course our ability to respond affirmatively to threats like Hebrews 6 is given us by the good power of God (1 Peter 1:5). Judas was created to be reprobate; he was foreordained to be a temporary believer. We who respond with trust in the cross (and don't go back to something else plus the cross) have been elected to salvation from death. We hang on because God our Father will not let us go!

I do think one can be a Christian and be anxious and unsure about the Father letting go. But the NT calls us to faith, and faith means assurance, not suspicion of ourselves or of others. Because our faith should not be in ourselves or in others in the first place!

Romans 4:19 "Abraham did not weaken in faith." His faith was not a 'one time thing,' nor is the faith given to us by our Father a 'one time thing'. Faith involves lifelong patience and trust in the cross (and not the Mosaic law system) as the fulfillment of ALL of God's promises.

Thus I pray: do not let me outlive my faith in the cross. I would rather die than live without this faith. This faith did not come from me; it does not come from me. It is a precious gift which will be tested but not despised or minimized.

I need the encouragement and nurture of others with faith in the cross.

I need to encourage and nurture others with my faith. Some days some of us have more faith than others!...ground that produces thorns and thistles is to be burned over. (6:8)

Though this does not say burned without end, it does say that the ground is to be burned. Not only the thorns and the thistles produced by "temporary believers," but the people themselves!

Thus this is a real threat not to be relegated only to unbelievers or to professors; we believers also hear the threat and our positive response to it is not only guaranteed but NECESSARY.

Just like when we got saved in the first place! Yes, we were predestined to believe. But also, it was necessary that we confess with our mouths and bow our knees!

We must then repent and believe and work. And yet repenting and believing and working are very dangerous things for us to do. Because it is very tempting for us to put our faith in our faith, in our repentance, and in our works. For example, with our works, we think: "at least they won't hurt me and maybe they will help a little."

Wrong! Works done to "help a little" will hurt us because they put our trust in our works instead of 100% in the cross. Thus we must continually repent of our repentance and not put our faith in our faith.

Put it another way: our faith does not serve God but is self-serving. We need to trust God. God doesn't need us to trust Him.

There's nothing wrong with this self-serving faith IF we are not depending on this faith. Our dependence is on God who serves us by saving us. God does all the saving. Our faith does none of the saving. Our self-serving does none of the saving. Our covenant-keeping does none of the saving. It's not enough to "not keep the old covenant." We do not keep the new covenant. Jesus kept it!

So Hebrews 6 does not say: live your life so that you may look back and see that you were not a temporary believer. The threat is more direct. If you are a temporary believer, you will be burned. If you are

a temporary believer, you are sinning against Jesus by sacrificing Jesus for the sake of this other thing that you are trusting in.

You will be "crucifying again the son of God."

Do not say to yourself: "I could never do that." Do not say to yourself: "the elect can never do that." Say to yourself: "don't do that!" Say to yourself: "if you do that, you are lost and headed toward death."

The gospel does not tell us: just as you are is OK. The gospel tells us: "trust in the cross– if you do not trust in Jesus and the cross, you will die."

The gospel we preach to ourselves after we have become Christians says the same thing. Though we may not be Jews tempted to go back to the Mosaic system, we are tempted to add on something else to the gospel: To show that we are serious; To prove that our church is more righteous than other churches, etc.

But the threat is the same threat: there is still no other way to be saved but in the blood of Jesus over there, outside of us, given at the cross. We Christians have not graduated to some other (additional) way of being saved now.

God has given us the threat of Hebrews 6 as a means by which we flee once again to the cross and to no other place.

The fact that the elect of God do this very thing does not mean that the threat is unnecessary anymore than prayer is "useless if God has already decided." God has already decided that we Christians will not be temporary believers and that we will NOT say: "OK, let's sin then."

But neither does God want us to say to ourselves: "my performance today is a retrospective test to see if I am good enough to stay in the covenant."

We are not good enough. Not even now! The call is still for faith in the cross.

Though this faith is a gift of God, the psychology of how we experience faith is not automatic or inevitable. So we should not be suspicious of fellow Christians when they do not have today the same measure of assurance that we have today.

The test of faith is not how great the faith is, nor even our full understanding and interpretation of the cross in which we put our faith: the test is simply that we do continue to put our faith in the cross when we are threatened with the consequences of not doing so!

Mark McCulley/ Edited by jillj on Jan. 20 2005,06:46
