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A Critical Review of

Dr. Michael L. Brown's

"Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus"

5 Volumes

By

Yisroel Chaim Blumenthal

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Preface

You are the judge in town. The local prosecutor together with the police department has presented a criminal accusation against the wealthiest man in the state. The accused proceeded to hire the most capable legal team that money can buy. These lawyers spent long months preparing a case to exonerate their client, and the result of their work sits on your desk. You find yourself reading through a complex document that takes up well over 1000 pages. You read, you reread and you take notes. Then you sit back and reflect.

You realize that the lengthy legal presentation that you have just studied is riddled with flaws. Key issues that the prosecution has raised are not addressed in the document you have just read. Legal arguments that are forcefully emphasized in one section of the document contradict the arguments that are presented in other sections of the document. And you realize that these professional advocates have misrepresented some of the central facts of the case.

You ask yourself, why did these experts do such a sloppy job? Are they incapable? Certainly not! These are people that are well known for their legal skills. Were they lacking motivation? Not at all! If they were to successfully clear their client's name, their reputations, to say nothing of their bank accounts, would be considerably enhanced. Perhaps they did not have enough time to make their case? Again, no! They had all the time in the world.

It dawns upon you. The defendant must be guilty. If he was innocent, then his professional legal team would have had no problem presenting a flawless argument on behalf of their client.

This parable sheds light on the 2000 year missionary campaign of the Church. All of Christendom acknowledges that God had presented the Jewish Scriptures to the people of Israel before Jesus appeared on the scene. The Church also acknowledges that when Jesus and his followers presented their theological claims to the people of Israel, the people of Israel were morally obligated to evaluate those claims in light of the Scriptures that God had given to them. It is Israel's holy duty before God to see if the claims of the Church are consistent with the Jewish Scriptures, or if they contradict them.

The Church recognizes that if the Jewish people find that the claims of Christianity are inconsistent with the Jewish scriptures, then the Jewish people will be duty-bound to reject both Jesus and Christianity. It is for this reason that they spared no effort in preparing a case that would justify their theology according to the Jewish Bible.

If you were to study the end-product of this 2000 year effort, and you were to realize that it is riddled with flaws, what should your reaction be? If you were to discover that key issues are avoided, inherent contradictions appear at the heart of the core arguments, and foundational truths are distorted, what would this tell you about the theological claims of the Church?

Introduction

Dr. Brown's five volume series "Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus" was a decade in the making and consists of more than 1500 pages. In this series, Dr. Brown presents over 150 Jewish arguments against Christianity together with a response for each of these questions. One would expect that these books should encompass the culmination of the 2000 year old Christian campaign to establish an argument for Jesus. In my humble estimation, Dr. Brown did that, and much more. Not only does Dr. Brown present most of the age-old Christian arguments, but Dr. Brown has added many arguments of his own in his attempt to provide a logical basis for his faith. Dr. Brown has left no stone unturned in this effort to establish a legitimate foundation for Christianity.

However, in spite of all of Dr. Brown's efforts, I believe that this series clearly demonstrates the very opposite of what he sets out to prove. In this brief article I hope to articulate why it is that I believe that Dr. Brown's five volumes loudly declare that Jesus is NOT the Messiah predicted by the Jewish prophets, and that the basic doctrines of Christianity are NOT rooted in the words of the Jewish Bible.

When we observe a lawyer advocating a given cause, there are two possibilities that we must consider. There is the possibility that the lawyer is speaking on behalf of the truth and there is the possibility that the lawyer speaks on behalf of falsehood. It is not always so easy to determine if it is the truth that is being served or the lie, but there are certain indicators that could help us make a positive identification.

The lawyer's rational argument is in essence an appeal to the human sensitivity to truth. The truth and the logical argument are very comfortable with each other because they are two sides of the same coin. The rational argument and the truth are like hand and glove. We expect a perfect fit. There is no conflict between truth and rational logical thinking.

When a seemingly rational argument is presented on behalf of a falsehood though, there is bound to be conflict. Falsehood and the honest argument are essentially polar opposites. Trying to clothe falsehood with the rational argument is like trying to dress an elephant with a fine, three piece Italian suit that was custom designed for a person. The last thing we would expect is a perfect fit. When falsehood and the logical argument are coupled together, the incompatibility of these two will have to show itself.

Truth and the logical argument thrive on openness. Truth wants all the facts and considerations on the table. Falsehood would much rather that some of the facts and considerations remain out of the discussion. An argument on behalf of truth is marked by openness, while an argument on behalf of falsehood will be marked by the omission of relevant information.

Truth is at peace with itself. When you speak the truth, it is not difficult to remember what you said yesterday. The logical argument on behalf of truth will be internally consistent. When falsehood employs the logical argument, we will be sure to find contradictions at the very heart of the argument. The argument on behalf of truth is

marked by coherence and harmony, while the argument on behalf of falsehood is marred by contradiction.

And finally, the truth does not fear reality. A logical argument presented on behalf of truth will present facts as they appear in the real world. An argument presented on behalf of falsehood will have to misrepresent reality. An argument that advocates falsehood will contain misrepresentations of the facts and distortions of the truth. The argument on behalf of truth is marked by truth, while the argument on behalf of falsehood is marked with misrepresentations of the truth.

I shall set forth before you the flaws that are apparent in these five volumes of Dr. Brown. These books bear the following markings: omission of relevant information, internal contradictions, and misrepresentations of the truth. With the light of the God of truth, I will substantiate these accusations in the following pages.

Before I set out on this journey, I would like to take some time to clear up some possible misconceptions.

No, I am not nitpicking. I know that a work of this magnitude is bound to contain minor mistakes. I will not be addressing anything that is not of fundamental importance. The information that was omitted from Dr. Brown's work is central to the debate between Judaism and Christianity. The contradictions that appear in these five volumes stand at the heart of Dr. Brown's core arguments. And the misrepresentation of facts is not limited to peripheral matters, but rather these serve to distort the very essence of Judaism.

Yes, I am aware that the works of some counter-missionary activists contain some of these flaws as well. But in no way does this fact mitigate my argument, and allow me to explain.

There is a fundamental difference between the Christian missionary campaign to convert the Jewish people, and the Jewish counter-missionary campaign to defend Judaism. The Christian missionary campaign to the Jew is an expression of the heart and soul of Christianity. The essence of Christianity is the belief that Jesus is the one predicted by the prophets of Judaism. The core texts of Christianity can be read as one long argument advocating the alleged Messiahship of Jesus. The history of Christian scholarship is primarily a continuation of this effort to validate and to define the Messianic claim of Jesus. When flaws appear in the arguments of the Christian missionary, this is a reflection on the essence of Christianity, on the core texts of Christianity, and on 2000 years of Christian scholarship.

The Jewish counter-missionary campaign was never an essential component of Judaism. The essential beliefs of Judaism were established long before the inception of Christianity. The core texts of Judaism contain almost nothing about Christianity. And the history of Jewish scholarship barely touches upon the Messianic claims of Jesus. When flaws appear in the works of counter-missionaries, they serve as a reflection of the

humanity of this particular counter-missionary activist. In no way can these flaws be considered a reflection on the heart and soul of Judaism.

There is one more misconception that I must clear up before we get to work.

No, I am not judging Dr. Brown on a personal level. I am not accusing him of consciously lying or distorting the truth. However, I am aware that the unfortunate circumstances of Dr. Brown's personal life brought him to accept Jesus before he began his search for truth. I believe that it is this invalid sequence (first Jesus then truth) that subconsciously distorts Dr. Brown's natural affinity to truth.

As a personal friend of Dr. Brown, I can hear Dr. Brown's response. Dr. Brown would chuckle and say: "Yisroel, isn't it true that in your own personal life you were first born into Judaism and only afterward did you begin searching for truth? Isn't it possible that this sequence of events in your own life is clouding your picture of reality?"

Here is my response: "Michael, Michael, aren't you aware that the sequence that I am following was the one designed by God? Didn't God first establish Judaism and have generations of Jews born into the Jewish belief system and only afterward did He allow the Church to present the Messianic claims of Jesus? Don't you agree that our duty before God demands that we examine these new claims in light of the truths that God had already established in our hearts? Come Michael, try to put Jesus out of your heart for a few minutes and let us see how your books read without him."

Again, the purpose of this work is not to pass judgment against Dr. Brown on a personal level. Not only that, I do not believe that these criticisms stand as a judgment against Dr. Brown as a Christian scholar. The critique that is presented here exposes the essential flaws that are innate to the age old Christian missionary campaign. I would go so far as to say that Dr. Brown has exerted himself more than anyone else in his attempt to correct these failings inherent in the Christian missionary campaign. The entire point of this article is that you can push and pull, fold and rip, and keep at it for 2000 years, it is not going to fit. No matter how much one exerts himself or herself, the garment of the rational argument will not fit the cause of falsehood.

It is my sincere prayer that the God of truth shine His face upon all of His children including Michael and myself. May the pleasantness of the Lord our God be upon us, our handiwork establish for us, our handiwork establish it (Psalm 90:17). May the expressions of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before you, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer (Psalm 19:15).

Let us begin.

Key Witnesses That Were Not Called to the Stand

Deuteronomy 30:1-10

As a Protestant Christian, Dr. Brown asserts that, “The real question is: What do the Hebrew Scriptures teach?” (vol. 1, page xx). One would expect that in keeping with the standard that Dr. Brown has set for this discussion he would focus on those Scriptural passages that directly address the issues that stand between Judaism and Christianity. Yet, in all of the 1500 pages of his work Dr. Brown did not find the space to address one of the foundational Scriptural passages that is central to this discussion.

"1 And it shall be that all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse that I have set down before you, and you will bring it to your heart amongst all the nations that the Lord your God has driven you. 2 And you shall return unto the Lord your God and you shall hearken to His voice according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul. 3 And the Lord your God will return your captivity and He will have compassion upon you, and he will return and gather you from all the nations that the Lord your God has scattered you there. 4 If your outcasts be at the ends of the heaven, from there will the Lord your God gather you and from there will He fetch you. 5 And the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your ancestors inherited and you shall inherit it, and He will do you good and He will multiply you more than your ancestors. 6 And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your children to love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul for the sake of your life. 7 And the Lord your God shall place all these curses upon your enemies and upon those that hate you who have persecuted you. 8 And you will return and hearken to the voice of the Lord and you shall do all His commandments that I command you today. 9 And the Lord your God will make you plenteous in all the work of your hands, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your land, for good, for the Lord will turn to rejoice over you for good just as he rejoiced over your ancestors. 10 When you hearken to the voice of the Lord your God to keep His commandments and statutes which are written in this book of teaching, when you return to the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul." (Deuteronomy 30:1-10).

In this passage God set down before His people a clear portrait of the Messianic era. The picture we have here is not one that is ambiguous and murky. Rather, God used sharp and well-defined brush strokes to paint this portrait. We learn from this passage that the return of Israel to her land will be precipitated by her repentance. We learn from this passage that repentance means turning back to obedience of God’s law as Moses taught it. We learn from this passage that repentance is effective even when we are in exile and we do not have the ability to bring a blood offering. We learn from this passage that God will accept exiled Israel’s repentance even before He circumcises their heart. Finally, we learn from this passage that the commandments that Moses taught us will be fully observed in the Messianic era.

In stark contradistinction, Christianity teaches that Israel’s return to the teachings of Moses will play no part in the ushering in of the Messianic era. Christianity teaches that

repentance without a blood offering is not accepted by God. And the Church teaches that with the advent of Christianity, the law of Jesus has superseded the Law of Moses¹.

How does Dr. Brown answer the Scriptural challenges from Deuteronomy 30 to the doctrines of Christianity? In the volume that deals with the issue of repentance (Volume 2), these verses do not appear in the Scriptural index. This open Messianic prophecy does not show up in the Scriptural index of Volume 3 either (- this is the volume entitled “Messianic Prophecy Objections”). In Volume 5 we are sent on a wild goose chase.

On page 164 of Vol. 5 Dr. Brown partially acknowledges the challenge. I quote: “But what about Deuteronomy 30, which states emphatically that, after we have experienced judgment and dispersion, when we repent and return to observance of the Torah, we will be brought back to the land? That means that the central issue is Torah observance, right until the last moment before the Messianic age.”

Dr. Brown’s presentation of the Jewish argument is inaccurate. This passage (verse 8) clearly confirms that the teachings of Moses will be observed in the Messianic era, after the circumcision of our hearts. The unequivocal teaching of this passage is that the Law of Moses will be observed DURING the Messianic era and not only UNTIL the Messianic era as Dr. Brown would have his readers believe. But let us put this point aside and get to Dr. Brown’s response.

Dr. Brown responds to this Jewish objection with the words: “This is an excellent point, and we will take it up in 6.12 below”. But Dr. Brown says nothing about Deuteronomy 30 in 6.12. We should not be hasty to jump to conclusions; perhaps there is a typographical error here. Maybe Dr. Brown was actually referring to 6.10 where he briefly touches on the circumcision of the heart mentioned in Deuteronomy 30:6 and then directs us to Volume 4, 5.28. However, this passage from Deuteronomy is not discussed there either.

Let us leave no stone unturned. Let us examine the one paragraph that Dr. Brown did devote to this Scriptural passage in 6.10 of vol. 5 (page 223). In this paragraph Dr. Brown tells us that there is a divergence of views amongst followers of Jesus. Some understand that the obedience to the Torah that this passage speaks of is a reference to obedience and faith in Jesus. In endnote # 343 Dr. Brown informs us that other followers of Jesus believe that this Scriptural prophecy will never be fulfilled because of Israel’s failures.

Both of these positions are openly refuted by the text. Moses told the people that they will return to obey God, “according to all that I (Moses) command you (Eternal Israel) today”. These words were spoken by Moses more than 1000 years before Jesus was born. Moses made it clear that he expected the last generation of Jews to look back to him

¹ Dr. Brown tells us that after the advent of Jesus the central issue is, “believing in him, obeying him, following him, honoring him” (vol. 4, pg. 181). He repeats this concept several pages later: “The Messiah, not the Torah, is now central” (vol. 4, pg. 236). Another quote: “And this new and better covenant also brought about changes to the first covenant, specifically in terms of the high priest and the sacrificial system. Speaking of Israel’s high-priests, Hebrews states, “The former regulation is set aside because it was weak and useless...”” (vol. 4, pg. 263).

(Moses) as their ultimate teacher, and that he expected them to follow his commandments as they were understood on the day he presented them to Israel. These words of Moses clearly preclude the Christian belief that Jesus is the ultimate teacher, and that the teachings of Jesus are somehow superior to the teachings of Moses.

The second position that Dr. Brown attributes to followers of Jesus is also invalidated by the Biblical text. The passage opens with words: “*And it shall be that all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse...*” The curse that Moses is referring to is the curse that God warned would befall Israel should they fail to obey His voice. How then can one make the claim that on account of Israel’s failure to obey God, this Scriptural prophecy will never be fulfilled? This same prophecy clearly predicts Israel’s failure to obey and tells us how, after our failure, we will ultimately return to God. It is clear that God took our failures into consideration when He encouraged us with these words, and God’s promises are irrevocable.

The two Christian explanations that Dr. Brown offers his readers are clearly refuted by the words of this passage. Dr. Brown does not even begin to provide a textual justification for the Christian interpretation of Deuteronomy 30.

According to Dr. Brown’s own standard, the real question is: What do the Hebrew Scriptures teach? This passage in Deuteronomy clearly teaches that Israel’s repentance is the precursor of the Messianic age, this passage teaches that repentance is efficacious while Israel is still in exile, and this passage clearly teaches that the Law of Moses, as Moses taught it, is going to be observed in the Messianic era. Each of these issues is central to the debate between Judaism and Christianity. Why then does Dr. Brown fail to address this key passage in his comprehensive work?

Deuteronomy 4:35

Another gaping hole in Dr. Brown’s presentation involves a Biblical passage that gives expression to the heart of Israel’s calling as a nation before God. Israel’s appreciation of her covenantal duty before God stands at the very root of the Jewish objection to Jesus and to Christianity, yet Dr. Brown saw no need to bring this concept into the discussion.

When God created the nation of Israel He planted a certain critical truth into the core of their beings. The Jewish people recognize that their responsibility towards God demands that they carry this truth through the corridors of history. Indeed, the dedication of the Jewish people to God’s truth brought them into conflict with every force of evil, but the spiritual core of the nation remained loyal to this truth. Ultimately, Israel’s steadfast commitment to God’s truth will be rewarded, and all the ends of the earth will acknowledge God’s truth and Israel’s mission as God’s witness will be vindicated to the eyes of all nations².

What is this truth? And how was it implanted into the heart of Israel? I will allow the Bible to explain.

² Isaiah 25:9, 26:2, 43:10,12, 44:8. Jeremiah 16:19, Micah 7:10, Psalm 69:35-37

*“30 When you are in distress and all these things have befallen you in the end of days, you will return unto the Lord your God and hearken to His voice. 31 For the Lord your God is a merciful God, He will not abandon you nor will He destroy you nor will He forget the covenant of your forefathers that He swore to them. 32 For inquire now regarding the early days that preceded you, from the day when God created man on earth, and from one end of the heaven to the other end of the heaven; Has there ever been anything like this great thing or has anything like it been heard? 33 Has a people ever heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire as you have heard, and survived? 34 Or has any god ever miraculously come to take for himself a nation from the midst of a nation, with challenges, with signs, and with wonders, and with war, and with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with greatly awesome deeds, such as everything that the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? 35 **You have been shown in order that you know that the Lord, He is the God there is none beside Him.**” (Deuteronomy 4:30-35)*

The miracles of the exodus and the Sinai revelation are described in this passage as a unique educational experience designed by God. The miracles of the exodus demonstrated to the Jewish people that God is the absolute Master of all existence, and that all of nature is completely subject to Him. The Sinai revelation taught the Jewish people that all of their devotion ought to be directed to the One God who is completely above every conceivable form of existence, and to no one else.

God did not establish the monotheistic concept in Israel through the recital of words or by handing them a written text. The Scripture describes a fiery experience that brought the truth of God’s total sovereignty to Israel’s heart in a way that words alone could never accomplish. This was not simply a matter of acquiring information. Many nations are aware of the truth of God’s absolute dominion as a fact of knowledge. Israel’s formative educational experience seared the truth of God’s reality into the heart of Israel with the deepest intensity. The intense appreciation for this truth is Israel’s exclusive possession³.

God points to the awareness that Israel acquired through these unparalleled events as a gift that He granted to Israel, to the exclusion of every other national entity. The last generation of Jews is encouraged to look at the fact that this knowledge was granted to them, and to them alone, as the sign that God’s promises to them still stand.

Throughout history the Jew drew strength, courage and conviction from the fact that of all the nations of the earth, Israel alone was chosen by God to be the bearer of the ultimate truth. When the Christian theologians would employ the paradoxical teachings of the trinity and the incarnation to encourage devotion to Jesus, the Jewish response was clear and unequivocal. The Jew would tell the Christian: “God Himself taught us everything we need to know about devotion. The teaching He granted us was comprehensive and complete. He alone is the Creator of all, and everything else, including Jesus, are but His creations. Our hearts belong to the One who we encountered at Sinai and to no one else”.

³ Interestingly, Dr. Brown himself acknowledges that Israel possesses a special attitude of “staunch monotheism” (The Case for the Real Jesus, by Lee Strobel, Zondervan 2007, pg. 204).

This Biblical passage from Deuteronomy stands at the heart of Israel's 2000 year conflict with the Church. But Dr. Brown could not find the space for it in his work. Why not?

This same passage also serves as a key witness for the Jewish position in another area of the debate between Judaism and Christianity. According to Judaism, God has appointed both the written word, and the living nation of Israel as the means through which His Law should be transmitted throughout the ages. Judaism maintains that it is impossible to arrive at a complete understanding of the Law without the benefit of the living witness of Israel's teachers. Reading the Five Books of Moses while ignoring the living testimony of Israel, is wrenching the Scriptures out of the intended context of the Divine Author.

In keeping with Protestant tradition, Dr. Brown rejects this Jewish position. According to Protestant Christianity, the Jewish people play no part in transmitting God's Law from generation to generation⁴. Dr. Brown maintains that it is only the written word that is designated by God to communicate His Law through the ages. Dr. Brown asserts that the living traditions of Judaism only serve to distort the Authorial intent of the Five Books of Moses. Dr. Brown devoted the bulk of Volume 5 to substantiate the Christian position on this very issue.

In his discussion of the oral traditions Dr. Brown discusses the Sinai revelation (Vol. 5, pages 235-238). At one point Dr. Brown actually makes reference to a part of the passage that we have quoted above, but amazingly, he stops short right before the key verse. Dr. Brown directs the attention of his readers to Deuteronomy 4:15-34, but he leaves out verse 35!

Verse 35 clearly teaches us that the knowledge that was granted to Israel at Sinai was not limited to the recital of words or to the handing over of a written text. The verse makes reference to a living demonstration ("you have been SHOWN"). When we read this verse in context we learn that the extraordinary awareness that Israel was granted through this living demonstration will remain exclusively theirs until the last generation. The Bible also makes clear how this unique appreciation of God's absolute sovereignty is to be passed on through the generations. In verse 9 of this same chapter Moses exhorts the Jewish people: "*Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul, lest you forget the things that your eyes have beheld and lest you remove them from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children and your children's children.*" This verse clearly teaches that this crucial message is to be preserved through the living experience of parents sharing their knowledge with their children⁵. This important verse does not appear in the entirety of Dr. Brown's 5 volume work.

⁴ The Protestant position that rejects Israel's mission as God's living witness while accepting the Jewish Bible, is actually an exercise in self-contradiction. If the Jewish nation is not God's witness, then why should we accept their Biblical canon? If the Jewish nation is not God's witness then who is supposed to inform us that the Bible is God's book? (The reader is referred to the articles "The Foundation of Scripture" and "Faith Structure" available at www.jewsforjudaism.org)

⁵ Psalm 78, verses 3 thru 7 also speak of the live teaching experience of parents sharing their knowledge with their children. The Psalmist testifies that despite Israel's failings, the message will still be preserved until the last generation. This critical passage from the Psalms is also not mentioned in Dr. Brown's work.

The Testimonial Observances

Judaism and Christianity both acknowledge that God gave a teaching to Moses. These two belief systems also both acknowledge that God devised a method of communication through which this teaching could be preserved for future generations. Judaism and Christianity disagree with each other over the character of this communication.

According to Protestant Christianity, the written word is the only authentic repository for God's truth. Protestant Christianity contends that the Bible is the only means that God provided for the communication of His truth.

Judaism disagrees. Judaism affirms that God did not rely on the written word alone to preserve His message. According to Judaism, God also utilized the minds and the hearts of the Jewish people to pass His truth from one generation to the next. It is the written word together with the living testimony of the Jewish people that preserves the fullness of God's message throughout the ages⁶.

Dr. Brown devotes Volume 5 to advocate the Christian position and to invalidate the living testimony of the Jewish people. Oddly enough, some key witnesses were not called to the stand in the courtroom of Dr. Brown's books.

The Bible clearly tells us that God designated various testimonial observances as a means to preserve His truth amongst the Jewish people. The living observances of circumcision, Passover, redemption of the firstborn, the Sabbath, and Tabernacles were all appointed by God as a means of passing various truths from one generation to the next (Genesis 17:11-13, Exodus 12:25-27, 13:8, 11-16, 31:12-17, Leviticus 23:42-43, Deuteronomy 16:3).

These observances play a vital role in the preservation of God's truth amongst His people. The miraculous events of the exodus and Israel's subsequent sojourn through the wilderness served as the hammer-blows through which God formed this nation for Himself⁷. Scripture attests to the foundational nature of the exodus events by repeatedly making reference to the exodus in the most central settings (Exodus 20:2, 29:46, Leviticus 11:45, 22:33, 25:38, Deuteronomy 6:21, 8:14, 29:1-8, Joshua 24:17, Judges 2:12, 2Samuel 7:23, 2Kings 17:7, Jeremiah 2:6, Hosea 13:4, Micah 6:4, Psalm 81:11). And Scripture explicitly points to the testimonial observances as the means through which the impression of this pivotal event is to be preserved.

Circumcision and the Sabbath are the witnesses that God appointed to teach the future generations of the irrevocable nature of God's covenant with Israel. The Sabbath was designated by God to ensure that every generation of Jews will know the sanctity that God grants Israel (Exodus 31:13). The election of Israel⁸ and God's sanctification of

⁶ The reader is referred to "The Council of my Nation" for a full discussion of this concept (available at www.jewsforjudaism.org)

⁷ 1Samuel 12:22, 2Samuel 7:24, Isaiah 43:21, 44:21, 1Chronicles 17:21.

⁸ Exodus 4:22, Deuteronomy 26:18, Jeremiah 31:2, Isaiah 43:10, 60:2.

Israel⁹ are central components of the theology of Scripture. God recognized that the full impact of these critical truths cannot be preserved solely through the written word. God designed the testimonial commandments so that each generation of Jews could learn to appreciate the significance of Israel's election and her sanctification by God.

The Biblical texts that describe the testimonial observances make clear that God expected the latter generations of Jews to look at the living observances of their parents, and see in them a repository of God's holy truth. These texts make clear that God recognized that the written word alone is not a sufficient means of preserving the full impact of His truth without being enhanced by the living observances.

The testimonial observances are the very witnesses that God Himself designated to ratify the most central elements of His truth for future generations. Dr. Brown never discusses this critical aspect of God's plan to perpetuate His truth amongst His people. The very witnesses, appointed by God, are ignored by the advocates of the Christian missionary campaign. This should tell you something about the nature of this campaign.

Dr. Brown's Objections to Christianity Inherent Contradictions

Dr. Brown's Teaching on Biblical Interpretation

In Volume 2, on page 94, Dr. Brown presents a teaching on the correct method of Biblical interpretation: "...it would be highly unlikely - to put it mildly- that the Lord would hang a major life-critical Torah revising revelation, on just one verse, especially when that verse in the original Hebrew is somewhat obscure grammatically...".

This teaching is quite straightforward. God did not give us the Hebrew Scriptures to confuse us. There are many clear and explicit teachings in the Hebrew Scriptures. Many of these teachings are repeated again and again. God has no problem making a point clear and emphasizing the point again and again. Dr. Brown is teaching us that a Biblical interpretation that assumes that God revealed a critical revelation in just one grammatically obscure verse that runs counter to another teaching that is expressed clearly and explicitly in many verses, would be illogical and faulty.

With this teaching, Dr. Brown has delivered a death blow to the Church's 2000 year effort to establish a Scriptural basis for Jesus' claims.

The entire theology of Christianity stands on the tenuous claim that God hung major Torah revising revelation on solitary verses where the Hebrew is grammatically obscure.

The Scriptures explicitly state that the forgiveness of sin is achieved through sincere repentance. This teaching is repeated many times throughout the Hebrew Scriptures in a clear and unambiguous manner (Deuteronomy 30:1-10, Ezekiel 18:21-23,27,28,31,32,

⁹ Exodus 19:6, Leviticus 11:45, 20:26, Deuteronomy 7:6, 26:19, Jeremiah 2:3, Ezekiel 37:28.

33:11,14-16,19, Isaiah 1:16-18, 55:7, Hosea 14:2-10, Jonah 3:10, Micah 6:7,8, Psalm 51:19)¹⁰. These passages directly address the issue of forgiveness from sin, yet they make no mention of a blood offering. Some of these passages¹¹ actually preclude the requirement of a blood offering as a necessary component in the process of forgiveness from sin. Yet on the basis of the misinterpretation of one solitary verse (Leviticus 17:11)¹² from a passage that does not directly address the issue of forgiveness from sin at all, Christianity teaches that repentance cannot achieve atonement without a blood offering!

Throughout the Scriptures, we find that both tribal and royal lineage proceed through the paternal line. The phrase “to the house of their fathers” is repeated over 20 times in the first four chapters of the Book of Numbers alone. Yet Christianity teaches that the Davidic Messiah of the tribe of Judah will NOT be a descendant of David and Judah from his father’s side. This, on the basis of one solitary mistranslated verse that is wrenched out of its Scriptural and historical context (Isaiah 7:14)!

Many passages in Scripture are devoted to describing the Messianic era. These passages provide us with a clear and unambiguous portrait of those glorious times (Numbers 24:14-19, Deuteronomy 4:30, 30:1-10, 32:43, Jeremiah 3:14-18, 16:14,15,19, 23:3-8, 30:3,7-11,16-25, 31:1-39, 32:37-44, 33:6-26, 46:27,28, 50:4,5,19,20, Ezekiel 11:17-20, 20:40-44, 28:25-26, 34:9-16,22-31, 36:6-15,22-38, 37:1-28, 38:1-48:35, Isaiah 1:26,27, 2:1-4, 4:2-6, 10:33-12:6, 24:21-25:9, 30:26, 34:1-35:10, 40:1-11, 41:8-20, 43:1-10, 44:1-5 49:8-26, 51:11,22-52:12, 54:1-55:5, 56:7, 60:1-63:9, 65:17-25, 66:10-24, Hosea 2:1-3,16-25, Joel 3:1-4:21, Amos 9:11-15, Obadiah 1:17-21, Micah 4:1-7, 5:1-13, 7:8-20, Zephaniah 3:9-20, Zechariah 2:9, 8:1-8, 14:3-21, Malachi 3:4,16-24, Psalm 51:20,21, 69:36,37, 98:1-3, 102:14-23, 126:1-6, Daniel 2:44, 7:18,22,27, 12:2,3). Throughout these lengthy Scriptural depictions, we find not a word about a second coming of the Messiah. Christianity builds the theological edifice of a second coming on the basis of the misinterpretation of one solitary verse (Daniel 7:13¹³)!

This is not to mention the many Christian doctrines which do not have even one solitary, non-contextual, mistranslated verse to lean on at all. These include, but are not limited to, the idea that the sacrificial system is to be replaced, the teaching that our devotion ought to be directed to Jesus, the concept that all men are damned to hell for ever and ever because of Adam's sin, the concept that a new election is established on the basis of devotion to an individual and the concept that devotion to an individual is a prerequisite for atonement, amongst many others.

According to Dr. Brown’s own teaching, Christianity has no valid Scriptural basis.

¹⁰ See also Genesis 4:7, Deuteronomy 4:29, Judges 10:16, 2Samuel 12:13, 1Kings 8:33-36,48-50, 2Kings 20:1-6, Jeremiah 3:22, 4:1-4, 18:7,8, 25:5, 26:3,19, 35:15, 36:3,7, Ezekiel 3:18, Joel 2:12-27, Job 11:13-20, 22:21-30, 33:26-30, Daniel 4:24, Nehemiah 1:9, 2Chronicles 6:24-30,34-39, 7:13, 12:6,7, 30:9, 33:12,13.

¹¹ See below pages 18 and 19

¹² See Contra Brown (available at www.jewsforjudaism.org) for a full discussion of this passage.

¹³ See Contra Brown for a full discussion of this passage.

Volume 4 versus Volume 5

Dr. Brown devoted the fifth volume of his series to invalidate the oral traditions of Judaism. One of the major criticisms voiced by Dr. Brown against these traditions focuses on the style and method of the Biblical interpretations found in the Talmud. Often enough, we will find that the Talmudic interpretations do not seem to conform to the plain meaning of the Scriptural text and Dr. Brown sees this as an inexcusable fault of traditional Judaism. With righteous indignation Dr. Brown declares: “Nothing can violate the plain sense of the text and carry any authority, otherwise the written word has no meaning and no authority” (vol. 5, page 53).

Let us note that all of the major theological principles of Judaism are explicitly spelled out in the Bible. The adherents of Judaism do not need to rely on anyone’s Scriptural interpretations when it comes to the fundamentals of the faith.

In the following paragraphs I will present the foundational Jewish beliefs concerning the key issues that stand between Judaism and Christianity (worship of God, atonement from sin, and the advent of the Messiah). I will also demonstrate how these beliefs are supported by the Biblical text.

Our devotion is directed to the One Creator of all who spoke to us at Sinai and to Him alone. This core belief of Judaism is clearly stated in Exodus 20:1, 2. The passage records how God told the people: “I am the Lord your God who took you out of the land of Egypt from the house of bondage, you shall not recognize other gods before me”. This concept is repeated in Deuteronomy 4:35, where Moses reminds us: “You have been shown in order that you know that the Lord, He is the God there is none beside Him.”

Jews believe that God requires sincere repentance for the forgiveness of sin. This fundamental doctrine is plainly stated by the prophets. Isaiah taught: “Let the wicked one forsake his way and the iniquitous man his thoughts, let him return to the Lord and He will show him mercy, to our God for He is abundantly forgiving” (Isaiah 55:7). Ezekiel passes on the word of God: “As for the wicked one, if he repents from all his sins that he has committed, and he observes all My decrees and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he has committed will not be remembered against him...” (Ezekiel 18:21, 22).

All of Judaism’s core beliefs about the Messiah and the Messianic age are clearly expressed in the Jewish Scriptures.

The prophets spoke of the ingathering of the Jewish exile (Deuteronomy 30:3, Isaiah 11:12, 40:11, 43:5,6, 49:12,18,22, 60:4, 66:20, Jeremiah 3:18, 30:3, 31:7, 32:37, Ezekiel 11:17, 20:41, 34:13, 36:24, 37:21).

The prophets spoke of a Temple in Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2, 60:7, Jeremiah 33:18, Ezekiel 37:26, 43:7, 44:15, Micah 4:1).

The Scripture tells us about a national return to Torah observance (Deuteronomy 30:8, Jeremiah 31:32, Ezekiel 11:20, 36:27, 37:24, 44:23,24).

The prophets taught us about universal peace (Isaiah 2:4, 65:25, Jeremiah 33:9,16, Ezekiel 34:25,28, 37:26, Hosea 2:20, Psalm 72:3).

And Israel looks forward to a world that is filled with the knowledge of God (Isaiah 11:9, 45:23, 54:13, 66:18,19,23, Jeremiah 3:17, 31:33, Ezekiel 38:23, Zephaniah 3:9, Zechariah 8:20-23, 14:9,16).

The fundamentals of Judaism are explicitly spelled out in the Scriptures. It is only within the limited realm of practical observance of the Law of Moses that the rabbis applied the Talmudic method of Scriptural interpretation. In most cases, the rabbis applied these Scriptural interpretations only as a supplement to the plain meaning of the text, and not as a replacement for the plain meaning of the text. Conversely, the alternative theology that Dr. Brown promotes has relegated Torah observance to practically nothing, in blatant violation of the plain meaning of the text. Furthermore, the historical record confirms that the Talmud embodies the only practicable form of obedience to the Law of Moses that is viable in the context of an eternal community. Dr. Brown brushes these considerations aside. He discredits the Talmud and her teachers because the Talmud contains Scriptural interpretations that are not in line with the plain contextual meaning of the Bible.

Let us turn back to Volume 4. It is here that Dr. Brown notices that the foundational texts of Christianity advocate a new belief system, a set of core beliefs that were hitherto unknown to the Jewish people. These writers teach that the Messianic era will incorporate a new election, an election of devotees of the Messiah. These writers preached that atonement for sin is achieved through loyalty to an individual. And the later generations of Christian teachers proclaimed belief in a trinity.

Not one of these foundational Christian concepts can be found in the Jewish Bible. (There are many scholars who believe that belief in the trinity cannot be found even in the Christian Scriptures, but that point is beyond the scope of this discussion.) The teachers of Christianity expected their Jewish audience to accept these radically new concepts on the basis of their own twisted Scriptural interpretations. These teachers did not stop there. They condemned everyone and anyone who did not accept their teachings to the eternal fires of hell.

Dr. Brown attempts to address this issue in his first section of Volume 4. Dr. Brown gives restrained expression to the Jewish objection: “The New Testament misquotes and misinterprets the Old Testament. At times it manufactures verses to suit its purposes” (page 3). Dr. Brown does not share with his readers the fact that ALL of the theological underpinnings of Christianity stand on these fanciful interpretations and on nothing else. But for a Christian, he said a lot.

As part of his response to this Jewish objection, Dr. Brown cites the Talmud. Dr. Brown demonstrates to his readers how the authors of the Talmud utilized a free-flowing method

of Scriptural interpretation, and he tells us that the early Christian teachers were simply doing the same.

Dr. Brown does not tell his readers that the authors of the Talmud did not use these interpretative methods to establish the fundamentals of their faith. Neither does he tell his readers that in Volume 5 he will point to these same interpretative methods to condemn Judaism. And he certainly does not tell his readers how the same interpretative methods of the Talmud can serve to exonerate the teachers of Christianity, while they stand as a condemnation for the teachers of Judaism.

Imposing Theology on the Biblical Text

On page 133 of Volume 3, Brown directs the attention of his readers to Psalm 45. This Psalm is addressing a human king, describing his greatness and his glory. The opening phrase of verse 7 in this Psalm is the object of Dr. Brown's attention. The most literal translation of the Hebrew would be rendered: "Your throne God forever..." At first glance, this would seem to indicate that this human king is actually divine.

The Jewish commentators explain that in keeping with Scriptural usage of Hebrew, this verse is not attributing divinity to a human. Some Jewish commentators explain that the Hebrew word for the divine is not referring to divinity in this instance, but rather to human lordship¹⁴. Others explain that this poetic phrase ought to read: "Your throne is of God forever". This explanation is in keeping with the Scriptural teaching that the throne of the Davidic dynasty is actually God's throne (1Chronicles 29:23). Others understand that this particular phrase is actually addressing God in regard to the Davidic throne, and is not addressing the human king.

Each of these explanations is in keeping with the general rules of Scriptural interpretation. But Dr. Brown is not satisfied. He administers a stern lecture to the Jewish commentators, and I quote: "... we do best to take the Scriptures in their most obvious, basic sense, allowing the Bible to dictate our theology, rather than imposing our theology on the word of God". Dr. Brown accuses the Jewish commentators of imposing "their own" theology on the Scriptural text.

Dr. Brown does not tell his readers that this text in the Bible (Psalm 45) is not presented as a teaching on the nature of God. Neither does Dr. Brown tell his readers that in those Biblical passages that do directly address the nature of God, we are taught that God has no form (Deuteronomy 4:12, 15, Isaiah 40:18). If he were to bring these facts to his readers' attention they would realize that his argument has no merit. It is not "their own" theology that the Jewish commentators are imposing on the text; it is the theology of the Bible itself.

But let us now turn to Volume 2. It is here where Dr. Brown attempts to substantiate the Christian position which posits that there is no atonement for sin without a blood offering. There is not one verse in the entire Hebrew Bible that presents this teaching.

¹⁴ The Hebrew word used here is used in reference to human lordship several times throughout the Scriptures (Exodus 4:16, 22:8, Psalm 82:1).

Instead Dr. Brown turns to the Talmud and the commentaries of the Talmud to provide a basis for this non-Scriptural teaching. (Yes, the same Talmud that is the villain of Volume 5 is the hero in Volume 2.) It is beside the point that Dr. Brown has completely misunderstood both the Talmud and her commentaries¹⁵. What is relevant to our discussion is that the theology that Dr. Brown is defending has no viable Scriptural basis.

But that is only where Dr. Brown's problems begin. Of far more serious nature is the problem that the Bible repeatedly emphasizes the power of repentance to achieve atonement for sin. How does Dr. Brown deal with these passages? Simple! He imposes his own non-Scriptural theology on the Bible!

Come dear reader and let us see how he does this. No, he will not use the classical methods of Scriptural interpretation such as those used by the Jewish commentators of Psalm 45. The language that Scripture uses to establish the efficacy of repentance is too explicit and too straightforward. The open message of Scripture will not be mitigated through sober Scriptural interpretation.

So what does Dr. Brown do? We will go through some of the salient Scriptural passages that deal directly with the issue of atonement from sin, and we will record Dr. Brown's response for each of these.

We have already quoted the passage from Deuteronomy 30:1-10. This passage is foundational because it teaches that God accepts our repentance while we are in exile and without the ability to offer a sacrifice. This passage also teaches that the repentance need not be perfect to be accepted. The human repentance (of verse 2) that precedes the circumcision of the heart will be accepted by God to the degree that He will return our exiles on the basis of this repentance. Only after the return of the exiles will God intervene to perfect our repentance through the divine circumcision of our hearts (verses 6 and 8).

Dr. Brown's response? Silence!

Micah (6:7-8) gives expression to the quest of the sinner seeking forgiveness for his sin: *"Shall the Lord be appeased with thousands of rams, with tens of thousands streams of oil? Shall I give over my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my belly for the sin of my soul?"* The prophet responds: *"He has told you, O man, what is good! What does the Lord require of you **BUT** to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God."*

The clear teaching of the prophet is that a substitutionary offering is NOT a prerequisite for the forgiveness of sin. The key word in this prophecy is the word "but". All that God requires is the practice of justice, the love of kindness and walking humbly with God. The two Hebrew words "ki im", translated as "but", "just" or "only", clearly teach that there is no other requirement.

¹⁵ See Contra Brown for a full discussion of this matter.

How does Dr. Brown address this challenge? On page 75 of Volume 2, Dr. Brown provides a translation of this passage in Micah. However, the translation that Dr. Brown chose **OMITS THE KEY PHRASE!** The critical Hebrew words “ki im” have no counterpart in the English rendition that Dr. Brown has provided for his readers. This glaring omission speaks volumes.

The Biblical Book of Jonah describes God’s decree of destruction against the city of Nineveh. The prophet describes how the people repented and God rescinded the decree of destruction. This is the primary plot of the 3 chapters of this Biblical book. There was no blood sacrifice, just repentance, and it worked. This poses a serious problem to Dr. Brown. How does he respond?

Here again Dr. Brown turns to the Talmud for help (the villain of Volume 5 is again the champion of Volume 2). Dr. Brown quotes the Talmud which speaks of Israel offering sacrifices on behalf of the gentiles (vol. 2, page 152). Dr. Brown then argues that the repentance of the Ninevites only worked in conjunction with the offerings described by the Talmud.

Dr. Brown does not tell his readers that the authors of the Talmud never meant their teaching to be read that way. The same Talmud points to the Book of Jonah as the classic teaching on the efficacy of repentance (B. Talmud, Taanit 15a). But for Dr. Brown, an obscure teaching of the Talmud, wrenched out of its broader Talmudic context, is grounds enough to transmute the central teaching of this Biblical book.

These three Scriptural passages (Deuteronomy 30, Micah 6, and the Book of Jonah) represent some of the prominent teachings of the Bible on the issue of forgiveness from sin. We have seen the unconventional methods that Dr. Brown utilizes in order to impose his own theology on the prophetic word. May I now remind you of Dr. Brown’s admonition quoted earlier: “... we do best to take the Scriptures in their most obvious, basic sense, allowing the Bible to dictate our theology, rather than imposing our theology on the word of God.”

Amen.

Foundational Truths Distorted by the Christian Missionary Campaign

Israel’s Messianic Hope - Universal Peace

An integral part of the Christian missionary campaign is the effort to invalidate the Jewish understanding of the Messiah and the Messianic age. As an advocate of this campaign, Dr. Brown would have his readers believe that the Jewish vision of the Messianic age is not rooted in the words of the prophets.

The concept of universal peace lies at the heart of Israel’s yearning for the Messianic era. Jews believe that when the Messiah will come, there will be peace on earth. As an advocate of the Messianic claim of a man who has had more blood spilled in his name

than any other human being in history, it is understandable that Dr. Brown would like to disassociate the concept of “peace” from the concept of “Messiah”.

In Volume 1, on page 70 Dr. Brown shocks us with the following statement: “In fact, nowhere in our Scriptures does it explicitly say, “When the Messiah comes there will be peace on earth.” Rather, it speaks of an era of peace at the end of the age (see Isaiah 2:1-4, without any mention of a Messianic figure there)...”

This incredible statement of Dr. Brown crashes into the wall of Scriptural reality.

Ezekiel prophesied: “*23 And I will establish for them one shepherd and he will shepherd them, My servant David, he will shepherd them and he will be their shepherd. 24 And I the Lord will be their God, and My servant David a prince amongst them, I the Lord have spoken. 25 And I will make with them a covenant of peace, and I will cause wild animals to desist from the land, and they will dwell in the desert in security and they shall sleep in the forests*” (Ezekiel 34:23-25).

God had Ezekiel repeat this teaching: “*24 And My servant David (a) king over them, and one shepherd shall be for all of them, and they will walk in My statutes, and they will keep My laws and observe them. 25 And they shall dwell in the land that I have given to My servant Jacob, that your forefathers dwelt there, and they will dwell upon it, them, their children, and their children's children, unto eternity, and My servant David (a) prince for them forever. 26 And I will make with them a covenant of peace an eternal covenant it will be with them, and I will set them down and I will increase their number, and I will place My sanctuary in their midst forever*” (Ezekiel 37:24-26).

Jeremiah taught us concerning the Messiah: “*...in his days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell securely*” (Jeremiah 23:6, repeated in Jeremiah 33:16).

It is clear that Israel’s expectation that the Messiah’s days will be marked by universal peace is firmly rooted in the words of the prophets. The effort of the Christian missionary campaign to discredit Israel’s Messianic hope only serves to discredit the Christian missionary campaign.

Israel’s Messianic Hope - the Temple

Another central feature of Israel’s Messianic hope is the yearning for the return of the physical Temple in Jerusalem. Since Jesus claimed to be a replacement of the physical Temple, Christianity places no emphasis on the Temple in her vision of the Messianic future.

In Volume 3, Dr. Brown attempts to discredit the Jewish hope that the Temple will be rebuilt in the times of the Messiah. Dr. Brown devotes 10 pages (170-179) to the task of demonstrating how this hope of the Jewish people has no Scriptural basis.

Dr. Brown begins by quoting Maimonides who teaches that the Messiah is to rebuild the Temple. Dr. Brown insists on understanding the teaching of Maimonides in a hyper-

literal sense, meaning that the Messiah must personally rebuild the Temple with his own hands. Dr. Brown then seeks to prove that this belief is not based on Scripture. Dr. Brown concludes his arguments by telling us that Maimonides "...missed the mark, painting a picture of the Messiah that (1) would be in agreement with Rabbinic Judaism and (2) would rule out Yeshua as a candidate."

It is in place to mention that Dr. Brown's assumption that Maimonides was swayed by a desire to discredit Jesus has no basis in fact. Anyone who is familiar with the writings of Maimonides knows that Maimonides was in no way intimidated by the possibility of Jesus being the Messiah. The arguments of the Christian missionary campaign are so obviously flawed, that no prominent Jewish thinker in the history of Jewish scholarship felt threatened by the claims of the Church.

It is also in place to mention that in the very same section of his book where Dr. Brown insists that Maimonides adhere to the most literal Scriptural standard, he allows himself the loosest standard of Scriptural interpretation. Dr. Brown demands that Maimonides substantiate his position with a Scriptural verse that will explicitly state that the Messiah will personally rebuild the Temple. But Dr. Brown has no hesitation telling his readers that the Messiah must perform miracles on the basis of a Scriptural passage which does not even mention the person of the Messiah (Isaiah 35:5-7)!

Dr. Brown's problems are far from over. Even after Dr. Brown put the words of Maimonides into a straight jacket (by limiting his teaching to the notion that the Messiah will personally rebuild the Temple), he still faces an uphill battle. There is a passage in the book of Zechariah which explicitly states: "And he shall build the Temple of the Lord" (Zechariah 6:13). How does Dr. Brown deal with this prophecy?

Dr. Brown begins his dissertation by making the claim that in the book of Jeremiah: "there is no mention of the Temple's restoration, nor is there any explicit connection between the Temple and the Messiah anywhere in the book." Dr. Brown goes on to assert that "Similar statements could be made concerning every one of the remaining prophetic books aside from Zechariah and Ezekiel". After discounting Ezekiel's prophecy (because it does not speak of the Messiah personally rebuilding the Temple), Dr. Brown asks his audience, "Where then are the alleged prophecies that the Messiah will build the Temple? They are found in only *one book* of the Hebrew Scriptures..." (Emphasis appears in the original).

It seems that Dr. Brown will have us discount a prophecy because it is stated only once in the Hebrew Scriptures. May I remind you dear reader that the virgin birth is mentioned only once in the Hebrew Scriptures (and only after the verse in question is mistranslated and wrenched out of context), the concept of a life for a life¹⁶ is mentioned once in the Hebrew Scriptures, and the doctrine of a second coming of the Messiah leans on the

¹⁶ According to Dr. Brown the concept of "a life for a life" is the one of the most significant teachings of the Bible. In Volume 2 (pg. 152) Dr. Brown states: "Therefore, we can see that God has always had one system of atonement and one system alone, namely substitutionary atonement, life-for-life atonement, blood atonement."

misinterpretation of one verse in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is to say nothing of those Christian teachings which do not have even one verse to lean on. No, I am not referring to peripheral teachings of Christianity. I refer here to doctrines that stand at the very heart of Christian theology. The teaching that there is no atonement for sin without devotion to an individual, the teaching that God's newly elect are the devotees of the same individual, and the concept that all men are eternally damned to hell on the basis of Adam's sin, have no Scriptural basis whatsoever.

But let us go back to the prophecy of Zechariah. After all, Zechariah was a prophet, and his words do seem to satisfy the strict Scriptural standard that Dr. Brown requires of Maimonides. Zechariah actually said the words: "he will build the Temple". Dr. Brown responds with the argument that this prophecy of Zechariah does not necessarily refer to the Messiah. Then Dr. Brown's offers us the possibility that the Temple spoken of in this prophecy refers to a spiritual rather than a physical Temple.

It is interesting to note that this is not the only time that Dr. Brown discusses this very same prophecy of Zechariah. In an interview with Lee Strobel (*The Case for the Real Jesus*, Zondervan 2007), Dr. Brown points to this same passage in Zechariah as, "the most overt passage in the Bible where a human being is explicitly identified with a Messianic figure" (page 199). So which is it? Is this prophecy one of the most important Messianic prophecies or is it a lonely obscure prophecy which may not even refer to the Messiah and should not to be taken literally?

We will put this question aside for now and focus on the real issue. How central is the Temple to the Messianic vision of the Scriptural prophets? According to Christianity, the Temple plays an insignificant role in the Messianic age, if at all; whereas according to Judaism, the Temple is a central feature of the Messianic hope.

Dr. Brown's sweeping statements to the contrary notwithstanding, the prophets do tell us quite a bit about the Temple in the Messianic era. Isaiah mentions the Temple four times in his vision of the future: "*And it shall come to pass in the last days that the mountain of the Lord's house will be established on top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and the nations of the world shall flow unto it*" (2:2). "*And I shall bring them to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer, their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted on My altar, for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all people*" (56:7). "*All the flocks of Kedar will be gathered unto you, the rams of Nebaioth will serve you; they will be brought up with favor upon My Altar, and I will glorify the House of My Splendor*" (60:7). "*The glory of Lebanon will come to you - cypress, fir, and box tree together - to glorify the place of My Sanctuary; and I will bring honor to the place of My feet*" (60:13).

Jeremiah speaks of the bringing of thanksgiving offerings to the House of the Lord in the context of a Messianic prophecy (33:11). In the same passage Jeremiah assures us that the priests will be bringing various types of offerings (33:18). Joel tells us that a spring will flow forth from the House of the Lord in the Messianic age (Joel 4:18). Micah assures us that the House of the Lord will be exalted in the Messianic era (4:1). Zechariah

speaks of the Temple in the context of the Messianic era as well (14:20, 21). Ezekiel devotes several chapters to a description of the Temple in the Messianic era (40 - 47). Furthermore, Ezekiel tells us that one of the great accomplishments of the Messianic era will be: *“Then the nations shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel when My Sanctuary shall be amongst them forever”* (37:28).

There are more verses in Scripture that explicitly speak about the Temple in the Messianic era than there are verses that are manipulated by Dr. Brown to teach about all of the Christian conjectures about the Messiah combined. Yet Dr. Brown claims that it is the Jewish view of the Messianic era that fails to pay heed to the Biblical script! What does this tell us about the Christian mission to advocate the Messianic claims of Jesus?

Israel’s Relationship with God

Israel’s relationship with her God stands at the heart of Israel’s 2000 year refusal to consider the claims of the Church. Hundreds of thousands of Jews have chosen death over Jesus, primarily because they considered acceptance of Jesus to be the deepest violation of their relationship with God.

In recognition of the serious nature of this issue, Dr. Brown devotes over 50 pages to the discussion of this question: are Christianity’s beliefs about Jesus idolatrous? (Vol. 2, pages 3-59)

Amazingly, Dr. Brown’s 50 page discussion does not mention the Sinai revelation. This makes Dr. Brown’s dissertation on the subject about as meaningful as a 50 page composition on the political history of the American Revolution that fails to mention the concepts of liberty, freedom, independence and democracy. I say this not only from the standpoint of Jewish theology (which Dr. Brown is supposed to be addressing), but from the standpoint of the Bible. The Scriptures clearly point to the Sinai revelation as the event that defined the concept of idolatry for the Jewish People (Exodus 20:19, Deuteronomy 4:15-19, 30-39). The Bible teaches that if it is not what was revealed to you at Sinai, then it is idolatrous to direct your devotion to it. No one ever made the claim that it was Jesus who said to our ancestors at Sinai, “I am the Lord your God”, and no one ever claimed that it was a trinity that was revealed to our ancestors at Sinai. From a Biblical standpoint, this simple fact defines faith in Jesus and belief in the trinity as idolatrous. This foundational Scriptural objection is conspicuously excluded from Dr. Brown’s presentation on the subject.

Furthermore, the Sinai revelation preceded Scripture. God presented this foundational teaching directly to the Jewish people before He gave them the first word of Scripture. This means that God expected the Jewish people to read the Scriptures in light of the lessons learned at the Sinai revelation. To quote Scripture on the subject of idolatry without reference to the Sinai revelation is to wrench the Scriptures out of the context into which God placed them.

To his credit, Dr. Brown does make mention of the Sinai revelation in Volume 5 (page 238). In the midst of an attack against the oral traditions of Judaism Dr. Brown devotes

one paragraph to the Jewish objection that the Sinai revelation precludes faith in Jesus. But Dr. Brown limits the Jewish objection to the point that the Sinai revelation taught us not to worship a human form. Dr. Brown seems not to have grasped the pivotal role that Sinai played in the injunction that God gave His people concerning idolatry. And Dr. Brown's response directs his readers back to Volume 2, where he does not discuss the Sinai revelation at all.

Dr. Brown's failure to acknowledge Scripture's emphasis of the Sinai revelation in connection to God's teaching against idolatry is only the beginning of Dr. Brown's misrepresentation of the Jewish position on this issue. As serious as this omission is, and in no way do I mean to diminish the weight of this omission, there is a flaw in Dr. Brown's presentation that runs much deeper than anything I mentioned up until this point.

Dr. Brown addresses the issue of idolatry as if it were a legal exercise. He points to anomalies in the Scriptural text, and uses complicated word formulations¹⁷ in order to justify Christianity's devotion to Jesus. But idolatry is not a technical legality or a philosophical abstract. Idolatry is a sin of the heart. Dr. Brown's efforts can be compared to a lawyer who points to a quirk in the text of a marriage contract in order to justify an act of adultery. It is not necessary to respond to the legalistic argument of the lawyer. It is obvious to one and all that this lawyer did not begin to understand the concept of marriage.

The human heart is capable of submitting itself in total all-encompassing devotion to almost anyone and anything. One can allow himself or herself to be overwhelmed by the beauty of a natural object and engender in their heart the feeling of total submission towards this object. One can allow himself or herself to be carried away by the righteousness and self-sacrifice of another human being, and allow their hearts to be dragged along in a current of total devotion towards the object of their love and reverence. According to the Bible, both of these devotions would be idolatrous.

The Bible teaches that everything in heaven and earth are but creations of the One Almighty God. Our hearts belong to Him as do the hearts of every fellow inhabitant of this earth. To allow one's heart to be subject to a creation of God, is to confuse Creator and created. It is to give to created that which belongs exclusively to Creator.

The Jewish people are married to their Creator. They pledged their hearts towards the Maker of heaven and earth, and promised Him that they will not allow their hearts to be led astray by any of His subjects. We bask in the shine of God's holy radiance. We are overwhelmed by the truth of God's absolute reality, by His absolute Mastery over everything in heaven and earth, by the love God demonstrated in creating us, and by the tenderness of His holy embrace we sense in the benevolence of every facet of our own

¹⁷ Here are some of Dr. Brown's word formulations: "Jesus is the replacement of the ancient Tabernacle" (vol. 2, pg. 23). "...the one in whom the fullness of God dwells in bodily form" (vol. 2 pg. 35). "...his divine Word became flesh and blood" (vol. 2, pg. 37). "...spiritual reality, clothed in human flesh" (vol. 5, pg. 238).

existence and in the existence of every fellow inhabitant of heaven and earth. What does the life and death of a mortal inhabitant of God's earth have to offer to us? How meaningless are the activities of flesh and blood when contrasted with the all-encompassing love and truth of the Master of all?

The Jewish response to the Christian missionary is simple and straightforward: We are already happily married. We are not looking for another mate.

Concluding Statement

Jesus has had 2000 years to prepare his case. He had some of the greatest minds that humanity has ever produced, working tirelessly on his behalf. These scholars filled libraries with their arguments, and in our age of open communication, these libraries were all open before Dr. Brown. The Churchmen have pulled and stretched, ripped and sewed, in an unceasing effort to get the suit of the rational argument to fit the Messianic claims of Jesus. The end-product of this 2000 year effort is marred with all of the flaws we would expect when a rational argument is used to justify a falsehood. The Christian presentation features gaping holes, inherent contradictions, and the misrepresentation of basic truths. It simply does not fit. The wardrobe of truth does not belong on the figure of Christianity.

Dear brothers and sisters. How much more time will you give the Church to try to get the suit to fit the elephant? Come my dear brothers and sisters, take your rightful positions as contributing members of the eternal community of God's firstborn son (Exodus 4:22, Jeremiah 31:8). Taste and see that the Lord is good, praiseworthy is the man who takes refuge in Him (Psalm 34:9)