

December 26th, 2012

Dear Paul and Lorraine,

I trust this letter finds you both in good health and good spirits as the Christmas season slips into the past with the new year lying ahead. I am doing well, though Grandma's condition continues to decline. As I mentioned briefly while visiting with you during the summer, I am caring for her as she lives out her last days on home hospice. Her health is in a fragile state now. She cannot be left alone for long periods of time, which limits my outside activities somewhat. By God's grace we both take each new development as it comes.

I was surprised and honored that you should care to hear my thoughts regarding Mr. Deuble's book. Thank you for your patience in waiting for my response. I have carefully considered what was written in *They Never Told me **This** in Church!* (for brevity hereafter shortened to "*They Never Told*").¹ In responding I have tried to do the issue justice by accurately handling the truth. I apologize for the poor quality of my writing. The following was assembled over the course of several weeks and so lacks the polish gained by refinement over a much longer period. Special thanks is due to both my Dad (Ivan) and Arlan who each critiqued my writing in their own way, and made it better than otherwise would have been. The flaws that remain are mine alone, and there are plenty. I hope my failures in clarity, conciseness, and exposition will not be too much of a hindrance.

You are receiving a printed copy in the mail because I feel it is much easier to read long-form writing on paper. However, I also intend to e-mail a digital copy to the email address of Paul that I have on file. I have included links in the digital file (which appear as underlined text in the printed copy) which are helpful in further study, for those so interested.

This response doesn't covers all that could be said, or addresses every matter. My goal was a balance between thoroughness and brevity. In spite of its limitations, I trust this response will be an adequate introduction. It is hard to graciously argue some points (especially in print). The tension between rebuke/reproof and a gracious manner of conveying them is a difficult one. Any response at all leaves me trusting in God for a good outcome. So then, whatever my own failures, I hope they will not be too much of a hindrance in introducing you to the logical and ethical defects in the arguments Deuble employs. Only God knows the heart of Deuble, but the substance of what he has publicly argued in writing can be assessed by the objective witness of the Scriptures and the personal witness of the Spirit of Christ as to His intended meaning. If my efforts spur further thinking or questions on your part, I would be happy to receive any reply that seems good to you.

¹ All of the quoting I do herein is from the 1st edition of *They Never Told me **This** in Church!* I discovered after I purchased my used copy that a 2nd edition was released. I am not certain what edition you have, but some material was re-arranged in the 2nd edition so the page numbers I give from my 1st edition will not match the location of material in the 2nd edition. I apologize if this creates difficulties for you cross-referencing material.

The outline of my response to Deuble is divided into two parts. In **Part 1**, I want to establish how we know the mind of God; In **Part 2**, I want to show how we can recognize the difference between God’s revelation/interpretation of Himself to man, and man’s *re-interpretation* of God’s public revelation. This second part is not a happy way to arrive at truth—as it is a critique dictated by the necessity of contrasting Deuble’s thoughts with God’s thoughts.

The situation being what it is, I will show that the fundamental **first premise** employed by Deuble (mostly implicitly presented, *not* explicitly stated) is that the authority and wisdom of man interprets and defines the revelation of God. That is a fundamental premise I do not accept. I reject the idea that we need a wisdom *beyond* that given by the Spirit of God, and revealed in Scripture, to properly understand Scripture. To put the best face on his point Deuble makes it seem that we, of ourselves, can only know and submit to the authority of the Author of scripture *through* our submission to the minds/authority of learned men who enable a “proper” understand Scripture. I hope to convince you that the living Spirit of Christ *personally* speaks to those born of God. Consequently, by the mind of Christ we are able to hear and judge all things—even the published gospel—and this comes *not* through the discernment/mind of any mere man.

However, since that ‘first’ premise is mostly implicit, I will delineate two further related troubling premises I see in Deuble. What I will call the **second premise** is a premise of the necessity of the “Hebrew mindset.” Deuble explicitly asserts that it requires a Hebrew mindset to rightly understand the gospel and, by extension, God. This second premise flows from his first, unstated, overarching premise that one must go outside of Scripture to the mind of man in order to understand God and Scripture. Deuble presumes a correct Hebrew mindset in order to make further assertions about the Hebrew text and Hebrew terminology.

The **third premise**, then, is found in Deuble’s declaration that we need an understanding of the Hebrew *text* in order to properly know and understand what was said. In this second part of my response I hope to show that all these premises are false. To this end, I will critique specific examples from Deuble's book.

The entire document, broken down, is as follows:

Part 1 — How we Know the Mind of God

Part 2 — Distinguishing Between God's Revelation/Interpretation and Man's Re-interpretation

- **Section 1. Acts 13 and Hebrews: The Eternal, Exalted, Uncreated One**
- **Section 2. The Gospel of John**
- **Section 3. Monotheism, Trinitarianism, and Ambiguity**
- **Section 4. Hebrew or Greek Text?**
- **Section 5. Shaliah and Agency**

As the context for opening my Part 1, I would like you to remind you that Deuble begins by claiming we need a “Hebrew mindset” to rightly understand God's revelation. It is here I would open my response.

Part I – How we Know the Mind of God

Greg Deuble obscures the truth by presenting a false dichotomy—a choice between the Hebrew or Greek mindset. Contrary to Deuble, the correct interpretation of Scriptures is not an issue of recognizing truth by identifying with a Hebrew mindset as opposed to a Greek mind. You can neither go far enough back in time, nor find a transcendent culture which shows **any human** mindset that rightly understands God. According to Scripture the fundamental obstacle to knowing God is a inability to share in the mind of God (Christ). The bondage of the natural mind of man (both Jew and Greek) is to sin, alienated from the thoughts of God. The ethical condition of man governs all his thinking—both his religious and cultural contexts. In fact, the very witness of the entire Old Testament is that when the Jews did not misunderstand the very words given to them, they rejected them. In the New Testament we have the explicit teaching: “*There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God*” (Rom. 3:10-11).

Because there is no one, Jew or Gentile (not one!), who understands or seeks God, I reject any assertion that a Christian needs to acquire any mindset of man—whether Hebrew or Greek—in order to come to know God and His work of salvation. The only mindset required is that of Christ which is given by the Spirit of God to those born of His Spirit. Neither the wisdom of the Greeks nor the doctrines of the Jews leads to a knowledge of the truth. Rather, both turn from the truth of God because it is a stumbling block and offense to them. The apostle Paul does not call us to become wise according to the wisdom of the Greeks **or the Jews**. Rather he declares, “*God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise*” (1 Cor. 1:27). In preaching the Apostle Paul says that “*When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God [. . .] My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power*” (1 Cor. 2:1, 4).

The apostle Paul presented the Corinthian church, and all who heard the gospel, with a stark choice. The choice was not between “the Hebrew mind or the Greek mind” but rather between the mind of the Lord/Yahweh (1 Cor. 2:16, Isa. 40:13)—which is the mind of Christ—or the mind of man; both Jew and Greek. I know the following is a long quote of Scriptures you have read before, but at least for the sake of following my argument, please take a moment to refresh your memories:

When writing to the the Corinthian church, the Apostle Paul declared:

For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;

the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.”

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength.

Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. He chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before him. It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.”

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written:

“No eye has seen,

no ear has heard,

no mind has conceived

what God has prepared for those who love him”—

but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man’s spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself

is not subject to any man's judgment:

“For who has known the mind of the Lord
that he may instruct him?”

But we have the mind of Christ.

(1 Cor. 1:17-2:16 NIV1984)

Note that the apostle Paul placed Jew and Greek in the same category saying, “*Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of the Age?*” (1:20) and “*Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom*” (1:22) and yet again, “*a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles*” (1:23) but finally, “*to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*” (1:24)

What the NIV in 1 Cor. 1:20 translates as “scholar” and “philosopher” is in other translations “scribe” and “disputer” (see NKJV). The underlying Greek word for scholar or scribe is *grammateus* ([Strong's #1122](#)) a word which, in its various forms, is used to refer in the gospel accounts to the Jewish scribes (experts) of the Law. Thus we see in 1 Cor. 1:18-25 that the apostle takes the greatest of the Jewish (theological) and Greek (intellectual) understanding and declares them both utterly contrary to a knowledge of God, for, he says, “*the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing*” (1:18)

If someone comes to you proclaiming a gospel that is based upon his superior wisdom (be it of words, languages, or mindsets), and dependent upon his knowledge, then it is a gospel resting on his wisdom and your faith is in him, not God. We who believe that God has preserved His word and grants us understanding by His Spirit do not trust not in the righteousness or wisdom of men in order to obtain knowledge of God. It is the presence and sufficiency of God's Spirit within us that teaches us. As the scripture says, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom*” (Col. 3:16) and “*As for you, the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit—just as it has taught you, remain in him*” (1 John 2:27). And, as Paul has just said: “*We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words*” (1 Cor. 2:12-13). Someone who claims that you need a special understanding of words, or a particular mindset which they must convey to you has denied the sufficiency of the Spirit for the revelation of God.

We have been clearly told that, “*The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (1 Cor. 2:14) and, “*None of the rulers of this age [Hebrew or Greek] understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*” (1 Cor. 2:8) Any who would use the mindset of man, Hebrew or Greek, Jew or Gentile, to define the revelation and gospel of God has not understood the words, “*Who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?*” Any who would think they can look to the mindset of

people in ages past, or their culture, or their understanding, to grasp the revelation and gospel of God, has failed to understand the declaration, “*No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him*” or “*Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you*” (Acts 13:41, Hab. 1:5). We who believe declare that the gospel is foolishness to the Hebrew and Greek mind. We utterly reject those mindsets and affirm that God has revealed to us by His Spirit “*a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began*” (1 Cor. 2:6-7).

It is Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit he has sent who provide us with the definitive understanding of all revelation. We should not look to the people, cultures, or prophets of ages past to define how the prophecies and promises of God should be understood. Consider these examples: To understand the prophetic meaning of Balaam's oracles (Numbers chapters 23 & 24) we do not seek the mindset or understanding that Balaam possessed. To understand the fulfillment of Isaiah and Jeremiah's prophecies we don't look for the interpretation they held. To know what was meant by the high priest Caiaphas when he prophesied “*Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one*” (John 11:51-52) we don't need to discover how Caiaphas understood those words. We do not because we have been told,

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things (1 Peter 1:10-12).

And even more clearly we are told,

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20-21).

In like manner, of Balaam we read, “*The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, 'Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you'*” (Num. 22:35) and from the mouth of Balaam himself comes the confession, “*Must I not speak what the LORD puts in my mouth?*” (Num. 23:12). Even in regards to the wicked high priest Caiaphas we are told, “*He did not say this on his own*” (John 11:51). Finally, the greatest prophet among men—John the Baptist—who declared the very coming of the Messiah plainly did not understand the fullness of the message he had been given, for later he said, “*Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?*” (Matt. 11:3).

Scripture testifies that true prophesy is divine revelation, not constrained or defined by the culture or understanding of man, but **rather confounding the understanding of that very man, and judging him ignorant of the things of God**. The Hebrew mindset was blind, and wholly

missed the revelation of Jesus Christ contained in their very Scriptures. We are told repeatedly in the New Testament that the gospel is the “*proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the **mystery hidden** for long ages past*” (Rom. 16:25, Eph. 3:3,9, Col. 1:26). The very testimony of Scripture is that the Jews as a whole did not understand or believe the scriptures they were given, and failed to know what type of Messiah and salvation God had promised. To seek out the Jewish understanding (their *wrong* understanding) is to seek to join them in their rebellion and unbelief.

Jesus declares,

“[T]he Father who sent me has himself testified concerning me. You have never heard his voice nor seen his form, nor does his word dwell in you, for you do not believe the one he sent. You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life” (John 5:37-40).

In this talk about the Hebrew mindset it seems fitting to close this first part of my response with the quote from the apostle Paul when he warned his listeners in the *Jewish synagogue* in Pisidian Antioch by referring to the prophet Habakkuk, saying:

Take care that what the prophets have said does not happen to you:

“Look, you scoffers,

wonder and perish,

for I am going to do something in your days

that you would never believe,

even if someone told you.” (Acts 13:40-41)

Part II – Distinguishing Between God's Revelation/Interpretation and Man's Re-interpretation

Deuble has three basic premises that frame his interpretive narrative and underlie the arguments he makes in *They Never Told Me This in Church!* In summary they are:

1. We must go beyond Scripture to properly understand Scripture.
2. We require a Hebrew mindset to rightly understand the gospel and, by extension, God.
3. We need the Hebrew text to properly know and understand what was said.

I discuss these three premises in their practical display by Deuble under the six different **Section** headings of my paper which follow. Hopefully this structure by Sections will provide a road map that will help you navigate this lengthy document. In particular, I want to discuss multiple examples from Deuble which illustrate his usual inaccurate and careless handling of the Biblical text.

The first premise, though plainly stated above for clarity (we must go beyond Scripture), remains unstated by Deuble. Since this broad premise of the authority of man outside Scripture to define Scripture remains the most implicit of Deuble's principles, an unwary reader may easily miss its repeated appearance throughout *They Never Told Me*. However, an attentive reading will notice that at key points in his exposition of doctrine Deuble goes outside the Biblical text to impose the “correct” interpretation onto the Biblical text.

Don’t misunderstand me—I am not dismissing “word studies” and other ancillary means of clarification when they are used *properly*, being governed by the clear meaning *already* established within the Scriptures themselves. The problem is the whole-sale methodology employed by Deuble—that is, this supposed crucial extra-Biblical doctrinal insights available only to experts, insights which redefine the Biblical text. This ought to raise alarms when it is a feature of establishing important points of *meaning*—that is, which pertain to the Author’s/Spirit’s fundamental *intent*.

Deuble is cavalier about context, and uses definitions and interpretations found outside of the Scriptures to shape his argument of (and about) the Biblical text. Typically he does this by an appeal to the “Hebrew mindset” (the second premise) which is then defined by some authority, expert, or text other than the Bible itself and then applied back to the Bible to shape the narrative and argument of the Bible. In many ways the broadness of the first premise encompasses the subsequent two premises, though the first premise has more implicit, (but extensive,) applications than the following two. Because of the fundamental nature of his methodology, I

confess that I will repeat some criticisms when making specific illustrations and application of my criticisms. My criticism of Deuble will include his handling of the discourse of Paul in Acts chapter 13, and the related use of Psalm 2:7 (my **Section 1** below). Then I will discuss his mishandling of various passages in the Gospel of John (my **Section 2** below).

The second premise is the most explicit. This is Deuble's *stated*, over-arching premise. Deuble continually states outright that we must have a “Hebrew mindset” to properly understand. Not only does he assert that we need a “Hebrew mindset” to understand the Old Testament text, but that same mindset and text is a necessary background to, (and thus also necessary for rightly understanding,) the New Testament Greek. As I go into this point in practical details, I will critique what Deuble has to say about Monotheism and Trinitarianism and Biblical ambiguity (my **Section 3** below).

The third premise (the necessity of the Hebrew text) is not stated as explicitly by Deuble as the second premise, but it incorporates his premised Hebrew mindset with features of both the Hebrew text *and language* that are key to his exposition. Therefore the necessity of the Hebrew language and the Hebrew text as a cornerstone for his arguments (is requisite even if not stated by him in such explicit terms. I begin addressing in my **Section 4**. Specifically, I will discuss terms which *supposedly* exist solely in the Hebrew text—such as the alleged *Adoni/Adonai* distinction (my **Section 5**) and the Hebrew term *Shaliah* (my **Section 6**)—a term not found in scripture, but which Deuble wants to use to re-frame the Biblical text.

I began my response by quoting at length from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians because *that* forms my fundamental premise. Meditating on that, and expounding from that, is from where my understanding grows. From what I have already said it is clear that I find Deuble's appeal to the “Hebrew mindset” (the explicit basis for his argument) directly contrary to scripture. The Apostle Paul has plainly said we must forsake the Hebrew/Jewish mindset, as well as every other mindset of men. If someone were to say we should forsake the modern mindset, or the Greek mindset, that would be true also. But we are to forsake *all* human mindsets, being conformed instead to the mind of Christ which is the mind of God.

I reject Deuble's interpretive narrative, and for the sake of symmetry I can formulate a contrasting three-point summary of my premises:

1. The mind of the Spirit is sufficient to understand the Scriptures. The Spirit of Christ leads us into all true understanding of Scripture and we do not need to appeal to any outside authority to define our understanding of Scripture.
2. We do not require the Hebrew mindset. Instead, we need to forsake the Hebrew mindset to rightly know God.
3. We do not need the Hebrew text to properly know and understand what was said—the Greek text is sufficient as demonstrated by the *practice* of the NT writers.

Viewed only as a rebuttal to Deuble, my statement of the third point might be narrowly applied to my premise for the sufficiency of translations of the Scriptures into Greek (as opposed to using the Hebrew text). However, my third point could be expanded to state that the living

Spirit of Christ personally ‘speaks’ to those born of God. Consequently, by the mind of Christ we are able to hear and judge all things—even the published Scriptures—though *not* through the discernment/mind of any mere man. And so the Bible can be adequately translated from Greek *or* Hebrew into the common tongue. Even more importantly, the understanding given by the Spirit is sufficient for knowing God and His gospel in any language. We don't need to read the Bible in Hebrew, Greek, or Latin(!) to rightly know the mind of Christ. No one understands anything at all about *anything* in Creation (including themselves) except by the common grace of God mediated by His divine power by which He upholds all things. But as to the character of God and His redemptive works, my message to all people is that they need His special grace to receive the Spirit of God (which is the Spirit of Christ) to receive the Mind of God (which is the Mind of Christ) so that they might understand the Gospel of God (which is the Gospel of Christ). My message is that when a person is endowed with His presence they may understand the gospel in their own language, and that they may understand the Author of their salvation through the Scriptures—no authority beyond their Author, no ancillary texts, nor expert knowledge is required to know God. My confidence in these things is based upon the promise and grace of God, who by that grace preserves and reveals His truth in spite of the ignorance, wickedness, depravity, and rebellion of sinful man.

Section 1. Acts 13 & Hebrews: The Eternal, Exalted, Uncreated One

Deuble promulgates many errors—but I am going to start with his handling of the discourse of Paul in Acts chapter 13, and the related use of Psalm 2:7 “*You are my Son; Today I have become your Father.*” This passage of Acts, and the related part of Deuble's book, are not the most germane to the discussion of the divine nature of Christ, but I will start there; firstly because the occasion is a clear illustration of the inaccurate and careless handling of the Biblical text typical of Deuble, and secondly because the passage is related to some extent to the divine nature of Christ and is a fairly natural springboard to where I would start the discussion of Jesus' divinity.

On Acts 13, Deuble says the following:

Psalm 2 is also quoted in the NT in Acts 13:33. Here **there is no doubt at all** that the Father's decree, “You are My Son; today I have begotten you” is a reference to Jesus' conception/physical beginning and to his life's ministry. As the apostle Paul announces “the good news of the promise made to the fathers” (Acts 13:32) he tells how God the Father “raised up Jesus” (v. 33) in fulfillment of His decree in Psalm 2. **This clearly refers to Jesus' physical begetting, because only in the next verse is the resurrection of Jesus introduced:** “And as for the fact that He raised him up from the dead, no more to return to decay...” (v. 34). (This point is lost to readers of the King James Version where there is an unfortunate mistranslation. The word “again” appears in verse 33 where it has no right to be. This gives the impression that the Psalm 2 citation refers to Jesus' resurrection when it reads, “God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus *again.*” The original Greek does not introduce the word “again” until verse 34 where, as we have noted, the resurrection first comes into view.) (*They Never Told*, p. 157-158, bold emphasis mine)

This caught my attention for how poorly, and dismissively, Deuble handled the text, but what I want to call attention to is Deuble's habit of not making his case by presentation, but rather by loud assertion. In reading *They Never Told* I was constantly reminded of how Deuble lived out the adage “If you don’t have a case, make it bold and loud.” He says there is “**No doubt at all**” that Psalm 2 is referring in Acts 13:33 to the birth of Jesus because “**only in the next verse is the resurrection of Jesus introduced.**” So because the word resurrection doesn’t occur until the next verse there can be **no doubt** that Psalm 2 is referring to the birth of Christ? Certainly that is the conclusion Deuble wants to reach, but it is rather evident to anyone paying attention that he actually hasn’t made any kind of argument at all. One could just turn the phrase around and say “*There is no doubt Psalm 2 is referring to the resurrection of Christ because the resurrection is mentioned in the next verse.*” The problem with an assertion in *either* direction is just that—it is an assertion of nothing more than force of opinion. The larger argument and context of the original writer is ignored, and the place of a single word (resurrection) somehow takes on the full convincing force of what is meant.

But it gets even more interesting. Deuble is in fact not telling the truth. He says “**only in the next verse [v. 34] is the resurrection of Jesus introduced.**” But look at the text:

“Brothers, children of Abraham, and you God-fearing Gentiles, it is to us that this message of salvation has been sent. The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath. Though they found no proper ground for a death sentence, they asked Pilate to have him executed. When they had carried out all that was written about him, they took him down from the tree and laid him in a tomb. **But God raised him from the dead**, and for many days he was seen by those who had traveled with him from Galilee to Jerusalem. They are now his witnesses to our people.

“We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers he has fulfilled for us, their children, **by raising up Jesus**. As it is written in the second Psalm:

“‘You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.’

The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

“‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’

So it is stated elsewhere:

“‘You will not let your Holy One see decay.’

“For when David had served God’s purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed. But **the one whom God raised from the dead** did not see decay. (Acts 13:26-36)

When we look at the larger passage it is obvious that the statement “**only in the next verse [v. 34] is the resurrection of Jesus introduced**” is plainly not true, as evidenced by the fact that it is explicitly stated first in v. 30, not v. 34! Further, in reading the text we see multiple references where “raised” is associated with “from the dead” making the one abbreviated “raising Jesus” contextualized by the preceding and following occurrences as a further reference to the

resurrection. So Deuble's assertion of textual *fact* is a falsehood, and his assertion of context "*there is no doubt at all that the Father's decree, 'You are My Son; today I have begotten you' is a reference to Jesus' conception/physical beginning and to his life's ministry*" is entirely unsupported by reading the passage. Is the context of that speech by Paul centering on and expositing the birth of Christ, or his resurrection? The discourse is focused on the resurrection of Christ and what it signified and the OT passages referenced are clearly in regards to that resurrection. What does that tell you about what the Apostle meant, and how he interpreted the passages quoted?

It is true that the Greek word "begotten" is often used in the generative sense, as John says, "flesh begets flesh, but spirit begets spirit" (John 3:6) But the word has more nuance. Some hint of the metaphorical use can be seen in how Paul applies it to himself in his writings. All of this can be rather obscured in modern translations where rather than leaving the word "begotten" translators attempt to supply the English words they feel best conveys the nuance intended. I am not saying the translators have done a bad job—only that you may be unaware of the times begotten is used or the nuance that must be brought to the text since translators have already supplied it for you.

For example, in 1 Cor. 4:15 the NIV1984 supplies "*Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.*" The NIV is supplying a nuance that is not literal word-for-word translation. The King James is closer to the original: "*For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ yet have ye not many fathers for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.*" Now to those of us of sound mind I think both translations are equally understandable and appear effectively the same. But there is no second "*pater*" in the Greek (as NIV might make you think). Paul is literally saying "*if indeed ten thousand tutors you should have in Christ yet not many fathers; in indeed Christ Jesus through the gospel I you did beget.*" Now if you took Paul literally this statement is theologically problematic since the gospel of John makes clear that God is the one who begets unto new life. To most it is obvious that Paul is making no claim to literal powers of spiritual procreation, but rather he is saying the obvious fact that he *metaphorically* took on the role of a father to them. Paul does the same again when in Philemon 1:10 he speaks of Onesimus saying, "*whom I have begotten in my imprisonment.*" Again, it is evident that Paul does not mean he *literally* in a fleshly or spiritual sense became the *begetter* of Onesimus, but metaphorically he functions as such, and thus intercedes for the run-away slave as a father would.

In Psalm 2:7 the NIV translates "He said to me, "*You are my Son; today I have become your Father.*" This is not word-for-word accurate because it is actually "have begotten you" (and there is no *pater* in the text) but "have become your Father" does highlight the ambiguity present. Is the begotten/become-father meant in the literal sense, or the metaphorical sense of taking on the role?

There is a tendency to leap to conclusions. We know this is a Messianic psalm, we know Jesus became man, and ergo this is speaking about his birth—and the train of thought flows so naturally that we don't stop to consider the context of the psalm itself or (even more importantly) how NT

writers have interpreted it.

Before discussing the use of the Psalm in NT passages, let's look at the psalm as it stands in the OT. First, it is a psalm about the Davidic king, as it says, "*I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.*" A strong imagery in the psalm is that of the contest between the Davidic king and the kings of the world as the psalm opens with "*Why do the nations conspire and the people plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord*" and closes with, "*Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned you rulers of the earth [...]*"

It is not hard to see how David as king in his relation to the nations around Israel functioned as the type. Certainly nations conspired against him, and he dashed them to pieces like pottery. So then we ask how is "*You are my Son; Today I have become your Father*" to be applied to David? Obviously David was not begotten by God in whatever sense we claim it for Jesus. More precisely, the question is "How we to understand that statement in the context of speaking to the *Davidic king*?" The NIV text note sums it up saying, "*In the ancient Near East the relationship between a great king and one of his subject kings, who ruled in his authority and owed him allegiance, was expressed not only by words "lord" and "servant" but also by "father" and "son." The Davidic king was the Lord's 'servant' and his 'son.'*"²

The parallel declarations, "*I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill*" and "*You are my Son; today I have become your Father*" presents *the depiction of fatherhood here as relating to the subordinate's assumption of a covenantal-kingly office.* There is particular application in the promise of 2 Samuel 7:14 when God covenants with David and says of his kingly descendant "I will be his father and he will be my son." While that had a particular reality in Christ, it was language that was used in ancient times of the treaty/covenant relationship.

In ancient times when a new king came to the throne it was a time when other rulers sought to throw off their vassalage and that state of affairs is alluded to here with the conspiring of the nations. Perhaps there is a hint of the imagery that the king is going away to be exalted to his status/throne and in his absence there is the conspiracy, and these conspirators are warned "you kings, be wise" because when this exalted son returns from his "coronation" he will overthrow all who have rebelled against him with "the breath of his mouth" as it is said elsewhere.

This appears in line with how the believers in Acts chapter 4 understood the psalm, where they say,

You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

““Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?
The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the Lord
and against his Anointed One.”

Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this

2 See NIV study note on Psalm 2:7. Taken from the 1984 version, revised 1995, 2002.

city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed (Acts 4:25-27).

It is interesting to see how the ambiguity in the meaning of the text of the Psalm allows for two different understandings. In type, David was installed in earthly Jerusalem. But when we read that the kings of the earth gather together against “The Lord and against his Anointed One” and then “The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them” there is a delightful ambiguity. Who is the “One enthroned in heaven” in the second instance? If we look at the Psalm from the perspective of David, the “One enthroned in heaven” is clearly God. But the textual ambiguity and parallel construction allows for the understanding that the Anointed One in the first verse is the One enthroned in heaven in the second.

I already touched on the Apostle Paul’s use in Acts chapter 13 of Psalm 2 in reference to the resurrection of Jesus so I won’t repeat the same. I would simply draw attention to the fact that the raising of Jesus from the dead is tied by Paul to God’s statement “I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.” The ultimate kingship and reign of David’s descendant is placed in the context of the resurrection.

In the book of Hebrews, Psalm 2:7 is quoted twice, and in both cases it is within the context of being associated with Psalm 110. In Hebrews chapter 1 the emphasis there is on the superiority of the Son to angels and the author opens by saying

For to which of the angels did God ever say,

“You are my Son; today I have become your Father”?

And then closes the chapter with a quotation from Psalm 110 saying again,

To which of the angels did God ever say,

“Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”?

The association between the idea already explored in Psalm 2 and that expressed above in Psalm 110 (the Sonship of Psalm 2 and the taking the throne of Psalm 110) is striking. The later development by the author of Hebrews is even more interesting; in Psalm 110 the idea of priest and king are brought together and in Hebrews chapter 5 the author brings Psalm 2 firmly into this mix:

No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,

“You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.” [Psalm 2]

And he says in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek.” [Psalm 110]

There is a staggering fusion going on here—We have a priest-king, one not of the Levitical priesthood, and it is *forever*. How can this be, and what does it mean?

This brings us to where I would begin the discussion about the divine nature of Jesus Christ. In handling the book of Hebrews, and attempting to present a case for a particular understanding of the text, it is noteworthy that Deuble never addresses Hebrews chapter 7. Deuble attempts to create a Christology of Hebrews that “*is not really a preexistence Christology but primarily a Christology of exaltation. The author is not concerned with primal time, but with the status of Christ as regent in the present which ensures our salvation.*” (*They Never Told*, p. 238) Hebrews chapter 7 is ignored because it explicitly refutes Deuble's contention that “*the author is not concerned with primal time.*” In that chapter we read:

This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means “king of righteousness”; then also, “king of Salem” means “king of peace.” Without father or mother, without genealogy, **without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God** he remains a priest forever. (Heb. 7:1-3)

Elsewhere Deuble attempts to get around the use of eternity and forever by saying only forward looking time is meant. But lest anyone attempt that sort of evasion, the author of Hebrews here clearly defines what he means by “forever” and it is not in an only “future looking” sense. He says, “*without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life.*” To be without genealogy or beginning of days is to be eternally uncreated. Some might wish to imagine the “idea” or “plan” for the priest-son is all that is in mind, but this interpretation is excluded by the text, wherein the discussion of father, mother, and genealogy makes it plain that the (external) existence of a *person*—not an idea—is meant. Some claim that Melchizedek was a literal manifestation of the pre-incarnate Christ. I find this doubtful, as the construction of the passage presents Melchizedek as an example (like) which illustrates what the Son of God truly is. No genealogy, no beginning or end, is recorded of Melchizedek, so that the author of Hebrews can use him as an illustration for the reality of the Son of God.

Now it is evident that according to his fleshly nature, Jesus most certainly had a genealogy—as several gospel accounts are careful to record. Clearly, when “without beginning” is said what is being spoken about here in Hebrews is not the *fleshly* nature of Jesus, but rather it is a statement about his *divine* nature which is without genealogy or beginning of days. This point of the author of Hebrews should guide our understanding, but rather than listening to the explicit statement of the text itself, Deuble goes with the opinions of others (Kuschel, et al.) to set up a false dichotomy where Hebrews must supposedly be about either a “primal Christ” or a “exalted Christ” and attempts to argue that the better choice is an “exalted Christ” rather than a “primal Christ.” An honest examination of the text of Hebrews shows that the choice is not either/or but both! The exaltation of Christ, and his eternal priesthood (without beginning of days or end of life he remains a priest forever) are both in view, and tied to his divine nature, as the author of Hebrews says of that priesthood, “*but on the basis of the power of an indestructible life*” (Heb. 7:16). The life of men is destructible—not so the life of God!

The author of Hebrews' understanding of “forever” is plainly stated, and an attentive reading of the text shows how the author weaves together the eternal God-nature with the chronological incarnation in the Man-nature. In the very first verses of Hebrews the incarnation is stated,

saying, “*in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son*” (v. 2) and his eternal divine nature is declared in the immediate following, saying, “*through whom he made the universe.*” If this verse were taken in isolation, the pairing of such two statements might be confusing, but the passage is rightly and plainly understood within the context of the entire book of Hebrews wherein the nature of the divine Son is stated as being “without beginning.”

In typical fashion, Deuble attempts to evade the plain meaning of “through whom he made the universe.” He asserts:

Again, the way this is translated predisposes our tradition-bound minds to run along a well-worn rut. We tend to immediately think of the Genesis creation at the beginning of the universe. But the word used for “worlds” here is the word for “ages” (it is the word from which we get our English word *eon/s*). The writer is not speaking of the Genesis creation of the heavens and the earth. He is speaking about time periods, epochs. In Jewish thinking there were classically two great ages. The first is the present and evil age. The next will be the Messianic age to come. And Hebrews 1:2 is speaking of the world—or more precisely—the Messianic age to come. (*They Never Told*, p. 234)

Here Deuble uses prejudicial language—“tradition-bound minds” along a “well worn rut”—to imply how foolish it is to hold such an “unconsidered” view and then offers a sweeping assertion that our understanding must be guided but a certain Jewish thinking (which, I note, he does not even bother to substantiate from biblical text, much less secular sources). But is it not most appropriate to understand an authors *own* use of a word based upon his *own* text and usage, not some supposed opinion of a group? Indeed, the author of Hebrews makes it abundantly clear what he means by *aiōnas* ([Strong# 165](#)) when he later writes, “*By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible*” (Heb. 11:3). The word here also translated “universe” is the very same *aiōnas* of Hebrews 1:2, and clearly is used in reference to the created order of Genesis. If *aiōnas* is used by the author of Hebrews in 11:3 to speak of the initial Genesis creation, isn't it appropriate to understand the term in the same way in the similar situation of Hebrews 1:2? Yes, it is. We can fairly say that understanding *aiōnas* in Hebrews 1:2 as a reference to the Genesis creation is not “tradition-bound minds running a along well-worn rut,” but rather a natural and appropriate acceptance of the authors own plan usage of the term—a meaning and usage Deuble has disingenuously attempted to conceal by talking about “Jewish thinking” instead of mentioning the plain usage of the author in the very relevant latter passage of Hebrews 11:3. It does not require a deep reading to see the evident parallel between the statement in Hebrews 11:3 “*the universe was formed at God’s command*” with “*through whom he made the universe*” in Hebrews 1:2.

In light of what has already been said, and shortly what we will see in the rest of this first chapter of Hebrews and beyond, it is astonishing to read Deuble brazenly state, “*If Jesus is the Almighty in human form, then the author could have saved himself a lot of ink and papyrus. All he needed to do was write that Jesus is superior to all because He is god. End of argument.*” Deuble may willfully blind himself to what is said in Hebrews, **but the author of Hebrews has in his writing done what Deuble derisively states he should have done.** Apparently, to Deuble

some words more than “God” “Lord” “Creator of the universe” and “without beginning or genealogy” need to be used to convey that Jesus Christ is God.

The author of Hebrews weaves together a tapestry about Jesus, shining his authorial light on the glories of the eternal, incarnate, and resurrected Lord. Eternal God, he was glorious, becoming incarnate as man he emptied himself (Philippians 2:7) and made himself “a little lower than the angels” (Heb. 2:7) so that in his resurrection he might be exalted once more the incarnate Son of the new creation becoming as much superior to the angels as the title he has assumed (Heb. 1:4). The superiority of Christ in all three roles (eternal, incarnate, resurrected) is brought out in Hebrews.

The quotation from Psalm 2:7 is, as I have explained elsewhere, a presentation of the glory of Christ in his resurrection—as it is also said just earlier “*After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven*” (Heb. 1:3). The assumption of this kingly seat is further emphasized by the second reference to 2 Samuel 7:14 & 1 Chronicles 17:13 wherein the statement is made in reference to God's covenantal promise to David's kingly descendant. But lest our view become too narrowly focused on the glories of the resurrected Christ, the author applies Deut 32:43 to the incarnation—bringing the son into the world—to show how great he was even in that humbled state. (It should be pointed out that the author of Hebrews quotes a version of Deut 32:43 that is preserved for us in the Septuagint and Dead Sea Scrolls, but not in the Masoretic text).

The force and implications of the quotations in Hebrews chapter 1 from Psalms 45:

But about the Son he says,

“Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,
and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions
by anointing you with the oil of joy.”

...and Psalm 102:

He also says,

“In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.

They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.

You will roll them up like a robe;
like a garment they will be changed.

But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.”

...As proof for the divine nature of the Son is such that Deuble is reduced to simply, and thinly, asserting that we must not understand those passages as clearly written. In regards to Psalm 102 he says with his usual bravado:

It has been argued that since these words quoted from Psalm 102 where their original reference is to Jehovah are now applied to the risen Son, then Jesus must be Jehovah. If we are not careful to follow the original intention of the writer it would be easy to see how these verses can be misread to mean that the Lord Messiah is the one who originally created the universe. But if we turn back to Psalm 102, the author's reference point, we will quickly understand that the Psalmist is also speaking about the coming Messianic age of the Kingdom which is to be centered in Jerusalem. (*They Never Told*, p. 236)

This is dissembling—if it can be called anything more than pure nonsense. Go back and read Psalm 102. The oppressed Psalmist is crying out for the restoration of Zion/Jerusalem. To whom is he crying out? To the Lord God. Since Deuble has a predilection for making much of the Divine Yahweh, we will mention that the majority of the references by the Psalmist are to “Yahweh.” By Deuble's own argument elsewhere, this must then be the Divine God. The Psalmist concludes the Psalm with an appeal to God as the eternal creator of all creation:

In the course of my life he broke my strength;
he cut short my days.
So I said:
“Do not take me away, O my God, in the midst of my days;
your years go on through all generations.
In the beginning you laid the foundations of the earth,
and the heavens are the work of your hands.
They will perish, but you remain;
they will all wear out like a garment.
Like clothing you will change them
and they will be discarded.
But you remain the same,
and your years will never end.
The children of your servants will live in your presence;
their descendants will be established before you.” (Psalm 102:23-28)

In reading the direct quote of this final segment by the author of Hebrews, we can easily see how this fits well with what the author of Hebrews has already said of Jesus as the Creator. This insistence of Deuble that we go back and consider the entire context of the Psalm does not help his case. It may be granted that the Psalm has in view the restoration of the people of God (characterized as the “Messianic Kingdom” by Deuble) but the one who brings it about is plainly portrayed as the divine God—and this psalm is applied to Christ by the author of Hebrews. Far from being any kind of refutation, everything Deuble says is simply a shrill demand that we must not understand the words of Hebrews (and the Psalms) for what they plainly say.

His every argument nothing but vaporous smoke, Deuble concludes by attempting to scoffingly make the very conclusion put forward by the text (in particular, the quotation from Psalm 45, “*Therefore O God, your God will anoint your head with the oil of joy*”) as somehow being the problem by saying:

Putting it another way, to make Hebrews 1:8-10 mean that Jesus is Jehovah God just because he is called God, is to create massive problems for Trinitarians. The reason is that it specifically states that the Son has *a God* who anointed him. If Jesus is (Almighty) God and has a God above him, then there are two Gods! This is an utter impossibility to the writers of Scriptures. (*They Never Told*, p. 237-238)

Deuble may mock, but far from this being a “massive problem” for Trinitarians, or the text, it is exactly how the text is to be understood and is the very conclusion of the argument being made. Jesus said, “I and the Father are One” (John 10:30) and so God anoints God. To Deuble this is impossible, but all things are possible with God. Rather than dismissing Scripture we should be careful to pay attention to what it says.

Section 2. The Gospel of John

The gospel of John speaks repeatedly about the divine Christ Jesus. The topic, being a central point of John's gospel, is one that could rightly be handled in a study of the entire gospel. Since such a study will not be undertaken here; I will limit myself to some brief comments on a few passages.

A good place to start is the beginning of John's gospel. In reading Deuble's attempt to handle the opening of John's gospel I was reminded of the famous politician's statement “It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is.”³ Except, for Deuble we have, “It depends on what the meaning of the word 'was' was.”

If you read, “David *was* king” how would you naturally understand that phrase? If you read “I am *with* you” how would you naturally understand the phrase? If you read “In beginning **was** the word and the word **was with** the God and God **was** the word” how would you naturally understand it? That is the transliterated Greek sentence structure. The word relations here are not obscure or ambiguous.

3 http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/chatterbox/1998/09/bill_clinton_and_the_meaning_of_is.html

Deuble certainly doesn't like what the Bible is clearly saying. He doesn't like what “with” and “was” indicates so he again appeals to his “Hebrew mindset” and to various authorities in an attempt to make a case. But the Bible itself doesn't support his case. He says all sorts of things, but does what he say have anything to do with the truth? Deuble may say “*there is absolutely no reason to make John 1 say that 'the word' is the person Jesus himself,*” (*They Never Told*, p. 175-176) but what does the Bible say?

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and **his name is the Word of God**. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron scepter.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: **king of kings and lord of lords**. (Rev. 19:11-16)

We know that the scripture “*He will rule them with an iron scepter*” (Psalm 2:9) is spoken of Christ Jesus, and of this person it is said “*his name is the Word of God*” and of this person it is said his name is “*king of kings and lord of lords*.” It is made abundantly more clear that this person is Christ Jesus when we remember that in Rev. 17:14 it is said, “*They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because **he is Lord of lords and King of kings***” But wait, let's not stop there. Who is this king of kings and lord of lords? Did we not read somewhere, “*God, the blessed and only Ruler, the **King of kings and Lord of lords**, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light*” (1 Tim. 6:15-16) If God is King of kings and Lord of Lords, and so is the Lamb who is the Word, who is Christ—what does that tell you about Christ Jesus? How could you say more clearly that Jesus is God?

Deuble talks about how we need to follow a “Hebrew mindset” and listen to the particular authorities he has conjured up, but how about we instead listen to the Apostle John himself? John wrote both his gospel and the book of Revelation. He defined what he meant by “the word.” He said it clearly. These two particular passages are not obscure, or ambiguous. John said, “his name is the Word of God” (Rev. 19:13) and he also said “The Word was with God, and the Word was God.” How could this be made more plain?

It is said of the Son, “*through whom he made the universe [aiōnas]*” (Heb. 1:2) and as we pointed out elsewhere “*the universe[aiōnas] was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible*” (Heb. 11:3) plainly indicates that the original creation is in view. So likewise here in John 1 we read, “*He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made*” (vss 2-3) and “*He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him*” (vs 10)—here it should be doubly evident that the present created order, not a future created order is in mind, because “the world” is said to not know him, something that would not be said of the sinless new creation—and further, “*The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the only begotten*” (v. 14) and still further, “*No one has ever seen God, but God the only begotten, who is at the Father's side, has made him known*” (v. 18).

As Jesus himself said, “No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father” (John 6:46) and “I and the Father are one” (John 10:30).

Let's not stop there. We read: “Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, 'Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before!'" (John 6:61-62) Deuble says Jesus doesn't actually mean he was literally in heaven before. The Jewish mind wouldn't understand it that way, Deuble says. But the lie of Deuble is shown clearly only verses earlier when Jews were grumbling saying, “Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, ‘I came down from heaven’?” (John 6:42) Manifestly, they understood Jesus *quite literally* and it offended them.

- When Jesus said, “*the Son of Man ascend to where he was **before***” he meant exactly what he said.
- When Jesus said, “*I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going **back** to the Father*” (John 16:28) he meant exactly what he said. In the original there is the Greek word *palin* ([Strong# 3825](#)) which means “again” or “back” clearly emphasizing a return to a previously occupied place.
- When Jesus said, “*And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with **the glory I had with you before the world began***” (John 17:5) he meant exactly what he said.

But not for Deuble. For him, “was” actually means “was not” and “with” means “absent.” “Before” doesn't mean before and “again” doesn't mean again! Further, the way Jesus used “come down from heaven” and how the Jews *explicitly* understood him (remember John 6:42!) wasn't actually the Jewish mindset.

Deuble likes to use the “prophetic tense” shtick to wave away a lot in John; for Deuble Jesus will say he existed before when he means he *actually* didn't. Jesus means the opposite of what he says. Deuble always backs this up by saying that it is “*clearly*” how the Hebrew mind thought. Forget what the text says—will go with some nebulous “Hebrew mindset.” This becomes incredibly, unbearably, ironic when the text itself blatantly demonstrates that the Hebrews in question thought no such thing.

In John 8:56-58 we read:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day; he saw it and was glad.”

“You are not yet fifty years old,” the Jews said to him, “and you have seen Abraham!”

“I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am!” At this, they picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

Deuble tries to assert that Jesus (in accord with the natural Hebrew mindset!) was saying something like “before Abraham existed God had planned for my coming, so in prophetic present tense I can say I was” (see *They Never Told*, p 170-173, esp. the conclusion on 173). But the comment of the Jews themselves shows that they understood Jesus *not* to be speaking in some “prophetic present tense” but about *actual chronological real existence*. As they said, “You

are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham!” The Jews understood Jesus to be speaking of his actual existence—not the existence of Messianic prophecy—and for Deuble to claim that their desire to stone him is because they took Jesus’ “I am” statement to be nothing more than a claim to be the Hebrew expected Messiah is to *deny the very context the Jews explicitly brought to the discussion*. They were discussing chronological existence, and understood the second half of Jesus’ reply “Before Abraham was, I am!” as an explicit affirmation not just of chronological supremacy to Abraham, but even more to the eternal existence as God! Deuble tries to rip individual verses out and explain them in some constructed “Hebrew mindset” but in the passage as John wrote it, what the Jews understood was evident from the text of their words.

Again, Deuble exhibits his methodology of ignoring plain context and inventing his own in his handling of John 10:24-33. There we read:

The Jews gathered around him, saying, “How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly.”

Jesus answered, “I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father’s name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep. My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one can snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.”

Again the Jews picked up stones to stone him, but Jesus said to them, “I have shown you many great miracles from the Father. For which of these do you stone me?”

“We are not stoning you for any of these,” replied the Jews, “but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God.”

Jesus answered them, “Is it not written in your Law, ‘I have said you are gods’? If he called them ‘gods,’ to whom the word of God came—and the Scripture cannot be broken— what about the one whom the Father set apart as his very own and sent into the world? Why then do you accuse me of blasphemy because I said, ‘I am God’s Son’? Do not believe me unless I do what my Father does. But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.” Again they tried to seize him, but he escaped their grasp.

Deuble attempts to assert based upon Psalm 82 that the Hebrew mindset *expected* the Messiah to be called a “god” in the sense of being God’s ultimate human judge, and so, Deuble breezily claims, when the Jews said they were going to stone him because “you, a mere man, claim to be God” they were saying they were going to stone Jesus for the blasphemy of being a man and claiming to be Messiah. But this is absurd. The literal Greek reads “*For a good work not we do stone you but for blasphemy and because you a man being make yourself God.*” The very text itself presents a contrast of natures: human vs. Divine. If the Jews understood “God” to actually mean “Messiah” which to them actually meant a “mere man” then the contrasting form of their own sentence falls apart! “You being a man make yourself out to be a man”? Of course they would expect a *man* to be Messiah. What they did not expect was the Messiah to be divine God.

Deuble wants to say that Jesus was just claiming to be Messiah, not God, and that the Jews

simply were rejecting the claim of Messiah. Not only does Deuble assertion make nonsense of the text itself, but it doesn't mesh with the explicit *context*. The Jews are eagerly waiting ("How long will you keep us in suspense") to know if Jesus is the Messiah. And so according to Deuble they go from eager desire for an answer to wanting to stone Jesus because he did claimed "Yes" in answer to the eager suspense. Deuble is conveniently unaware that if the Jews had been threatening Jesus because they desired a "No" answer then the opening dialog would have been phrased differently.

In the same brazen manner Deuble manufactures up a "common Hebrew understanding" that the Messiah would be called a "god" in a non-divine judge sort of way. For a man who at other times wants to make mountains out of a supposed slight variation in word between *Adonai* and *Adoni* suddenly the complete different words of "Messiah" and "God" are exactly the same in Hebrew meaning! How fantastic! We are supposed to accept that when the Jews asked if Jesus was the Messiah they naturally expected the phrase "I and the Father are one" to express affinity between a non-divine Messiah and God completely in tune with Hebrew expression and thought, and they simply decided (like bi-polar maniacs) that they no longer wanted him to be their naturally expected Messiah. Of course this passage doesn't possibly mean that the Jews asked Jesus if he was the Messiah they meant a human Messiah and got a claim of divinity (I and the Father are one) that they didn't expect, and didn't like and when they accused him of claiming to be God they meant divine God, not human Messiah!

The crowning fulfillment of Deuble's claim that people don't mean what they are saying is in the final declaration of Thomas in John's gospel "*My Lord and my God!*" (John 20:28)

Elsewhere Deuble said of the LXX translators, "*The first LORD of Psalm 110:1 (the LORD, Ho Kyrios) they always reserved for the one God, Jehovah. In the light of this incontrovertible evidence, the sincerely held (but false) view that Jesus is the Lord God of the Old Testament should surrender*" (*They Never Told*, p. 120). I go into detail elsewhere how Deuble's statement is flat wrong—but for illustrative purposes how about we hoist him by his own petard. Even if his formula had been correct it would not constitute "incontrovertible evidence" of anything. *But for a moment let's pretend it does*. Let's take Deuble's argument that the Greek "*Ho*" ([Strong's Greek# 3588](#)) has the magical and conclusive ability to denote the one true Deity.

Well what do you know, the the Greek text the declaration of Thomas is "*Ho Kyrios*" and "*Ho Theos*" If Deuble accepts his own argument, the words of Thomas must be **incontrovertible evidence** that Jesus is divine. But, Deuble protests, it isn't actually Jesus being declared God, you see, but rather Thomas exercising the "Hebrew mindset" of recognizing that Jesus is **not God, but God's representative and so able to be called God** (*They Never Told*, p. 110, 112-113) because you see (Deuble says) it was perfectly acceptable in the Hebrew mindset to worship something that was not God as God if they understood it to be God's authorize representation of Himself. And anyhow, Deuble can assure you that it makes no sense at all for God to worship Himself, so Jesus clearly can't worship God and be God.

But then, I might equally assert that it is most wondrously right and appropriate for God to worship Himself because He is God, just as it is most right and proper for God to honor and exalt

Himself and glorify His own name. Further, I would assert that it is proper to understand someone to mean exactly what they say—not the opposite of what they say. So when Thomas called Jesus “My Lord and my God” he meant exactly that. He recognized Jesus as his divine Lord and God, and the right recipient of what is said “*Worship the Lord your God and serve him only*” (Deut 6:13, Matt. 4:10, Luke 4:8) Deuble would tell you that “only” means “many representatives” and so instead of worshiping God only—with no other capable of rightly representing Him as an object due divine worship—we worship many in His stead. And for Deuble calling Jesus God actually means saying he isn't God.

Apparently Deuble would have you think that text, and context, is exceptionally plastic, to be molded into whatever meaning you desire. But I tell you the Bible should be understood to say exactly what it says. Worship the Lord your God and serve Him only—not many, and none in His stead. And Thomas declares in verbal form what John shows throughout his gospel—that Jesus is divine God, due the divine worship as the eternal, indestructible, immortal, God.

Section 3. Monotheism, Trinitarianism, and Ambiguity

I have already pointed out how according to the NT we should not seek a Hebrew mindset, but it is worth pointing out that even if we were going to discuss a “Hebrew mindset” in the abstract (not as something that we should have ourselves, but as something that historically existed) Deuble does not even adequately specify, or justify, his conception of “Hebrew Mindset.” Using a term like that is like talking about the “American Mindset.” If someone used that term that we might rightly well ask, “Which mindset? America circa 1776? During the Civil War? During WWI? WWII? The 1960's, or the present day?”

If you pick any period of American history you will find in each a different emphasis in national thought—not to mention in any period there were competing and contradictory positions of national thought (Civil War, anyone?). To view the entirety of American history and assert anything as some unifying national “American Mindset” would be both imprecise and inaccurate. Even if you took such vague and general terms as “democracy” or “freedom” they do not hold as a consistently understood idea across the history of America. Democracy at the birth of the nation meant adult white males could vote—certainly a very different idea from the present reality of women and blacks voting. Likewise, “freedom” meant freedom for white people, not freedom for everybody. That idea came later. The very constitution itself has been up for addition, subtraction, and continued reinterpretation. All of this has occurred in less than 250 years of American history as a nation. What about when we consider some odd three or four thousand years since the time of Abraham?

The implied presumption of Deuble to a monolithic and consistent “Hebrew mindset” is nothing but a sham coming either from deliberate disingenuousness or gross ignorance. When Deuble uses the term “Hebrew mindset” does he mean the mindset of the Sadducees, who only accepted the first five books of Moses as the Word of God? Does he mean the mindset of the Pharisees, who added all sorts of teaching and binding rules on top of the Jewish scriptures?

Does he mean the mindset of the Essenes, who rejected the temple priesthood as corrupt and rejected much of the temple ritual and sacrificial system? What about the Hellenistic Jewish mindset, or perhaps some other mindset of the Jewish Diaspora? All of those mindsets are ones that existed at the time of Christ. We could go on to other time periods. What about the mindset of the Hebrews when they were slaves in Egypt? Or the mindset of the Jews during the time of Judges when “every man did as he saw fit”? Maybe we mean the mindset of Jews in the ten northern tribes, who worshiped the golden calves and of whom, by the time of Elijah, God would say He had saved out only seven thousand who had not bowed knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). Or perhaps the Hebrew mindset is that of those during the last years of the kingdom of Judah, a people so corrupt God sentenced them to exile. We could go on. By now the point is obvious: there was great variety in how the Jews thought not only over the passage of history, but even within a particular age. Not only is it spiritually wrong to go looking for a “Hebrew mindset” to guide us, but to breezily claim you have *the* “Hebrew mindset” is nothing but smoke and mirrors to justify a particular chosen interpretive grid. The diversity of Hebrew mindsets is such that you can find one to justify nearly *any* view you wish. The reality is that the largest existing corpus of commentary on the *ancient* Hebrew mindset is the Old Testament itself—and that is a recorded litany of a rebellious and unbelieving Hebrew mindset. By and large (if not wholly), the extra-biblical “Hebrew mindset” that Deuble alludes to is something he extracted from Jewish writings *after* the time of Christ.

Deuble is not honest or consistent in his use of “Winners are grinners and losers just lose” argument contained in the first chapter. The idea is nothing new to anyone with some exposure to historical criticism, but Deuble's handling of it is inconsistent and contradictory. In secular circles, this very line of argument is used to degenerate the accuracy and veracity of any ancient historical documents, and in particular the Bible. With this backdrop Deuble, with great aplomb, declares himself on the one hand an unswerving advocate in the completeness and veracity of the Biblical text—and then applies this “winners are grinners” argument in an attempt to invalidate a position he dislikes. But he can't have it both ways. Are we discussing “Winners are grinners” or divine grace?

A thoughtful person recognizes that the accepted corpus of your text is the very first step in the formulation of your theological position—thus the great conflicts over what *was* accepted canon. We have a Catholic Bible that contains other books besides those in the Protestant Bible, and the Marcion Cannon lost out entirely. Upon what basis does Deuble express such confidence that *his* Bible is accurate, and not just a “winner's grin”? In fact, how can he be confident that the texts underlying any of these various canons are not just altered productions of ancient “winner's grin”? If he can accept gracious divine preservation as his confidence in text and canon, why not doctrine as well? Deuble doesn't answer that question. He simply exempts canon and text from the argument of “Winners are grinners” then applies that argument where it suits him.

The general historical conservative Christian position (which Deuble implies he endorses insofar as canon is concerned) is that *by faith* we believe God has caused His text to be preserved, and His canon to be made known, in spite of the wickedness of men. No mature and sober Christian would tell you his confidence in the preservation of the Old Testament is based

upon the righteousness or care of the ancient Jews. Scripture itself testifies that the Jews were so rebellious and sloppy that they lost the Law itself within the confines of their own neglected temple, only to be discovered again during the reforms of Josiah (see 2 Kings 22). If we hold that the ancient texts were miraculously preserved by God, and that after Christ and the Apostles left this earth, by the hand of God the biblical canon was determined by councils *in spite of the sinfulness of the men running the councils*, they why can't this same faith be applied to the doctrines of councils? Is not God the ultimate winner and grinner in history? If God could used Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, and a host of other sinful men to accomplish His will, is it any more difficult to imagine him using the sinful men of post-apostolic times to do the same?

Deuble is so completely inconsistent on this point it is hard to take him seriously. He is willing to take *on faith* that all the winners and gridders of history have not invalidated the *cannon* or *text* of the Bible—and yet without blushing takes the very argument that he ignored in the first two cases and uses it to attack doctrine. It certainly is a convenient piece of demagoguery but hardly honest or consistent in dealing with the full import of his own arguments.

This inconsistency is continued on the topic of textual ambiguity, which on the one hand Deuble will scoff at when it serves him (*They Never Told*, p. 77), and on the other hand create whatever ambiguity he can when it serves his purposes. I found it ironic that in an early chapter he declared that we should not try to twist what things mean, and that “when we say white, we do not mean black and when we say hello we do not mean goodbye” (*They Never Told*, p. 77) but later on went through considerable effort to conjure up an argument that Jesus saying, “I go back to where I was before” doesn't *actually* mean exactly what it says. Deuble's posturing at one moment in scorn of ambiguities and then turning around in the next and straining in the attempt to use a gnat of ambiguity on which to balance the entire edifice of his argument is hardly impressive.

I certainly agree—as I will discuss further shortly—that much of the Biblical text contains certain ambiguities. I fully accept that within the OT text the divinity of Christ and the salvation he would bring was opaquely presented—a method of revelation that Jesus continued in his own earthly ministry. As we read in Matt. 13:10-17:

The disciples came to him and asked, “Why do you speak to the people in parables?”

He replied, “The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. This is why I speak to them in parables:

“Though seeing, they do not see;

though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

“You will be ever hearing but never understanding;

you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

For this people's heart has become calloused;

they hardly hear with their ears,

and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,

hear with their ears,

understand with their hearts

and turn, and I would heal them.'

But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it. (See also John 12:37-41, Acts 28:23-28)

For Deuble to at times scornfully say that if Jesus had meant something he would have explicitly said it is an assertion that goes against Jesus's own declared *Modus Operandi*. To say that the Jews clearly and rightly understood the nature and role of the Messiah flies in the face of the teaching of the NT itself where we are shown repeatedly that Jesus' own closest followers did not fully comprehend Jesus' most *explicit* teaching about himself and still needed to be taught about those things after his resurrection. (See, for example, the road to Emmaus, Luke chapter 24.) In light of this why on earth would we appeal to some "common Jewish understanding" of who the Messiah would be? The teaching of Scripture is that the nature and work of Christ was a mystery kept hidden in ages past, prophesied in Scripture, but only now in this present time revealed to our understanding by the Holy Spirit. It is the loud affirmation of Christianity as witnessed in the NT that the Jews failed to understand who the Messiah would be and what he had come to do, and that they rejected the truth—and it is on the basis of that rejection that the gospel has come unto the Gentiles, yes the whole world. It boggles the mind how Deuble will go on about how we need to go back to the Jewish conception of the Messiah when the very teaching of the NT is that such an understanding was *blindness*. Certainly Deuble may go and join those Jews in their views, but he will reject the Jesus who was, and who declared himself, just as wholly as they did.

His handling of arguments for the Trinity are equally poor, apparently depending largely on marshaling the language of demagoguery and "refuting" extra-biblical arguments of various scholars rather than addressing the actual Biblical text itself. In this case he once again appeals to the Jews sayings,

The belief that Jesus of Nazareth crucified and resurrected is not only the Messiah but also of the same substance as God "seems to be something radically un-Jewish; they feel it to be something which utterly contradicts strict monotheism, particularly as expressed in the 'Shema Yisrael' which pious Jews say every day, indeed to be blasphemy." Surely there is urgent need to rethink how the Bible speaks of Jesus as the Song of God in order to remove valid Jewish objections to the Gospel. It is not surprising that the 'fruit' of a theology presenting a multi-personal God is failure to gain an audience with millions whose fundamental belief is that God is one (*They Never Told*, p. 106).

I wholeheartedly concur that the divine Christ is radically un-Jewish and blasphemous to them. Naturally, since the Jews were blind and without understanding the truth of the gospel would be un-Jewish to them, and blasphemous. It was for this “blasphemy” that Jesus was crucified, and it is this “blasphemous” gospel that I declare. For anyone who has read and understood the NT, it is hardly news that the Jews have a problem with the gospel, and any plea such as the one Deuble puts out that the gospel message ought to be modified to accommodate their sensibilities is rightly rejected.

It is not my intention at present to spend much time on the topic of the Trinity, since my focus is the deity of Christ. For the moment I will say I found Deuble's implication that trinitarians have somehow abandoned the Shema of Deut. 6:4 particularly irksome. Trinitarian interpretations of Deut. 6:4 may not *satisfy* Deuble, but that verse is hardly a dirty little secret that Trinitarians must hide from. I freely proclaim Deut. 6:4 and the divinity of Christ and find neither mutually exclusive. Certainly many do find such a belief offensive and reject it. In that rejection Deuble may join the large crowd of those who have gone before him, including the Jewish nation as a whole.

However, for those who wish to be contentious, I would prefer to *not* use the term Trinity. That term is not found in the Bible, and the conceptions brought to that word by people *may* not be entirely Biblical. Far better to stick with what the Bible explicitly says. Sufficient for me is the declaration that God the Father is the One God, God the Son is the One God, and God the Holy Spirit is the One God. That much is made plain by the NT, but how exactly, in detail, that reality is rightly understood is not made precisely clear. When we get into arguments about “Personhood” and “Attributes” we are venturing into rather “Greek” arguments, and matters in which the NT did not see fit to provide such specificity (much as most people feel a necessity to nail down such specifics).

If we acknowledge that God is all powerful, and is not bound by time or space, we have already admitted that He supersedes the laws of physics and time-space itself. It hardly seems like an obstacle, in the face of this, to acknowledge that He is not bound by grade school math either. If we know that the highest of heavens cannot contain God, and yet He may make Himself manifest in the Shekhinah Glory in the temple of Solomon how much more when the Shekhinah Glory is incarnated in flesh. Much more could be said, but that is a topic for another day.

What we have been told is:

- “In the beginning was the Word, and the **Word was with God, and the Word was God.** He was with God in the beginning.” (John 1:1-2)
- “**I and the Father are one**” (John 10:30)
- “I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as **you are in me and I am in you.** May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:20-22)

Some, thinking themselves clever, like to launch the barb that apparently we become God,

since Jesus prayer is that we become one as he and the Father are one. Rightly understood (as Scripture defines it) this is no problem at all. Elsewhere it is declared that by the Holy Spirit we become participants/recipients of the divine nature, as it is said, “*Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires*” (2 Peter 1:4). We do not *become* God, but indeed God does come to *dwell* within us by His Spirit. The unity of the Divine nature which existed before the creation of the world is a life we have been given to partake of by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Section 4. Hebrew or Greek Text?

This brings us to a discussion of texts. One does not need to believe a Hebrew *mindset* is necessary for a right biblical understanding to believe that the Hebrew *text* is necessary. While Deuble is in a minority among conservative Christian scholars with his claim for the necessity of a Hebrew mindset, his favoring of the Hebrew text is shared by many. Reasons people give for elevating the Hebrew text are varied—I will address only two, as follows:

- The Hebrew text is the original language and so the only way we can accurately know the original meaning
- The Hebrew text is the original text and so is the most accurate text.

The two points are related, though slightly different. For a Christian, the first point is *not* supported by the witness of Scripture itself. New Testament writers freely, and authoritatively, quoted from Greek translations of the Old Testament. If the NT writers felt Greek translations of the OT were sufficient for accurately translating the truth, on what basis do Christians today assert the necessity of returning to the Hebrew text for an accurate understanding? Apostolic witness indicates the contrary.

In regards to the second point, the *original* Hebrew manuscript penned by the original author was, by nature, 100% accurate. However, the Hebrew text we now have are copies of copies of copies, etc. In summary:

The MT was primarily copied, edited and distributed by a group of Jews known as the Masoretes between the 7th and 10th centuries CE. Though the consonants differ little from the text generally accepted in the early 2nd century (and also differ little from some Qumran texts that are even older), **it has numerous differences of both greater and lesser significance when compared to (extant 4th century) manuscripts of the Septuagint, a Greek translation (made in the 3rd to 2nd centuries BCE) of the Hebrew Scriptures that was in popular use in Egypt and Israel and that is believed by scholars to be the source often quoted in the New Testament.**⁴

It is further said,

4 For more info: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text I freely admit that Wikipedia is not scholarly, but it is easily accessible. The reader who is doubtful of veracity and wishes to double check the facts is welcome to do so.

The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran, dating from c.150 BCE-75 CE, **shows however that in this period there was not always the scrupulous uniformity of text that was so stressed in later centuries.** The scrolls show numerous small variations in orthography, both as against the later Masoretic text, and between each other. It is also evident from the notings of corrections and of variant alternatives that scribes felt free to choose according to their personal taste and discretion between different readings.

And,

An emphasis on minute details of words and spellings, already used among the Pharisees as bases for argumentation, reached its height with the example of Rabbi Akiva (d. 135 CE). The idea of a perfect text sanctified in its consonantal base quickly spread throughout the Jewish communities via supportive statements in Halakha, Aggada, and Jewish thought; and with it increasingly forceful strictures that a deviation in even a single letter would make a Torah scroll invalid. Very few manuscripts are said to have survived the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. This both drastically reduced the number of variants in circulation, and gave a new urgency that the text must be preserved. New Greek translations were also made. **Unlike the Septuagint,** large-scale deviations in sense between the Greek of Aquila and Theodotion and what we now know as the Masoretic text are minimal (Emphasis in all passages are mine).

The standardized Hebrew text people refer to today is the product of these Masoretes—Jews living over 500 years after the time of Christ, who had rejected Jesus. This Masoretic Hebrew text has discrepancies with the older Greek text. (The Septuagint translation being circa 200 years prior to Christ—a Greek text that was used during the time of Christ and by the Apostles.) For example, as already noted earlier, in Hebrews 1:6 the author quotes from Deut. 32:43 to make a point about Jesus Christ—and that passage from Deuteronomy is *omitted* from the Masoretic text. Deuble is quite willing to trot out the “Winners are grinners” argument when it suits him and yet somehow that never is an issue when he is using a Hebrew text standardized by Jews who had rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Is it so hard to imagine that they might have wanted to preserve textual variations and outright omissions that ran contrary to original Christian thought?

Regardless of opinions on the Masoretes, the use of the Septuagint by the NT authors to teach Christians indicates it was considered sufficient to convey the truth of God accurately. Second, that NT authors would chose a Septuagint rendering of scripture in explicit contrast to the rendering maintained by the Masoretic text calls into question why any Christian would exalt the Masoretic text as preferred. In spite of these observations, many Christians continue to hold the Masoretic text in higher regard. For reasons just stated, I do not agree with that popular position, and will not concede that I need to go to the Masoretic text to get the “real truth.” The truth preached by the Apostles was preached from the Greek text, and so I maintain it is not required to go beyond the Greek text of the OT.

Section 5. Adoni or Adonai

If anyone should decide to look at texts, Hebrew or Greek, and engage in some sort of word study, they would do well to realize the limitations of such studies. As D.A. Carson says,

Perhaps the principal reason why word studies constitute a particularly rich source for exegetical fallacies is that many preachers and Bible teachers know Greek only well enough to use concordances, or perhaps a little more. There is little feel for Greek as a language; and so there is the temptation to display what has been learned in study, which as often as not is a great deal of lexical information without the restraining influence of context. The solution, of course, is to learn more Greek, not less, and to gain at least a rudimentary knowledge of linguistics.

[...] But the heart of the issue is that semantics, meaning, is more than the meaning of words. It involves phrases, sentences, discourse, genre, style; it demands a feel for not only syntagmatic word studies (those that relate words to other words) but also paradigmatic word studies (those that ponder why *this* word is used instead of *that* word). I have barely broached questions of metaphor and said nothing about purposeful semantic ambiguity. (D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, 2nd ed, p. 64)

Such warnings apply well to myself also, as my understanding of ancient Hebrew and Greek is (at best) at such a rudimentary level. However, it is noteworthy that even in the poverty of my understanding of the ancient text the continual sloppy and careless methodology of Deuble in his “word studies” is readily apparent—violating every warning and caution given by Carson above—and on closer inspection even revealing explicit falsehoods in his statements (whether deliberate on the part of Deuble, or evidence of his laziness and ignorance the reader will have to decide).

Based upon what I have laid out of Paul's statement to the Corinthians I am convinced that we do not have to be “experts” to know God and Christ, and likewise we are not required to engage in word studies to know the truth of the gospel. But if someone were going to engage in a word study it would behoove them to be knowledgeable about the limitations of such studies, the pitfalls of such studies, and the nature of the language itself. In these matters Deuble has neglected everything that has not suited his purposes, so for simply educational purposes I will attempt to offer a little balance to the picture.

In *They Never Told* Deuble makes much of the Hebrew language, and in particular what he calls the two distinct words *Adoni* and *Adonai*. We will deal briefly with both. First, as to the Hebrew language:

There are several systems of Hebrew spelling (Hebrew: כְּתִיב עִבְרִי /ktiv ʿiv'ri/, "Hebrew spelling") that are used. **The Hebrew alphabet contains 22 letters, all of which are primarily consonants.** This is because the Hebrew script is an abjad, that is, its letters indicate consonant, not vowels, nor syllables. An early system to overcome this, still used today, is *matres lectionis*, where four of these letters, Alef, He, Vav and Yud also serve as vowel letters.

Even later, a system of vowel points to indicate vowels (diacritics), called niqqud, was developed.

Throughout history, there have been two main systems of Hebrew spelling. One being vocalized spelling, also called 'defective' spelling, and the other being unvocalized spelling, also called 'plene' spelling.

In vocalized spelling (ktiv menukad), all of the vowels are indicated by vowel points (called

niqqud). In unvocalized spelling (ktiv male), the vowel points are omitted, but some of them are substituted by additional vowel letters (Vav and Yud). This system is the spelling system commonly used in Israel today.

Vowel points are always optional in Hebrew. They can be used fully, partially or not used at all. The recommended approach endorsed today by the Hebrew Language Academy and other Israeli educational institutions is to use the 'plene' spelling when not adding vowel dots (which is the usual case), and place a vocalization sign on a letter only when ambiguity cannot be resolved otherwise. The 'defective' spelling is recommended for fully vocalized text, hence its use is becoming rare. Texts older than 50–60 years may be written in an unvocalized 'defective' spelling (for example, the word ḥamišim "fifty", was written ח'מ'ש'נ'ן on banknotes issued by the British Mandate for Palestine or the Bank of Israel in its early days. Today, the common spelling is ח'מ'י'ש'נ'ן). A vocalized 'plene' spelling system is common in children books, when it is better to accustom the children to the more popular 'plene' spelling, while still letting them benefit from the vowel dots as a reading aid in early learning stages⁵

I provide all of that just to give a sense of context. Simply put, the original written Hebrew language only contained letters for constants which made the written language full of ambiguities, as the reader had to supply all of the necessary vowels in the words himself. Ambiguity is a problem if you want to insist that something must be understood in a very particular way. And so the Masoretes derived a solution.

Since no additions were allowed to be made to the official text of the Bible, the early Masoretes adopted other expedients: e.g., they marked the various divisions by spacing, and gave indications of halakic and haggadic teachings by full or defective spelling, abnormal forms of letters, dots, and other signs

And,

The most important of the Masoretic notes are those that detail the Kethiv-Qere that are located in the Masorah parva in the outside margins of BHS. Given that the Masoretes would not alter the sacred consonantal text, **the Kethiv-Qere notes were a way of "correcting" or commenting on the text for any number of reasons (grammatical, theological, aesthetic, etc.) deemed important by the copyist.** [Reference: Pratico and Van Pelt, Basics of Biblical Hebrew, Zondervan. 2001. p406ff]⁶ (Emphasis mine)

I hope all of this has not been too difficult to follow. If you would like further details, looking up Tiberian vocalization⁷, Niqqud⁸, cantillation⁹, and Kethiv-Qere¹⁰ will provide additional information. For the present, the above very brief overview is to provide the context to understand that the original Hebrew written language was ambiguous in reading, and so the Masoretes added their own *commentary* to provide their opinion on how the text was supposed to

5 For a more extensive overview, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hebrew_spelling

6 Ibid. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Masoretic_Text

7 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tiberian_vocalization

8 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Niqqud>

9 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cantillation>

10 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Qere_and_Ketiv

be understood and read aloud. They added their own “inter-linear notes” as it were. Even if you can’t read Hebrew, this is visually evident if you look at the original Masoretic Aleppo Codex and compare it to, say, the Great Isaiah scroll from the Dead Sea Scrolls. (You can find images from both easily with a search of the Internet.) In comparing them you will see the Masoretic text has jots and dots above and below the Hebrew script, whereas in the older Dead Sea Isaiah scroll—in existence before the Masoretes came around—does not.

How this impacts the discussion of *Adonai* and *Adoni* has two levels. First, the Masoretes made the Tetragrammaton¹¹ (the divine name Yahweh) an extra little twist. Since in later Jewish thought the divine name could not be said, the Masoretes constructed a case of *Qere perpetuum* so that the Hebrew written word יהוה (YHWH or Yahweh) is marked up by the Masoretes as יהֿוֹהֿ to indicate that it should *not* be pronounced as it is read (Yahweh), but rather pronounced aloud as *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי)—an entirely different Hebrew word! So, not only do we have *Adonai* and *Adoni* but *Yahweh* which is supposed to be read as *Adonai* (according to the Masoretes).

Leaving aside the Tetragrammaton, what of *Adonai* and *Adoni*? **Simply put the distinction between *Adonai* and *Adoni* does not exist in the ancient Hebrew text!** In the Hebrew text it is אֲדֹנָי (ADNY). The distinction between *Adonai* and *Adoni* is something the Masoretes added with their “interlinear notes” of jots and dots to give their *opinion* of how the ambiguous Hebrew text should be interpreted. Where they saw fit אֲדֹנָי became אֲדֹנָיִ (same Hebrew word as you can see, but now with those jots and dots added it is *Adoni*) and other places where they saw fit אֲדֹנָי was marked up as אֲדֹנָיִ (same Hebrew word, but now with just one different jot under a character instead of a dot it is *Adonai*).

Deuble is less than completely honest when he says, “*Here are the words of some of the very best Hebrew commentators: 'Adonai and Adoni are variations of pointing to distinguish divine references from human'*” (*They Never Told*, p. 117). As far as that statement goes, it is factually true, but it would have been more honest to give the complete truth instead of a half-truth. A more truthful statement would have been, “*Adonai and Adoni are variations of pointing introduced by the Masoretes over 500 years after the time of Christ to give their opinion on what should be divine and human references.*”

For one so keen on the “Winners are grinners” argument, Mr. Deuble seems surprisingly willing to accept the theological opinions of Jews who had rejected Jesus as Messiah and lived over 500 years later. If he was honestly looking for the *ancient* Jewish mindset, it would be more forthright to say that we must ignore the later Jewish additions and read the text as it originally stood with the completely ambiguous אֲדֹנָי (ADNY). As it is, one might ask if Deuble is truly searching for the “original Hebrew mindset” (whatever that might be!) or is he simply searching for a Jewish mind 500 years after Christ, that has rejected the Lord Jesus as Messiah and is

11 <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tetragrammaton>

hostile toward him?

Unless you (like Deuble) find the opinions of Jews who rejected Jesus and lived over 500 years later to be authoritative in how you should understand scripture, the argument Deuble makes about *Adoni* and *Adonai* is utterly worthless. More than that, the argument doesn't even exist! *Adonai* (אֲדֹנָי) and *Adoni* (אֲדֹנִי) are additions of the Masoretes. In the original Hebrew—only אֲדֹנָי (ADNY) existed—an ambiguous word to be puzzled out based upon the narrative and context as best the reader was able.

If this problem with his argument weren't enough, Deuble makes it worse with an outright falsehood. He goes on to say:

Occasionally, it will be objected that this distinction between *Adonai* and *adoni* was a late addition to the Hebrew text by the Masorites around 600 – 700 AD and therefore is not reliable. This objection needs to be considered in light of the fact that the Hebrew translators of the Septuagint (the LXX) around 250 BC recognized and carefully maintained this Hebrew distinction in their work. They **never** translated the second “lord” of Psalm 110:1 (“my lord,” *kyrios mou*) to mean the Deity. The first LORD of Psalm 110:1 (the LORD, *Ho Kyrios*) they **always** reserved for the one God, Jehovah. In the light of this incontrovertible evidence, the sincerely held (but false) view that Jesus is the Lord God of the Old Testament should surrender (*They Never Told*, p. 119-120, bold emphasis mine.)

Anyone sensitive to language should find these blanket assertions—“never” and “always”—suspect. On the one hand, even if the words were used as Deuble claimed, it doesn't necessarily mean anything and it is a rather foolish grammatical bases to make an argument. Context is everything. But I had enough sense for Greek to have a suspicion that what he had just said was simply not true. “My lord” is a very natural phrase to apply to a human *or* divine figure, and my inkling said that the Greek “*ho*” was not the infallible divine indicator Deuble wished to suggest.

A quick look at a word concordance was enough to reveal what Deuble said above about the Greek text is flatly wrong.

First, in [Matt. 22:44](#) what we have is: *Eipen Kyrios tō kyriō mou*. The *Kyrios* for the divine Yahweh (out of the mouth of Jesus!) is **not** *Ho Kyrios*. Now, in Psalm 110:1 it is *Ho Kyrios*. But Jesus did not find it necessary to preserve that “*Ho*” in his rendition. Perhaps because it wasn't important? Perhaps because the presence of “*ho*” (Greek ὁ, [Strong # 3588](#)) was not required to indicate the divine Lord? Yes, that is easily evident. Deut 6:16 “Do not put the Lord your God to the test” has no *Ho* before the *Kyrios*, either in the Greek of Deut 6:16 or when Jesus quotes it in Greek in Matt. 4:7. If you simply read that entire chapter of Deuteronomy alone you will see other examples of the divine Lord being referred to by *Kyrios* without a *ho* to “indicate” the divinity. You don't have to limit yourself to Deuteronomy chapter 6—read through the rest of Deuteronomy, read through the rest of the OT in Greek and you will find numerous reference to the divine *Kyrios* without *ho* present to indicate divinity! So much for Deuble's declaration that “*ho*” always proceeds the divine Lord!

If one were trying to be generous to Deuble you might observe that he had simply said that *Ho*

Kyrios was “**always reserved for the one God, Jehovah**” not that the one true *Kyrios* **always** had *Ho* prefixing it. But that still leaves us with the question—whenever *Ho Kyrios* does appear is it always referring to the Divine God? Deuble claims this is “*incontrovertible evidence*” that Jesus is **not** divine.

Even if we imagine for a moment that such an outlandish measure as a definitive article to determine divinity were used, Deuble has defeated himself by his own measure because *Ho Kyrios* is used to refer to Jesus! In [Luke 7:13](#) it says “And having seen her **the Lord** [*ho Kyrios*!] was moved with compassion and told her not to weep” again in [Luke 10:1](#) when Jesus is sending out the seventy: “After these things **the Lord** [*ho Kyrios*!] appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go” and still yet again in [Luke 11:39](#) “Then the Lord [*ho Kyrios*] said to him, 'Now you Pharisees make the outside of the cup and dish clean, but your inward part is full of greed and wickedness.'” If that weren't enough, one could look at the application of *ho Kyrios* to Jesus in Luke 12:42, 13:15, 17:5, and John 21:7. If *ho Kyrios* incontrovertibly indicates the divine person, (according to Deuble!) then by that measure Jesus is incontrovertibly divine!

If that weren't enough, *ho Kyrios* is used when denoting a *kyrios* who is **not the LORD**. (Jesus or God the Father.) In the parable of the workers in the vineyard in Matt. 20 in v. 8 it reads in part: *ho kyrios tou ampelōnos tō epitropō* which is translated (interlinear [here](#)) “the master of the vineyard to the foreman” The great *ho kyrios*, which Deuble has declared **always** means the LORD, is here used by Jesus to refer to the master of a vineyard. Further, if we go back to the OT, in Gen. 39:16, 19 *ho kyrios* is used in reference to Potiphar, the master of Joseph. In Exodus 21:4,6 *ho kyrios* is used to speak of an Israelite master of a slave. In Exodus 22:8 and Judges 19:23 *ho kyrios* is used to speak of a master of a house. In 1 Samuel 30:13 *ho kyrios* is used to refer to an Amalekite master of a slave—*hardly a divine figure!* I could go on, but by this point it is apparent that Deuble's statement that in the Greek OT *Ho Kyrios* “*They always reserved for the one God, Jehovah*” is a falsehood, and one readily apparent to anyone familiar with the Greek text. Not only that, but the very argument itself (that the Greek definitive article *ho* indicates a divine *kyrios*) is as ridiculous as saying “the” before “lord” always indicates a divine lord in the English language. In that measure, “The Lord Cavendish of Furness”¹² becomes divine because “the” proceeded his name in that sentence! Not only is Deuble's statement about the use of the Greek *ho* false, but it is equally ridiculous. The Greek *ho* is a definite article, commonly used before **both** the divine *kyrios* **and** the non-divine *kyrios*.

So, to sum up so far, Deuble's argument about a distinction between *Adoni* and *Adonai* is shown to be a modification to the Hebrew text—not something in the original text—added by the Masoretes to the biblical text over 500 years after Jesus Christ and Deuble's defense of this modification as being supported by the Greek *ho kyrios* is shown to be wrong—at best a false statement made in gross ignorance, at worst a deliberate lie¹³.

12 There really is one: <http://www.parliament.uk/biographies/lords/richard-cavendish/27022>

13 In either case, it is evident he follows after his mentor, Sr. Anthony Buzzard, who is quoted by Deuble making repeated fantastic and inaccurate statements.

Section 6. Shaliah and Agency

By this point it is apparent that I take issue with Deuble's idea of "Agency." When we come to where this idea is first introduced (*They Never Told*, p. 64) a number of problems are immediately apparent.

Deuble is again appealing to the "Jewish mind" as both the basis and measure of the understanding we should seek to know what the Bible means. The problems with that have already been listed earlier. Second, his term "Agency" is never used in the Bible (I looked using Strong's and the closest I found was the verb form "[Shalach](#)" which means roughly "to send"), nor is his definition of the term taken from the Bible. Finally, as the basis of authority for this idea of "Agency" he appeals not to the text of the Bible but to an Encyclopedia written by two modern day Jewish scholars (*They Never Told*, p. 65)! That may well reflect how *some* form of Judaism viewed the term *Shaliah* at *some* point in time—but if you cannot present the term in the Bible what difference is that? The absence of your term *Shaliah* in the Bible is hardly proof of its biblical importance, to say the least!

If we were discussing the idea of prophets in the Bible, we could find the word in the Bible, and study the context in which the word was used to understand its meaning. Likewise, if we wanted to understand how the idea of "messenger" was used in the Bible, we could look up the term and study the context in which the word is used. But the term "Agent/Agency" is never used in the Bible, and so there is no *biblical* context to look up. The easiest way to get around the meaning of a text is to go outside the text and assert the usage of a term not present in the text. Deuble can use his term of "Agency" to explain away whatever he wants to explain away and nobody can refute him from the Bible *because it is a term absent from the Bible!*

For this reason I utterly reject Deuble's term of "Agency" as a **Biblical** term. Yes, *Shaliah* is a Hebrew word, used by Jews, but *if we are discussing what is in the Bible it will be on the terms the Bible uses*, not terms someone brings from outside the text, to the text, to define the text. The introduction of "Agency" is a rather cheap attempt to re-frame the debate and avoid dealing with what the Bible actually says.

We may ask, does the Bible discuss *representation*? Yes, absolutely. And each of many varied methods of representation has a term to describe it. Prophet. Priest. Messenger. King. One could add more. But each of those is a term, a word, used in contexts, which we can go back and examine to understand how the Bible was using those terms. "Agency" is not in the Bible and so we can do none of those things. In the case of the terms that are mentioned, a bit of reflection should be enough to recall to mind that within God's revelation to Israel each of these representatives mentioned held limited and defined roles of representation. While some of the roles overlapped in function, each was defined and limited. The kings were of the tribe of Judah and house of David and could not be a priest. The priest was of levitical descent and could not be king. There were many forms of representation instituted by God in His dealings with His people, but none of these representatives were given unlimited *carte blanche* authority to represent God. In the Bible, every person appointed to represent God had limits placed on the

nature of their representation.¹⁴ So, if we are going to discuss any incident in the Bible where someone represented God we must go back and study the text to understand the nature of the representation. There are many roles of representation that Deuble attempts to blur under one broad “Agency.”

The idea of representation was not something originated by the Jews, or limited to them. The idea of representation was a very common idea. The Jews understood their prophets as speaking for God, and so did the pagans understand their prophets as speaking for their gods. Ambassadors were recognized by all cultures as speaking for and with the authority of the one who sent him. This idea was shared through all ancient Mesopotamian cultures (and in some sense through people of *all* cultures). Even within pagan cultures limits on representation were readily recognized. A messenger for a pagan king was authorized to represent the message of the king—not thereby represent the king as a general in an army. A general was authorized to represent the king in that manner. Different manners and spheres of representation were recognized, some, perhaps, overlapping, but all representation had defined limits. However, pagan notions on the proper extent and nature of representation did not align with God's declared methods of representation to Israel. For Israel, the king could not be high priest, and the high priest could not be king. In many pagan religions, the king was a priest of the gods, if not a high priest. So, while both Hebrew and pagan understood the idea of representation, it did not mean they both recognized the same limitations. Further, the fact that God revealed His accepted roles of representation did not mean Israel in her idolatry followed those limits of representation. An obvious example would be when the ten northern tribes rebelled against the kingship of David's house and Jeroboam established himself as king and priest of the golden calves, and allowed whoever wanted (and was willing to pay) to become priest. This violated the distinctions, limits, and roles of representation that God had given Israel. One could offer up more examples, but the point is simply to observe that while pagans, Jews, and God all recognized the idea of representation what was considered true and acceptable representation varied. Ideally, Israelite conception of representation would have been the same as God's declaration. In practice it typically was not, and our goal is not to find Jewish conception but rather God's declaration.

This brings us to Deuble's particular aim on the topic of representation—the idea that one may represent another to the extent of receiving the worship due to the other. This is a very common idea of representation within ancient culture. *It is the premise for worshiping idols*. In pagan thought, the idols that men made were not thought to “be” gods in the sense that the god did not exist until the carved image was made—the pagans did not imagine themselves the creators of their gods. What the pagans understood was that their idols—the things they fashioned with their hands—*represented* their gods. The carved images were the “agent” of their god, very much in line with Deuble's own idea. *Deuble has swallowed a pagan idea of representation in worship—the idea that something **other than God** can represent God as the object to be worshiped*. Is this

14 Even the Jewish Encyclopedia recognizes that agents have limits on their representation: “*It is a general principle that the agent who acts outside or beyond the power given to him 'does not effect anything'; in other words, his acts are void, and neither bind nor benefit his principal*” (Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906 edition). On his own terms, Deuble use of *carte blanche* agency is not supported! (See: <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/894-agency-law-of>)

mode of worship what God has revealed in scripture? No, this is the spirit of idolatry. This pagan idea of having a *representation* of God which could be worshiped is the very idea being admonished against in Deut. 4:15-18:

You saw no form of any kind the day the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below.

As the passage makes clear, an idol is something that represents God and is worshiped as His representative or—to use Deuble's words—his agent. This is the very idea God speaks against here in Deuteronomy and again when He says in Isaiah 42:8, “*I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not give my glory to another*” What is meant by “not giving my glory to another”? It is **not** said, “I will not give my glory to another—except my duly appointed representatives. To them I will give my glory, and then you may worship as worshiping me!” That is an entirely different meaning.

The statement in Isaiah 42:8 is an *exclusive* statement. This is not to say that Isaiah 42:8 teaches the others do not have glory—for the statement is both *exclusive and particular*. As it is said: “*I will not give **my** glory to another.*” The glory spoken of is the particular glory of God. As all men are created in God's image, they have a type of glory, but it is not the “my glory” which God has reserved for Himself. Great men and leaders (such as David) have a particular glory because of the position God has exalted them to, but they do not have the “my glory” which God has reserved to Himself. To worship David, Moses, or any man of God as God is idolatry because they do not have the “my glory” which God has reserved for Himself and to which is due divine worship.

The Biblical example is that both men and angels are God's messengers, bringing His authoritative Word to the world. And we are His *servants*, being tasked with carrying out His Work in the world. Both of these are indeed limited ways in which both men and angels may be seen as God's representatives. But to be the agent/recipient/image/representative of God unto whom is due the glory/honor/praise/worship that is due God—in this matter God has made clear that He and He alone represents Himself, and gives that representation to no other. This fact is tied up with the deity of Christ—God come to reveal and represent Himself—as declared in the NT.

As something of an aside I will observe that having just recently discussed Deuble's attempt to use the definitive article to define when deity is in question, one cannot help but feeling some wry irony when Deuble become indignant at R.A. Torrey for doing the very same thing, saying of him and those like him, “*They make much of the definite article*” and scoffing “*This is a fancy bit of footwork that disregards the Hebrew text as we shall see*” (*They Never Told*, p. 64, 65). Somehow Deuble can be dismissive of someone else's use of the definite article to make a point about when deity is in question, but when he does it himself such an argument becomes “*incontrovertible proof.*”

Previously I discussed how Deuble did not honestly handle the ambiguity in the original Hebrew word ADNY “lord” where the nature of the lord could not be determined by the original Hebrew word itself—and instead of admitting the ambiguity of the text Deuble retreated to a later Masoretic interpretation. In a like manner, in attempting to make the Hebrew word *shachah* (worship) serve his purposes Deuble does not handle it honestly. I will not launch into a lengthy deconstruction now. Sufficient, perhaps, is the following:

The principal Old Testament word is *shachah*, "depress," "bow down," "prostrate" (Hithpael), as in [Exodus 4:31](#), "bowed their heads and worshipped"; so in 94 other places. The context determines more or less clearly whether the physical act or the volitional and emotional idea is intended. The word is applied to acts of reverence to human superiors as well as supernatural¹⁵.

The root word, we see, actually has the meaning of something like “bow down.” That term is general, and what is meant and what is being acknowledged by that bowing down must be understood by *context*. Is a person bowing down to indicate the acknowledgement that someone else is “over” or “superior” to them? And then we can ask, “Over them in what sense?” Superior in physical strength (like a warrior), superior in social standing, or superior in rank? Or, perhaps, superior in nature, as the mortal bows before the divine. But, just as ADNY (lord) in Hebrew was completely ambiguous as to what kind of lord was meant (and context had to determine) so also the Hebrew *shachah* (lit. “bow down”) is ambiguous as to what is meant by that act of bowing down. Context determines. Deuble may assert, “*The answer is that whenever men “worshipped” other men it was a relative worship. In most of the examples above it is clear that the ones worshipped were God’s representatives*” (*They Never Told*, p. 111, emphasis his) but he is wrong. There is no “relative” worship of God. When we are told repeatedly “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only” it is not an inclusive statement—it is *exclusive*. But Deuble attempts to turn it around so that “only” becomes “Worship the Lord your God and serve him only—and by that we mean worship all sorts of men and angels as His representative.”

What Deuble does not want to admit is that *shachah* is a very general word that can be used to convey a wide variety of activity and in translating the Hebrew text the translator must decide what (in context) is being meant by the use of *shachah* and chose the appropriate English word to convey the same meaning. For Deuble to assert that *shachah* ought to always be translated with the same English word, and always carries the religious connotation is, at best, revealing an ignorance of Hebrew and the requirements of translation.

Sometimes what implication of *shachah* is meant can be ambiguous and difficult to determine. Welcome to the job of translating. But sometimes the meaning is clearly obvious from context. When Ruth “bowed down” before Boaz (Ruth 2:10) she was not offering him religious worship as God’s divine representative, but rather acknowledged him as her social superior. When Abraham “bowed down” before the Canaanite rulers (Gen. 23:7) he was not offering them religious worship but rather was recognizing their positions as leaders in the land. Conversely, there are also times when *shachah* is clearly meant in a religious sense—whether it be a bowing down before false gods, or before the one true God.

15 <http://topicalbible.org/w/worship.htm>

In the religious sense of *shachah* the Bible presents two options. The idolatrous bowing down (worship) of that which is not God or the appropriate bowing down (worship) to God Himself, and no other. Scripture presents no authorized representative of God, whom might receive religious worship in His stead. You are either worshiping God directly and solely, or you are committing idolatry by offering worship unto a representation when God has declared He continences no representation of Himself in that manner by another. For Deuble to suggest that “Worship the Lord your God only” actually means, “Worship the Lord your God, and all His chosen representatives” is to stand Scripture completely on its head! Deuble attempts to turn exclusivity into inclusivity! For me to bow down before David, Moses, or any other servant of God and say unto them “You are my Lord and my God” is an act of blasphemy and idolatry. To the idea that we can worship anything other than God as His representative, the Apostle John leaves us a final warning in the book of Revelation.

Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

At this I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! (Rev. 19:9-10)

And again he says,

I, John, am the one who heard and saw these things. And when I had heard and seen them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who had been showing them to me. But he said to me, “Do not do it! I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers the prophets and of all who keep the words of this book. Worship God!” (Rev. 22:8-9)

Certainly this angel was a messenger from God, and in that sense His representative. According to Deuble's idea of “agency” we then could rightly fall down and worship this angel. As Deuble says:

Jesus knew that the angelic messengers of Jehovah had in the past received *relative* worship from God-pleasing men and women. Jesus knew that agents of the one true God could be addressed as though they were God” (*They Never Told*, p. 112).

But as we have just seen, this assertion of Deuble flies in the face of what we explicitly read in Revelation 19:9-10 & 22:8-9! The idea is resoundingly rebuked. Worship belongs to God and God alone, not to any representative or “agent.”

In all of his posturing and misappropriation and misconstruing of text, about the only substantial point Deuble raises on this topic is the statement “*the Scriptures are absolutely clear that no one has ever seen God Himself*” (*They Never Told*, p. 69). In this case Deuble provides explicit references to Scripture and, on first glance, this appears problematic for the idea of Theophany. That seeming problem will be addressed in a moment, but to start I would address the huge problem here for Deuble, which he tries to ignore. Deuble references the following scripture:

- “No one has ever seen God [...]” (John 1:18)

- “God [...] whom no one has seen or can see.” (1 Tim. 6:16)
- “No one has ever seen God” (1 John 4:14)

What Deuble (so conveniently!) does not include is the following statement by Jesus, speaking of himself: “*No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father.*” (John 6:46). Do we have a terrible contradiction here? Scripture clearly says no one has seen God, and then Jesus goes and claims to have seen God! Who is not telling the truth?

Except, there is no contradiction at all if Jesus is God. To say no one can see God obviously does not exclude God seeing Himself. In supplying John 1:18, 1 Tim. 6:16, and 1 John 4:14 for his argument that nobody has seen God, Deuble omits Jesus' own statement in John 6:46 because it is a clear affirmation that nobody can see God, while also thereby being *a clear affirmation of Jesus' own deity*. Deuble is caught in his own argument!

But at this point we still need to ask, if no one but God has seen God what are we to make of Old Testament theophany? A good place to start in understanding what is being meant is Exodus 33:18-23. There we read:

Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.”

And the LORD said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the LORD, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”

Then the LORD said, “There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.”

The point here is not about the greater destructive power of God's face in comparison with His buttocks, as if one might behold His back well enough so long as the dangerous ray-beams of the divine face were concealed. The point here, as God explains Himself, is that no one can fully see Him—and the face is most closely associated with fully seeing/knowing someone. So God says, “*you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live [...] you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.*”

It is not as if the Apostles John and Paul forgot this incident when they wrote their statements above. They remembered the incident quite well, and in fact are simply repeating what God said Himself just before revealing His back to Moses. The point of God Himself, and the Apostles, is not that nothing of God can be seen but that one cannot behold the *totality* of the divine majesty.

Angels are glorious beings, and at times they are revealed as such in the Bible. But the record of Scripture also makes clear that Angels have the ability to conceal their true nature and walk the earth in the appearance of men and be mistaken for men. In the same way, God may veil His divine majesty and appear—not in the fullness of His glory but, as it were, as from behind a veil. So the claim to theophany in the OT is not that of someone seeing God as He truly is (for no one can see God and live) but rather seeing a limited and concealed manifestation of God much as

Moses saw God's "back."

My purpose here is not to go over every possible instance of theophany in the OT. As I have already made mention, Hebrew writing can be ambiguous so some instances claimed by people as a theophanic revelation are not necessarily so clear cut. My point for the present is twofold: First, that God reserves true worship until Himself alone, and no other. If in the OT you see a person *rightly* worshipping another as God you can be certain it is God Himself. Second, the idea of a limited theophany of God in no way contradicts the truth that God cannot be fully seen. If one wishes to go through all of the possible theophanic appearances of God and determine which can accurately be called such, and which not, that is a study for another time. I will briefly comment on the appearance of God in the burning bush because I think this is one of the clearest instances of theophany and Deuble's handling of this is incredibly egregious.

Deuble says,

Quite clearly this is an example of agency. It is an angel who appears to Moses and it is the angel who speaks. But note that this angel even speaks for God in the *first person*. The angel of the Lord says, "I am God" **The angel is distinguished from God** yet identified with Him. (*They Never Told*, p. 66, bold emphasis mine)

Once again, Deuble ignores the actual Hebrew text. In Hebrew, the word for Angel is *malak* (מַלְאָךְ) the word means "messenger" and is used of both men (simple messengers such as [Judges 6:35](#) and also prophets, see for example [Haggai 1:13](#)) and of spiritual beings as we typically associate the word. But the word itself is simply a descriptor, indicating the one in question is the bearer of a message. Who is being described must be understood by context. In the case of Haggai 1:13 mentioned above, we read "*Haggai malak Yahweh*" and in the context we understand that there are not three people (Haggai, the messenger, and God) but rather two, Haggai the messenger, and God. Likewise, the Hebrew text in Exodus 3:2 isn't clearly distinguishing between God and an angel. There is God, and someone bringing a message. Whether the one bringing the message should be understood as God, or a second distinct individual, must be understood from context. If you read the passage of Exodus itself, it reads quite naturally like God Himself appearing as a message bearer to deliver His own message. The necessity of seeing two *distinct* individuals is one of Deuble's own manufacturing, not one of the text.

I will also mention that the Hebrew word for "man" can also be used for those who are clearly not men. In the account of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah it opens by saying, "Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby" (Gen. 18:2). As the story continues to unfold it becomes evident the people in question are not actually men of the flesh, descended from Adam. They are beings who *appeared* as men and which we understand from the context to be spiritual beings who took on that appearance. So also in the account of Jacob wrestling with the man (Gen. 32:22-31), we understand the Hebrew word "man" is stating that the person in question *looked* like a man. Was he actually a man whom Jacob wrestled with or some other being who took on the appearance of a man? What does Jacob himself conclude?

Conclusion

The message of Deuble is one of elitism, wrapped in a cloak of conspiracy and victimhood as he proclaims that the truth of the gospel has been lost, only now to be revealed again by him and his sect. In Deuble's message the grace of God and His free and unmerited *gift* of knowledge of Him is replaced by the intelligence and work of man to come to a knowledge of the truth—those who are able to know this “Hebrew mindset” and so know the truth. Deuble's message to you is that you must be intelligent enough to grasp the special esoteric knowledge of the Hebrew mindset. In Deuble's message God has not plainly preserved the truth of His Gospel and so since the truth has not been plainly preserved discovering that truth again requires the abilities of learned men to decipher the truth—and if you are not one of those special men (such as Buzzard and Deuble) you must accept the mediation of such learned men (through their books and teaching) if you are to come to a knowledge of the truth. Authority no longer rests in the Spirit/Mind of God, but has come to dwell in man and his words.

You may feel I am being unfair and prejudicial against Deuble, but I will point out that if he had believed in the divine Authority of Christ by His Spirit to interpret the Scriptures in *any* tongue was sufficient to know God and the Gospel then he could have written a book simply expositing Scripture from Scripture in our own common language. But such a straight forward activity will not bring you to Deuble's chosen idea, so instead he must constantly tell the reader throughout his book that plainly reading the text of Scripture in their Bibles leads only to error! The title of his book is *They Never Told me **This** in Church!* but it could have as well been titled, *You Never Read **This** in the Bible!* since Deuble's argument itself is that if you picked up your Bible and read it you would not know the things he is revealing.

I argue for the sufficiency of Scripture on the grounds of the continuing presence and work of its Author. Deuble argues for the insufficiency of scripture on the grounds of the necessity and superiority of human wisdom. To know what he knows you must be let into the secret knowledge of the “Hebrew mindset” which cannot be found by a simple reading of Scripture. His message is that the truth has been lost in a conspiracy in the early life of the church and now he and his cohorts have come to unlock the secrets again.

I cannot, and do not, accept Deuble's premise that we need the “Hebrew mindset” because it is contrary to the plain teaching of Scripture. The premise is a complete nonstarter, to be rejected outright if one is to remain a witness to the truth. I do not accept that we need to return to the Hebrew text to know the truth. I do not accept the authority of man to determine the meaning of Scripture.

The appeal to the wisdom and authority of men as the interpreters of Scripture is not something limited to Deuble and his views. It is found in every denomination as pastors, Popes, and scholars are explicitly or implicitly, intentionally or unintentionally, exalted as those qualified and authoritative for providing the interpretation and understanding of the Bible. The

problem is not just the “Hebrew mindset” that Deuble conjures up, but also any appeal to any ancient or modern mindset, any scholar, school of thought, scientific method, historical view, or philosophy as the bases, grid, or authority with which to interpret the Bible. This broad methodology appeals to the fleshly mind, but each instance runs contrary to the very things Paul has declared to the Corinthians. These activities are the exaltation some type of “wisdom” of man as that which validates and defines God and His revelation.

If we stand on the wisdom of men, we will be tossed about by every wave of new teaching, by every new “wise” man who comes along, and every supposed new revelation. Our confidence should not rest in our wisdom and intellect—nor the wisdom and intellect of others. Our confidence should be a faith that God has plainly and clearly revealed His gospel to us *personally*, and on that revelation we take our stand.

I do not want to be misconstrued as seeming to suggest we never need to listen to others. But I am stressing the importance of the *context* in which we listen. It is not that we listen to nobody—rather *we listen and judge all things by the gospel, and Spirit, we have received*. I have read books and commentaries—but I do not use them to tell me what gospel I should believe. Rather, I judge their worth by the gospel I have *already* received. Not only that, I do not tell people they need to read this commentary or that book to truly understand the gospel—for that would be to say the gospel was the provenance of some man, or group of people, when in truth it belongs to God alone and to whom He freely reveals it—but to the Jew and Greek, to the ancient and modern man, it will forever remain a stumbling block and offense.

Deuble explicitly declares for himself that his is a different gospel. In that assessment, I whole-heartedly agree. He preaches an entirely different gospel from the one which I have received, believed, and upon which I take my stand. Every religion and belief under the sun has its own idea of “good news” and Deuble is no different. He preaches his own “good news.” You ask a Jew today, and if he knows his religion he will give you his hope. You ask a Muslim, and he will give you his hope. You ask a Buddhist, and he will give you his hope. Each religion has its own idea of hope, but each and all of these are no hope at all because they are not the truth declared by God. I do not need to read or listen to every “gospel” someone might declare, because I already know the true gospel—not by my wisdom, intellect, or great breadth of knowledge, but simply and solely because God has revealed it to me. I do not need to become an expert on history, or language, to know the gospel. The truth of God is self-authenticating by the testimony of the Spirit. When I received Him, I believed not because I was wise or learned, or knowledgeable, but because the Word was written upon my heart. And so with that *logos* written upon my heart, I need look for no other gospel, nor fear I have found the wrong gospel—for it is a gospel authenticated *not* by man, or the wisdom of man, but by fire from heaven. I do not need to give up a modern mind, or a Greek mind, to find a Hebrew mind. No, rather all human minds—modern, Greek, or Hebrew—must be rejected for my understanding to be renewed by the Mind of Christ. Having come to receive the gospel of Christ in the Mind of Christ, I know I need chase after no other mindset, Hebrew or otherwise, for such is utter folly.

I have felt it important to restate and stress that the entire premise Deuble begins with is wholly contrary to what Scripture has declared because it is an issue of more than just his book

—it is a matter of spiritual epistemology and authority. His failure is not, ultimately, one of intellect, but spiritual. Deuble does not accept the declaration of Christ and His Apostles that the Hebrew mind is contrary to God. Without Spirit, the rest of his argument is merely human intellect. We can quibble over the Hebrew mindset all day and even were we to find it truly we would be no closer to God. The Hebrew mindset does not accomplish that. If it did, the coming of Christ and the sending of his Spirit were needless.

I can critique Deuble's intellect on the measure of intellect—but if you have believed him because he seemed wise and persuasive, only to then, perhaps, come to disbelieve him because I seem wiser and more persuasive, you are no better off. For if my intellect persuades you, in due time another will come along with a more persuasive intellect and once again your views will change to follow your new found intellectual authority. If you come to believe anything from what you read here, it is my hope that such will come because you are convicted by the Spirit of what His Scripture plainly says—not because I present some sort of intellectually persuasive argument.

It is with regret that I leave so much unsaid, but there is a time for all things. While I have probably overburdened you with the length of my response, I have not attempted to make this letter exhaustive. I hope that I have at least begun to unveil the light of the truth of the Glory of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. I pray that what I have said spurs you on to further and deeper appreciation of the truth.

I will leave you with this last thought:

Who is the Lord Jesus Christ? Upon the answer to this turns the whole gospel—the significance of his death and resurrection. If you preach a different Jesus you preach a different gospel—which is no gospel at all. A Jesus who is incarnate God is an entirely different message from a Jesus who is only man (*They Never Told*, p. 160-161). Firstly, I will observe that a Jesus who is merely man is a “gospel” of the exaltation of man's own triumph. If Jesus is but man, then man has saved himself by his own work of righteousness. Trust in Jesus is then not trust in the work of God, but in the works of a man. By the merits of a man's works of righteousness he has (in this so-called message) earned a salvation. By contrast, a Jesus who is God incarnate is a gospel of the exaltation of God who in His supreme righteousness and power has worked a salvation for a human kind who could never save themselves and from this salvation that He (God) accomplished He graciously grants salvation as an unearned gift to the elect chosen from undeserving mankind.

The due of works is not grace, otherwise it would not be grace. If Jesus were only man, then the gospel we preach is a gospel not of grace, but works: A man has accomplished righteousness and earned his due. But if Jesus is Incarnate God, then the gospel we preach is grace: Man is incapable of accomplishing his salvation, and God in His grace took on our nature, that in His great Power and Righteousness He might do all that we could not, and graciously give us what we have not earned or deserve: righteousness and life in Him. These are two entirely different gospels. To call Jesus merely a man is a perversion of the gospel, and contrary to the explicit teaching of Scripture.

Not only this, but the question of the deity of Christ requires that one view or the other be blasphemy and idolatry—an absolute distortion and rejection of God's self-revelation. One cannot worship as God Himself one who *is not* God Himself without committing blasphemy and idolatry. Likewise one cannot reject God's ultimate revelation of Himself without committing blasphemy and idolatry. There can be no reconciliation between the two ideas.

I hope these thoughts have spurred you on in a study of the truth. May the God of all truth and grace keep and strengthen you in His Son.

Rundy