

A Review of David Klinghoffer's:

Why the Jews Rejected Jesus

(Doubleday, 2005)

by Robert Sungenis, Ph.D.

“No authentic Messiah would inspire a religion that ended up calling upon the Jews to reject the manifest meaning of Sinai. It is really that simple.”

David Klinghoffer, *Why the Jews Rejected Jesus*, p. 215.

As we can see from the above citation, Klinghoffer has thrown down the gauntlet against Christ and Christianity. To set the stage for his treatise, Klinghoffer tells us that his book is the fruit of a twenty-year interest. In college he was challenged by a very astute Christian who concluded that Klinghoffer really didn't understand his own reasons for not converting to Christianity. After college, Klinghoffer considered marrying a very spiritually-minded Catholic girl with whom he had many theological discussions, but he was still quite ignorant of his own Jewish religion. This changed when he met his future wife, a Jewish girl who, after being baptized in the Catholic Church, later “felt the magnetic pull of Judaism and left the church.” This prompted Klinghoffer to begin defending Judaism, not because he necessarily “seeks to dissuade any of the world's two billion Christians from their faith” but “to tell a story of passionate disagreement” (pp. 9-10). This soft-spoken disclaimer, however, belies a book that makes the adjective “passionate” a rather gross understatement. Simply put, Klinghoffer is on a modern mission to debunk Christianity, and in essence he is saying, ‘I rejected Jesus, and you can, too. Let me show you the reasons why you should.’

A Book with a Split-Personality

In many ways, the book has a split-personality. On the one hand, Klinghoffer welcomes friendship with Christians. He sees "a unique coinciding of Jewish with Christian interests. Jews have always had an interest...in illuminating the world with those truths of their faith," and "Christians...are more curious than ever before about what Judaism can teach" (p. 6). Moreover, "since 9/11, Jews increasingly have come to understand the threat that Jews and Christians equally face from Islamic radicals" (p. 192) and "those in the Jewish community who care about the security of the ever endangered State of Israel came to perceive that the Jewish nation's best friend in the world was America, specifically because American Evangelical Christians who vote are readers of the Bible from page one. They believe in scripture's promises to the Jews of the holy land. Jewish sentiment toward Christians...has been warming ever since" (pp. 192-193). Hence, "To reject American Christianity seems almost ungrateful" (p. 186). On the other hand, Klinghoffer doesn't want to get too chummy with Christians because neither he nor his cohorts, despite the best wishes of Christians, are going to convert. As he puts it: "For Jewish thinking is obviously tending toward increased acceptance of Christianity...Yet at the same time, resistance to Jesus himself remains as strong as ever" (p. 193). In fact, Klinghoffer dismisses the statistics that Christians have given for Jewish conversions.¹

Thank the Jews

Klinghoffer begins his book by taking the unusual step of giving a title to his Introduction: "Thank the Jews." He then asks his reader to consider: "Would the world really be a better place if Jews had accepted Jesus?" (p. 6). The implied answer to this rhetorical question is, of course, no, at least if you define "better" in a purely secular sense. As he elaborates a few pages later: "If you value the great achievements of Western civilization and of American society, thank the Jews for their decision to cleave to their

¹ Klinghoffer writes: "So perhaps it shouldn't surprise us, incidentally, that for all the efforts of Jews for Jesus and their cohorts, the success of such Jewish-led Christian missionary drives has been modest. This becomes clear when you figure it on a dollars-per-convert basis. As I was writing this book, Jews for Jesus was engaged in a \$10 million international campaign called Behold Your God. About a third of the way into a conversionary push expected to hit sixty-six Diaspora cities, the group claimed to have made 448 converts in nineteen cities, though only 31 converts in the United States itself. At that rate, Jews for Jesus could expect to harvest 1,556 new "Jewish Christians," at \$6,427 per Jew. This is assuming that the "Jews" being converted were actually Jewish to begin with—a doubtful proposition. Many of those who attend Jewish-Christian congregational services were born gentiles....Congregation Beit Tikvah is led by the earnest and genial Rabbi Hylan Slobodkin, who tells me that of the two hundred or so people who attend services at Beit Tikvah, about 2 percent are Jewish – mirroring the Jewish demography of Seattle, he points out" (pp. 210-211).

ancestral religion instead of embracing the rival teaching of Jesus and his followers" (p. 9). Klinghoffer's thesis is that two thousand years ago mankind took a somewhat beneficial detour for itself when it rejected Judaism (thus the subtitle for his book: "The Turning Point in Western History"). But equally important is that the detour would have been impossible unless the Jews had first rejected Jesus. The logic is as follows: (a) the Jews rejected Jesus because Jesus rejected Moses, (b) in rejecting Moses, Jesus fostered a religion of "freedom from the law," (c) the world liked this freedom, so it rejected Judaism. So, in his own idiosyncratic and twisted logic, Klinghoffer concludes his book by saying: "Here is the very seed of the concept I am driving toward in this book: the blessing to the world that came about through the Jewish rejection of Jesus" (p. 201). So Westerners can all be proud of the Jews for taking that first initial step on the way to success – the rejection of Jesus Christ. This was perhaps the innovative selling point that convinced Doubleday to take a chance on publishing Klinghoffer's book, for no one else in the world up to this time has ventured such a provocative thesis.

There is a third leg to Klinghoffer's logic. You Westerners may have enjoyed your civilization for the past 2000 years, but in reality, although the Jews were right in rejecting Jesus, the world was wrong in rejecting the one true religion, Judaism, and now it's time to set the record straight. Since Western society, following Jesus and Paul, chose the easy way—the way devoid of Mosaic perfection—the natural outcome was society's rejection of the real God. Klinghoffer is here to change all that. Hence, he mounts what he considers to be the most formidable attack against Christian beliefs to date. He catalogues all the historic Jewish arguments for the last twenty centuries, and adds quite a few of his own. As such, Klinghoffer is not merely an apologist for the Jewish religion; rather, he has become an ardent evangelist. As he says himself: "It is a modern myth that Jews have always disdained seeking to convert others" (p. 158). The world is now Klinghoffer's mission field, for it is "the Torah, which obligated them to be a 'kingdom of priests,' ministering to other peoples, teaching them about God" (p. 214). How this squares with his earlier thesis that "Judaism per se was never designed to be a mass religion" (p. 8) he never quite gets around to telling us. In any case, despite any pretensions of good relations between Christians and Jews, the gauntlet has been thrown down to determine which religion is superior, indeed, which religion is true and the other false. That being the case, since Klinghoffer assures us that his book is one in which "any claim you place before the Jews will be savagely critiqued" (p. 13), we thus feel obligated to return the favor.

The Mosaic Covenant – *Sine Qua Non*

After he cites the historic arguments against Christianity, Klinghoffer delivers on what he regards as his major contribution to reunite the Jews of modern times. In the last few pages (pp. 200-220), he boils down all his arguments into one overarching thesis – a

thesis that has become a common apologetic for the resurgence of Judaism and Jewish interests in modern times – the Mosaic covenant originating from Sinai. It has had such an ecumenical push from prominent Jewish leaders that even the 2006 USCCB catechism succumbed to the pressure, giving credence to Sinai's perpetuity and thus fostering the "dual covenant" concept, one covenant for the Jews and another covenant for Christians. Klinghoffer accepts this modern innovation. Quoting from Franz Rosenweig who "found a way to affirm the truth claims of Judaism and Christianity at once," Klinghoffer goes on to describe the rationale that led to the dual covenant concept:

"He [Rosenweig] accepted the formulation of John's Gospel that 'no one comes to the Father but by the Son' (14:6) but reasoned that since he was already *with* the Father by virtue of being a Jew, he had no need for the Son. But a gentile, who was not with the Father by any inherited right to begin with, could come to the Father only by way of Jesus Christ. Thus there were two covenants, one with the Jews, one with everyone else: Judaism 'relegates work in the world to the church and acknowledges that the church brings salvation for all heathens, for all time.' Much the same position was later adopted by the Catholic Church with Vatican II" (p. 200).

For the record, Klinghoffer makes reference to "Vatican II" twice in his book, but in neither case does he back it up with the specific document or actual words that support his claim. Rest assured, Vatican II did not teach the dual covenant concept, but there is a cadre of liberal clerics since Vatican II who have done so. For example, one will find little difference between Rosenweig's duality and that proposed by Dr. Eugene Fisher, former secretary general of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, who recently stated the following:

"God already has the salvation of Jews figured out, and they accepted it on Sinai, so they are OK. Jews are already with the Father. We do not have a mission to the Jews, but only a mission with the Jews to the world. The Catholic Church will never again sanction an organization devoted to the conversion of the Jews. That is over, on doctrinal, biblical and pastoral grounds. Finito."²

No doubt Fisher had a heavy hand in putting the erroneous statement about the perpetuity of the Mosaic covenant into the 2006 USCCB catechism. Fortunately, the bishops

² *The Jewish Week*, January 25, 2002.

finally recognized the error and recently made an executive decision to delete the statement from all future editions of the catechism.³

When Klinghoffer refers to the Mosaic or Sinai covenant, he is referring not merely to the Ten Commandments but to "the Torah's commandments, 613 in all according to Talmudic tradition" (p. 134). Klinghoffer holds that the Jews are "the people of the Covenant," a covenant that they cannot, in good conscience, reject or consider obsolete. Anyone (specifically, Christ, Paul and Christianity at large) who critiques, modifies or rejects the Old Covenant are themselves to be rejected, for God himself, says Klinghoffer, gave the Jews the Covenant at Sinai, and warned against anyone (*e.g.*, false prophets, foreign countries, *etc.*) who would tempt the Jews to abandon it. As Klinghoffer sees it: "Ours is a world the Jews made by rejecting Jesus, an act dictated by their conscience and, I hope to show, by their God" (p. 10). The subsequent 200 pages contain Klinghoffer's theological and biblical reasons why the Mosaic covenant is a valid and abiding covenant with God. It is Klinghoffer's vision to have all Jews today (orthodox, reformed, secular, Zionists, Israelis, *etc.*) to define themselves, to one degree or another, as members of the Sinai covenant. Once this is established, not only will it bring the Jews together, it will serve as the dividing line between the Jews and the rest of the world.

To Publish or Not to Publish

Klinghoffer tells us that he struggled a bit with whether to publish the book after having received advice from Jewish friends that now, probably because of ongoing friendly relations with Christians, was not the time to wage a full frontal assault on Christianity. Obviously, since he published the book, Klinghoffer rejected the advice, believing, for whatever reason, that he and other modern Jews have come of age to dethrone Christianity, especially after Gibson's movie, *The Passion of the Christ*, became a "cultural watershed" that "demonstrated the untruths about history, about Judaism...that well meaning Americans have come to accept as dogma" (p. 4). To rectify this, Klinghoffer says, "there is a time to reveal secrets" and "the right time is now" (p. 10).

Although the inside back cover sports an engaging and innocent enough looking picture of the young author, his half-smile betrays a literary work that attacks almost every major belief of the Christian faith with a vengeance not seen since Moses Hess. Ecumenism this is not. Touchy-feely this is not. Klinghoffer says he took "the controversial step of

³ The 2006 *United States Catholic Catechism for Adults* published by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops states on page 131: "Thus the covenant that God made with the Jewish people through Moses remains eternally valid for them." By vote of the bishops (243 to 14) in June 2008, the erroneous sentence will be removed in the next edition of the catechism.

gathering such material and using it to tell, for the first time from a Jewish perspective" the reasons for rejecting Christ. After telling us that "in our culture, the need to dispel the untruths has become urgent. That is why I have written this book" (p. 4).

To put it simply, Klinghoffer essentially argues that Jesus was a fabricator and Paul was an even bigger fabricator ("a faker who didn't understand the faith he so passionately critiqued" p. 115), both infatuated with their own self-importance and out to persuade as many Jewish sycophants as possible. Whereas Klinghoffer complains that "the villainy of Gibson's Jews is hard to recognize because it makes no obvious sense" (p. 11), he contradicts this later by saying that Jesus and Paul were such out-and-out frauds that the Jews should have stoned them to death, as prescribed by the Mosaic law in Deut 13:1-5. It just so happened that the Romans beat the Jews to the punch for purely political reasons, which thus provides Klinghoffer with the excuse that the Jews themselves had little or nothing to do with Jesus' death. And whereas "Gibson leaves us with no clear idea why certain Jews were so intent on seeing him dead," in addition to the fact that "the Gospels themselves have much the same difficulty as to what gets the Jews who object to Jesus so worked up" (p. 11), Klinghoffer again contradicts this by telling us that the Gospels (thanks to the convenient tool of Historical Criticism of which Klinghoffer makes full use), are mostly the musings of second or third generation Christians who, because they were never eyewitnesses to what occurred in Jesus' life, made up or embellished most of the narratives we find in the New Testament.⁴

National Review

Among Klinghoffer's supporting cast are institutions such as *National Review* which writes this glowing blurb on the front cover: "Excellent...Klinghoffer offers a cogent intellectual explanation of why Jews rejected Jesus." As we learned from Jones' book (*The*

⁴ Further examples are: "In John's Gospel, the Jews repeatedly try to stone him – in the Temple, no less. They cry 'Crucify him, crucify him.' We need not accept the historical truth of all this. The Gospels were written down anywhere from thirty to seventy years after the Crucifixion, and they clearly reflect Jewish Christian tensions of a much later date than the lifetime of Jesus" (p. 47); "In traditions that later were written down as the Gospels" and "orally transmitted data before it was shaped and added to by the early church" (p. 60); "the very earliest layers of Christ literature show the greatest reluctance to attribute anything like divinity to Jesus....This suggests that the equation of Jesus with God is an artifact of decades long after Jesus died" (p. 67); "the Trinitarian doctrine, at the end of Matthew [28:19] reflects relatively advanced Christian thinking and was not part of the original Gospel text" (p. 68); "the earliest Christians searched the Hebrew prophets and found some sayings of Isaiah that could be put to use, retrospectively salvaging Jesus's aborted career as messiah" (p. 79); "Of course, we can only guess at what the historical Jesus actually taught..." (p. 87). Interestingly enough, the historical critical approach leads Klinghoffer to conclude: "His public ministry lasted only a year or so, from the arrest of John the Baptist in 28 or 29 to the Crucifixion in 30" (p. 47). It can be shown quite easily from the Gospels that Jesus was in ministry for 3.5 years.

Jewish Revolutionary Spirit), although purporting to be a conservative voice for America as represented by their poster child, William F. Buckley, Jr., *National Review* has a Jewish board of directors with the same mentality as Klinghoffer. Klinghoffer himself makes reference to "the Jewish philosopher Will Herberg...the religion editor of *National Review*" (p. 201). Also in the supporting cast are people such as Michael Medved (and his wife Diane who took the picture of Klinghoffer for the inside back cover), the Jewish radio host who, as I've followed for the last few years, can be counted on to defend the Neocon-Zionist party line without fail. Although Medved is friendly with Christians⁵ who also see the Jews as the chosen people whom God will exonerate either now or in the future, he is quite candid in saying that "the one and only thing Jews all agree on today is that Jesus was not the Messiah" (p. 193).

Good Religious People

By the time I was about two-thirds of the way through Klinghoffer's book, two things were solidly confirmed in my mind. First, it was Klinghoffer's firm conviction that the Jews throughout history were good religious people who were simply trying to live out the Mosaic covenant, but, being highly outnumbered, were overrun by numerous political and religious competitors, such as the Greeks, Romans, Christ, Paul, and the Catholic Church, to name a few. All these competitors found that they could not live up to the high moral standards of Judaism "for the practice of the commandments is a discipline unsuited to the requirements of a mass religion" (p. 99), and therefore rejected the Mosaic law for an easier path, a more worldly path, a path as we noted earlier was "the turning point in Western history."

Acts 15: The Crucial Turning Point

Klinghoffer claims that the detour began at the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) when "the early church jettisoned the observance of Jewish law" and "with the demands of the faith whittled down to three [commandments]...having to do with food...the new church was all set to accomplish what it did: over the course of some centuries, convert all of Europe" (p. 99). It started when "Paul was contradicted and reviled by fellow Jews, leading him to conclude that the future lay no longer with his own people." Hence, "a split developed within the church" which "could continue as it was under the leadership of Jesus's brother James: within the bounds of Torah law, requiring all converts also to be observant Jews. Or it could take Paul's more radical view of Jesus's teaching." Klinghoffer then concludes:

⁵ Karl Keating once invited Medved to be the host speaker for a cruise sponsored by Catholic Answers, but his appearance was cancelled weeks before the cruise took place.

"At a council meeting of elders in Jerusalem in the year 49, Paul made his case for dropping Jewish law as a requirement for Christians. After much debate, James agreed – and the direction of Christian history was set. Had the Jews embraced Jesus, therefore, followers of the church of James would have continued to be obligated in the biblical commandments of circumcision, Sabbath...Thus, in every respect, the Jesus movement might have remained a Jewish sect" *etc.* (p. 7).

If this incident wasn't the backbone of his book (*viz.*, Klinghoffer's assertion on page 98 that in the council of Jerusalem "we have what is effectively the founding document of Western civilization") we could easily skip over it as simply a small case of tortured exegesis and presumptuous conclusions. But Klinghoffer's rendition of what happened is a typical example of how badly he handles Scripture in the rest of his book, whether it's his own Hebrew bible or the New Testament, and how his misinformed reading of the text leads him to make erroneous and often outrageous conclusions. These exegetical flaws will be of paramount importance when Klinghoffer tries to negate from Scripture some fundamental Christian doctrines, such as the Incarnation, the Trinity, and the Virgin Birth.

First, there is no indication in the text that it was Paul who initiated or was alone in "making the case for dropping Jewish law." In the two instances that Paul speaks at the council, he is merely retelling his experience of the "conversion of the Gentiles" (*vr.* 3) wherein "God did signs and wonders among the Gentiles" (*vr.* 12), but which Klinghoffer, for some odd reason, sees as "the heavy influence of Paul" from which a "faction in the church was developing" (p. 98). But "signs and wonders" have nothing to do with circumcision and there was no evidence of a "faction" created by Paul. The text (Acts 15:6) is clear that, if there was a faction, it was the Pharisees at the council who introduced the controversial subject of circumcision: "But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up, and said, 'It is necessary to circumcise them, and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.'" After their challenge, the text says all "the apostles and the elders were gathered together to consider this matter." Paul has no distinction at the council in this regard.

Second, there is no indication in the text that James was initially siding with the practice of circumcision for new Gentile converts, hence, there is no evident rivalry between James and Paul. Klinghoffer is creating clerical opponents who don't exist. In another place, Klinghoffer claims "At a council meeting in Jerusalem, the leader of the church, James, strikes a compromise..." (p. 94). But in actuality, James is not "the leader of the church" and he isn't the one who decides whether circumcision will be practiced by Christians. That duty was fulfilled by Peter, and Peter alone, a person that, amazingly enough, Klinghoffer completely leaves out of his analysis! As Acts 15:7-11 gives us the blow-by-blow:

"And after there had been much debate, Peter rose and said to them, 'Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will."

In fact, since Peter is the final decision maker on whether circumcision will continue, this is the very reason the Catholic Church has invested its identity in Peter as the first pope, since he singly led the Church in Acts 15 to make the doctrinal decision as to what will be believed and practiced in the Catholic faith. It was not up to James or Paul. In fact, the only mention of James' role in the council is that he immediately acceded to Peter's decision; backed it up with a quote from Amos; and then made a pastoral recommendation in order to implement Peter's decision, namely, that the Church might want to keep a few dietary laws, yet not as a "compromise" but as a gesture of sensitivity to the Jews so as not to greatly offend those who were strictly kosher (*vrs.* 13-21). It was the rest of the apostles and elders, not James, who approved his recommendation and subsequently decided to write letters to all the churches informing them of the council's decision. Moreover, it is only at that time that Paul makes the council's decision his own, and subsequently he is sent out by the apostles and elders as a missionary against circumcision. All in all, Klinghoffer's attempt to put Paul and James into a Hegelian synthesis that will determine the weal or woe of the future Church is simply non-existent. Klinghoffer's historiography certainly makes for good drama for getting a book published, but it does no favors for the demands of factual history. Unfortunately for Klinghoffer, the absence of any conflict between Paul and James, and the presence of a unilateral decision by Peter, destroys the major thesis of his book at the same time that it vindicates the Catholic paradigm of leadership.

No Recognition of Sin

The second and probably the most important thing that struck me about Klinghoffer's book is that his idealistic portrait of the Jews and Judaism is made in the face of virtually a total absence of how the Jews, both now and in the past, have disobeyed and rejected the very precepts taught in the Mosaic covenant. By the time I got to the end of the book, I was absolutely dumfounded how this Jewish man could write a book about Jewish history but completely hide from his reader the very heart of the whole question before us. Although Klinghoffer claims that "there was one language God had given the Jews in which to express their relationship with Him: the commandments" (p. 107), anyone who has read

the Old Testament cannot turn but a few pages before he comes to a narrative describing some gross and immoral sin the Jews committed either against God, their fellow Jews, or their foreign neighbors. But throughout his 222 pages, Klinghoffer doesn't mention one of them, yet it is clear from reading Moses' own description of the Jewish people in the Pentateuch and the subsequent commentary in the historical and prophetic books that the single reason God took the Old Covenant away from the Jews was that they continually transgressed it with their hypocrisy and immorality.

One would think that Klinghoffer would mention, for example, the horrendous sins the Jews committed at the very time they were *receiving* the Mosaic covenant from God. The story is told in graphic detail in Exodus 32-33. While Moses is up in the mountain to receive the Covenant from God, the Jews decide to create a false god made of gold. God is so angry at the Jews, He wants to destroy the whole nation right then and there (which, according to Num. 1:32, is approximately 1-2 million people). If not for Moses' pleading with God, Israel would have breathed its last breath at Sinai. In fact, God was so angry that when Moses later asks God to go with them through the desert to Canaan, God refuses, citing the fact that if He goes he might destroy the Jews! It isn't until Moses pleads once more that God decides to go, but only because he favors Moses, not the Jews at large (Ex. 33:1-11). After this incident, things were never quite the same between God and the Jews. For the next forty years God made them wander aimlessly, literally having them travel in circles in the Sinai desert. While they were wandering, one might think the Jews would be in a state of remorse and repentance after having almost lost their lives at Sinai. But that was not the case. Time after time the Jews continued to disobey the Covenant and incite the wrath of God. From the complaining against the manna (Num. 11), to the murmuring of Aaron and Miriam (Num. 12), to the rejection of Canaan and desire for Egypt (Num. 13-14); to the rebellion of Nadab and Abihu (Ex 10); to Korah's rebellion (Num. 16); to the sexual lust at Peor (Num. 25), the sins never stopped. So numerous and persistent are the sins that Moses makes a dire prediction in Deut. 31:14-21 just prior to Canaan, stating that, based on its past history, Israel will continue to break the covenant and bring down God's wrath. And that they did. In the time of the Judges, for 75% of the four centuries (1400-1000 BC), God put the Jews under oppression from foreign rulers as punishment for their continual sins. In the time of the Kings, in a span of four more centuries (1000-600 BC), almost every one of the kings earned the same obituary: "and he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and followed the sins of his father, with which he made Israel to sin, and so the anger of the Lord was kindled against them." Of the northern tribe's twenty kings, all twenty were said to be evil. Of the southern tribe's twenty kings, only three were good. Hence, of forty kings in four centuries, only 7.5% had not broken the Covenant. The Mosaic law was not even a part of their lives for centuries, having only been discovered by Hilkiah (2Chr. 34:14) in the reign of Josiah (641-609 BC). Of the people themselves, the percentages of covenant

breakers were even worse. Out of a nation of at least 5 million people in the ninth century BC, Elijah could only find 7000 who have not bowed the knee to a false god (1Kings 19:18), an astounding statistic of only 0.14% of the people. The northern tribes were carted off to Assyria for their punishment, never to be heard from again; and the two southern tribes were carted off to Babylon. When they returned from captivity under Ezra and Nehemiah, things didn't improve much at all. By the time of the Maccabees and on to the formation of sects such as the Pharisees and Sadducees, the Jews are quibbling about the minutia of the law but still haven't learned to obey the precepts of the law. It was after this, the culmination of 1500 years of sin and rebellion, that even Yahweh Himself, the epitome of long suffering and patience, could not put up with the Jews any longer. It was Yahweh in Exodus 32:9 who had resolved even then in Jewish history: "I have seen this people, and behold, they are a stiff-necked people." Lo and behold, it was the same thing that Stephen saw 1500 years later when he told the Jews in Jerusalem of their continual breaking of the Covenant (Acts 7:51-53):

"You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

All one need do to confirm Stephen's story is read the prophets. Just the book of Jeremiah will do, for it is where we derive the term "jeremiad." Page after page is filled with nothing but heart-wrenching words right from the mouth of God who is in utter consternation and sadness over the pernicious rebellion and disgusting immorality of the Jews. In Ezekiel and Hosea, Israel is called nothing short of a whore who can't keep her legs shut for any passer-by who whistles at her (*cf.* Ezek. 16, 23; Hos. 1-2). But you will get none of this in Klinghoffer's book. There is hardly a hint that the Jews of bygone days had sinned grievously, much less sinned to the extent that God was forced to annul the Covenant that Klinghoffer finds so crucial to Jewish identity and survival today. In the one instance that Klinghoffer mentions the Jews' negative history, he casually remarks, "the northern kingdom was conquered and taken away to captivity in Assyria. These were the fabled ten lost tribes. Two centuries later, Judah was overthrown by Babylon, the Temple destroyed" (pp. 14-15). The only mention of any Jewish indiscretions is made by way of a quote from Norman Podhoretz who "points out that Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and the rest had as their overriding goal to free the Jewish people from a tendency to revert to the paganism of their ancestors or of the peoples around them." Notice that it is classified as a mere "tendency" rather than a persistent abomination in the eyes of God, and never once is this "tendency" understood as the reason the Old Covenant was eventually taken from them. In fact,

Klinghoffer even tries to minimize the "tendency" by citing Podhoretz's quip that "idolatry manifests itself in every age, in one form or another," so it's really no big deal that the Jews, the covenant custodians, did it like everyone else. Klinghoffer exonerates the Jews by claiming that they "have been fighting idolatry in its guises since their inception as a people" (p. 15), apparently oblivious to the fact that the Jews were miserable failures at this so-called "fight" (including their "inception" in Exodus 32 when God was on the verge of wiping out the whole nation precisely because of its wholesale idolatry). If you read the Old Testament and then read Klinghoffer's book, you will find that Klinghoffer simply refuses to connect the dots in the proper way. Klinghoffer's idealistic view of the Jews sees only one side of the coin – the side he wants to see. He writes:

Theologically, we may put the truth in one word: Sinai....The covenant – the commandments – was the reason God brought the Jews to meet Him. There is no other purpose to Jewish existence. There is no other purpose to human existence. The Jews have long believed that the universe remains in existence only because they accepted the Torah, which obligated them to be a "kingdom of priests," ministering to other peoples, teaching them about God...To abandon those commandments was to abandon the whole meaning of Jewish existence. To give them up, you had to have an awfully good reason...But Christianity had none that was satisfying. Accepting Christ, as his message was preached by Paul, means abrogating the commandments. Beyond the one solitary verse that could be understood as God's promising a new covenant – Jeremiah 31:31, which we have seen that Christians misconstrued – the Hebrew Bible offers no escape clause from the Jewish mission (p. 214).

Besides Klinghoffer's inflated view of the Jews (e.g., "human existence" and the very "universe" remain in existence because the Jews accepted the Torah), at this point he is now 97% toward the end of his book and has not mentioned even one incident of sin from the Jews, either in the past or the present. This leads us to draw only one conclusion: Klinghoffer is suffering from the same disease as the Pharisees – the insistence of holding on to the form and neglecting the substance; praising the Torah institution without really understanding and doing the essence of Torah. As Jesus said: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you tithe mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith; these you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!" (Matt. 23:23-24).

Were the Commandments Abrogated?

Second, contrary to what Klinghoffer claims, accepting Christ does not mean "the commandments are abrogated." If anything, Christ enhanced the commandments by showing the real meaning behind them, as he did on the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery,' but I say to you, everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery in his heart" (Matt. 5:31). So not only was Jesus upholding Moses' commandments, He was actually trying to make them penetrate the inner recesses of Klinghoffer's heart. In effect, Jesus' teaching preserved the "manifest meaning of Sinai" better than Klinghoffer and the Jews ever did. Consequently, Klinghoffer inevitably draws a confusing picture of Jesus. On the one hand, his clarion call seems to be: "No authentic Messiah would inspire a religion that ended up calling upon the Jews to reject the manifest meaning of Sinai. It is really that simple" (p. 215); while on the other hand he says: "Jesus himself did not stand for the idea of the total nullification of the Sinai covenant" (p. 88). So which is it?

The answer probably lies in the fact that Klinghoffer is blaming Jesus for "inspiring" his Christian followers to reject Sinai as opposed to actually doing it Himself. The real culprit, in Klinghoffer's mind, is the Apostle Paul, who took Jesus' "inspiration" to its logical conclusion. Obviously, what Klinghoffer is missing here is that Jesus lived on the Old Covenant side of the Cross. It was only at the death of Christ that the temple curtain was miraculously torn in two to signify the complete end of the Old Covenant (Matt. 27:51; Lk. 23:45). Prior to that, Jesus was obligated to obey the Old Covenant. Hence, he did not "abrogate" the Mosaic law in the Sermon on the Mount; rather, he explicated the real meaning of the Mosaic law that the Jews had missed for most of their 2000-year history.

For Jesus, however, the "manifest meaning of Sinai" is far different than the institution of Judaism and the accompanying "Torah's commandments, 613 in all according to Talmudic tradition." Inspired by Jesus, Paul would eventually "abrogate" just what Klinghoffer wants to hold on to – the Judaistic institution. Whereas Klinghoffer blames Paul for abrogating the commandments, what he fails to understand is that the essence of the commandments can survive the institution and subsequently be absorbed into a new institution (as Paul did, for example, in Rom. 13:9-10),⁶ for the old institution became corrupt precisely because those who possessed it perniciously and consistently disobeyed the simple commandments within it!

⁶ Romans 13:8-10: "Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,' and any other commandment, are summed up in this sentence, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

Is the Sinai Covenant Eternal?

Klinghoffer's main problem is the very thesis of his book – that "the Sinai covenant...would be eternal" (p. 88). Perhaps Klinghoffer is confused by such passages as Ex. 31:16, 18: "Therefore the people of Israel shall keep the sabbath, observing the sabbath throughout their generations, as a perpetual covenant....And he gave to Moses, when he had made an end of speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." "Perpetual covenant" is *ברית עולם* (*berith olam*). But contrary to Klinghoffer's insistence, the Hebrew word *olam* does not necessarily mean "into the endless future" (p. 138) but often existence for a long time. Even if it is translated as "ever" or "everlasting," the total time of duration is conditioned by the object in view and its literary context.⁷ If Klinghoffer thinks otherwise, he will have to answer this passage directed at Israel: "And I will bring upon you everlasting reproach and perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten" (Jer. 23:40; cf. 25:9). The Old Covenant itself was clear that the covenant could be annulled and/or superseded.⁸

Thirdly, Klinghoffer says that "the Hebrew Bible offers no escape clause from the Jewish mission." He is partially correct. As long as the Old Covenant was in force, the Jews were required to obey it, as was Jesus. But right up until the first century AD the Jews never fulfilled the mission God gave them in the Covenant. The only high point in regards to a "Jewish mission" to the rest of the world was seen in the days of Solomon when Israel's influence stretched far and wide among the nations, but this was a mere interlude, since soon after his political and spiritual victories, Solomon fell into the same sins of his fathers and perhaps died an apostate, leading the nation in the same path of destruction (1 Kings 11:1-13). Even good king David's life was marred by adultery and murder, but at least David had the sense to repent of those sins, which distinguished him from most other Jews of his day, the same Jews about whom David complains time and time again in the Psalms as the "enemies" of himself and God because of their continual wickedness and apostasy.

⁷ e.g., Deut. 32:7; 1Kg. 1:31; 8:13; 2Chr. 20:7; Ps. 37:18; 77:5; 143:3; Is. 34:10; 45:17; 46:9; 51:9; 64:4; Jer. 2:20; 5:15; 6:16; 18:15; Ezk. 26:20; 36:2; Joel 3:20; Mic 7:14; Hab 3:6. "Jenni holds that its basic meaning 'most distant times' can refer to either the remote past or to the future or to both....*olam* can express by itself the whole range of meanings denoted by all the prepositions 'since, until, to the most distant time....J. Barr says, 'We might therefore best state the 'basic meaning' as a kind of range between 'remotest time' and 'perpetuity.'....The LXX generally translates *olam* by *aion* which has essentially the same range of meaning....Both words came to be used to refer to a long age or period" (R. Harris, et al., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 1980. Pp. 672-673).

⁸ Jer. 14:21; 31:32; Dan. 3:34; Zech. 11:9-11; Mal. 2:8; cf. Lev. 26:44-45; 2Cor 3:6-14; Heb. 7:18; 8:1-13; 10:9-16; Col. 2:15; Eph. 2:15.

It is precisely this posture of repentance that Klinghoffer lacks, for nowhere in his book does he seem to have any remorse for the sins of his fathers, or even his own sins. No wonder he thinks that "Christianity had nothing that was satisfying." Atonement and repentance to gain salvation are simply not in Klinghoffer's understanding of religion. At one point in the book Klinghoffer stuns us with one of his more audacious claims. From it, we can fully understand why the Mosaic covenant is so important to him. Seeking to reconcile an apparent contradiction in two of Solomon's teachings (*i.e.*, "God has already approved your deeds" and "Be in awe of God and keep his commandments" from Eccl. 9:7 and 12:13), Klinghoffer concludes:

In the Jewish understanding, salvation came to the Jews in the form of the Sinai covenant, God's gift. The commandments a Jew performed in his life did not "earn" him salvation. They were merely the response that God asked for to the fact that he was *already saved* – "God has already approved your deeds." As the Mishnah puts it, "All of Israel has a share in the World to Come" (pp. 100-101).

Not only has Klinghoffer taken Eccl. 9:7 out of context (since Solomon is not talking about eternal salvation but life on earth, as *vr.* 9 clearly states: "for this is your reward in life"), the more serious problem is that nowhere does the Sinai covenant or even the rest of the Old Testament say that salvation came to the Jews in the Sinai covenant, much less say that the Jews were *already saved* by it.⁹ This is precisely why it was fatal for Klinghoffer to claim earlier that "before the event of Sinai, there were no Jews per se...For it is the acceptance of the Torah that defines the Jewish people" (p. 14), for the passages that told the Jew how to attain salvation were written before the Sinai covenant, in the accounts of Abraham. There Gen. 15:6 says that "Abraham believed God and it was attributed to him as righteousness," and in Gen. 22:1-19 Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is said to "bless all the nations of the earth," not just the Jews. And for the record, Abraham didn't "earn" his

⁹ The only proof text Klinghoffer gives us is not from the Hebrew Bible but the Mishnah, and even there it proves too much for his claim for it says that "all of Israel" will be saved, yet in the same paragraph Klinghoffer limits salvation to those Jews who have not "rejected the gift" or "purposely excluded themselves." Incidentally, Paul makes reference to "all Israel shall be saved" in Rom 11:26, but there it is prefaced by "And in this way" from the Greek adverb οὕτως, showing us from the context of Rom. 11:1-23 that "all Israel," as Klinghoffer himself suggests, refers only to the Jews who have accepted God. In any case, Paul insists that it is not the Sinai covenant that saves "all Israel" but the New Covenant in Jesus Christ, the very extension of the Abrahamic covenant of Genesis 12-22 that bypasses the Sinai covenant which was revoked for the Jews' disobedience (Gal. 3:15-21). The New Testament adds that the Old Covenant could not provide salvation (*cf.* 2Co. 3:6-14; Gal. 3:10-12; 5:1-4; Col. 2:14-15; Eph. 2:15; Heb. 7:17; 8:7-13; 10:9-16).

salvation, for God didn't owe him anything. Salvation was given to him gratuitously for his faith and obedience, not as a payment. Paul makes that quite clear in Romans 4:2-4.¹⁰

Klinghoffer tries to escape the anachronism by creating an even bigger anachronism, claiming that Abraham "had in fact kept all the commandments...but only through oral transmission from the revelation at Mount Sinai as well as those that the rabbis would later enact, down to the most precise details," using Gen. 26:5 as a proof text: "Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws" (p. 135). Somehow, merely because the last word "laws" is the Hebrew word "torah," Klinghoffer proposes that Abraham knew he had to obey "the Torah's commandments, 613 in all according to the Talmudic tradition" (p. 134). How this "oral revelation" got to Abraham when it didn't even yet exist, Klinghoffer doesn't explain. Perhaps he thinks God gave the 613 commandments to him orally. The problem is, although it is quite clear in Genesis that God communicated to Abraham orally, there is no indication that it included the 613 Sinai commandments. As it appears, Klinghoffer seems to make it up as he goes along, attributing any lacunas to some magical ability of "oral tradition" to escape time constraints.

But there is another reason that Abraham did not live by the "613 commandments." What Klinghoffer and all other devout Jews don't understand about these monotonous commandments is that they were never originally intended to be a part of Jewish life. The real truth is, the more Israel sinned, the more God would add tedious commandments to their cultic regimen, to the point where God looks back on the days of the wilderness sojourn from Egypt in Ezek. 20:23-25 and says:

"Moreover I swore to them in the wilderness that I would scatter them among the nations and disperse them through the countries, because they had not executed my ordinances, but had rejected my statutes and profaned my sabbaths, and their eyes were set on their fathers' idols. Moreover I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not have life."

In fact, these burdensome regimens were given to the Jews immediately after their worshiping of the golden calf in Exodus 32. Prior to that incident (Exodus 1-31), Israel was given only a few laws to guide their lives, as Abraham had. God will not be mocked. If you want a religion of laws, God will give you a religion of laws. The laws won't bring you any closer to God. In fact, the laws will show you how far away from God you really are. God wants heartfelt faith and repentance, like that of Abraham, Joseph and Moses. They really loved God for who He is and accepted his vision for mankind.

¹⁰ "Indeed, if Abraham was justified on the basis of his works, he has reason to boast; but this was not so in the sight of God. For what does the scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.' A worker's wage is credited not as a gift, but as something due."

Klinghoffer tries to escape the impact of Ezek. 20:25 by siding with commentary from "Jewish sages" that the "bad laws [were] those imposed by harsh foreign rulers, like the Greeks and Romans..." (p. 127). But the Greeks and the Romans didn't exist as powers when Ezekiel wrote his words, in addition to the plain fact that the context of the passage (Ezek. 20:18-26) is speaking solely about the past, the wilderness sojourn after the Jews came out of Egypt. It was in the 15th century BC that they profaned the Sabbaths and sought for their fathers' idols, as the Pentateuch clearly explicates.

When Klinghoffer is posed with Israel's continual disobedience, he more or less ridicules the notion. In commenting on Pope Gregory's teaching on the Jews, Klinghoffer says:

"He saw the Jews not as simply ignorant of the salvation offered by Christ, but willfully, wickedly hostile to it. They knew Christ was the divine Messiah...It was out of some black, demonic depths in their souls that they refused to worship God's Son. What proof could there be for this? Well, did not their very own Hebrew Bible show how perverse the Jewish nation was? Again and again prophets from their midst railed against their rebellious spirit. The rejection of Jesus was just another in a long succession of Jewish acts of spite against God. For five hundred years, this hateful teaching worked under the surface of European culture" (p. 152).

Of course, Pope Gregory was merely echoing what Jesus said of the Jews in Matt. 23:37-38: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate."

The notion that the Jews are "already saved" because of the inauguration of the Sinai covenant is then enhanced by Klinghoffer's next assertion, namely, that little changed when Jesus came:

In the Hebrew Bible, the kind of salvation that received the most attention, and thus presumably mattered most to God, was not of the individual soul, but of the people altogether. So Isaiah had said, 'Your people will all be righteous; they will inherit the land forever.' [Is 60:21]. Hence the ultimate messianic redemption must take place on a world historical stage, visible to everyone" (p. 160).

That God was most interested in a corporate salvation is a half truth. God, of course, had always wanted all the people of Israel to be saved. It was why he took them all out of Egypt. But the reality is, very few Jews were willing to accept God's ways of attaining salvation, so God resorted to saving only the individuals who did accept it. That is why only two people out of the millions that left Egypt were allowed to enter the land of Canaan

(Deut. 1:35-39; Heb. 3-4). It is why in the time of Elijah only 7000, out of a nation of even more millions, did not bow the knee to Baal (1Kg. 19:18). It is why the Old Testament continually refers only to the "remnant" as the actual recipients of salvation in Israel, never the whole nation (Is. 10:22; 11:11; Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12; Zep. 3:13). As it stands, Isaiah 60:21 refers only to the land that Abraham and other faithful Jews will receive in the afterlife, for the Old Testament is clear that Abraham did not receive the fulfillment of those promises in this life (*cf.* Gen. 17:8; Heb. 11:39-40; Rom. 4:13).

The Reason for the Blindness

It then dawned on me why Klinghoffer is so reticent to tell the truth about both the sins of the Jews and the real reason the Old Covenant was taken from them. This is exactly what the Jews have been doing throughout their history – sinning against God and man and then blaming everyone else for the misfortunes that come upon them from those sins. From the complaint at Sinai (that Moses had abandoned them), to the claim today that the Jews still own and have the divine right to the land of Palestine and therefore are justified in forcibly relocating the Palestinians, Israel has done horrendous things throughout its history, and yet the Jews blame everyone else except themselves for this never-ending problem.

Israel is like a child prodigy, once doted upon by his father who, to his horrible dismay, finds that instead of the child using his gifts and privilege to grow up to be a shining example of the father's honor and good will, turns out to be a juvenile delinquent who believes he is better than everyone else and stubbornly refuses to get along with them; who, being weak, constantly schemes and cheats to get his way, causing both himself and his father to become odious to all. Yes, Klinghoffer is right in one sense. God so much wanted Israel to be his favorite son, a son he could proudly display to the world and who would lead all peoples to God (Is. 42:6). But Israel refused. Like Lucifer who fell in love with himself, Israel regarded its privileged status with God as an opportunity to abuse the peoples instead of bringing them to God. THAT was why the Old Covenant was taken away from them, for they abused it like they abused everything else God gave them. By the time of Christ, the last prophet God sent to them they killed, enough was enough. Even God Himself couldn't take it anymore. But poor David Klinghoffer can't see any of this. Instead of him saying "Why the Jews Rejected Jesus" he should be saying, in sackcloth and ashes, "Why Jesus Rejected the Jews."¹¹ For Klinghoffer the Jews are merely helpless victims, victims of either "self-hating Jews" (like Jesus and Paul) or Gentile oppressors (like the Romans, Christians, Muslims, Europeans, Arabs, etc.). In his view, the Jews have never done

¹¹ Klinghoffer does admit, however, that his book might more aptly be titled: "Why the Jews Who Rejected Jesus Did So" because "the Jews who knew of Jesus were not unanimous in rejecting him" (p. 90).

anything serious enough to deserve either the judgment of God or the wrath of the nations. And anyone who doesn't accept this presupposition or who even dares to accuse Israel of its faults, whether in the past or the present, is simply labeled an "anti-Semite," a reaction typical of a spoiled child that never grew up.

To make this "spoiled child" analogy more relevant in our day, I will quote a long passage from Jewish author Norman Finkelstein in his 2005 book titled, *Beyond Chutzpah: On the Misuse of Anti-Semitism and the Abuse of History* (University of California Press, 2005). If you are not familiar with Finkelstein's writings, he is a Jew who has basically had enough of the Jewish blame-game and the charade of victimization. Another of his books, *The Holocaust Industry* (Verso Pub. 2000) has now been translated into sixteen languages and even the *Jewish Quarterly* says: "Finkelstein has raised some important and uncomfortable issues...example cited...can be breathtaking in their angry accuracy and irony." Finkelstein has been on the warpath for several years now. So effective have his efforts been that Alan Dershowitz (who wrote, *The Case for Israel*, 2003)¹² put severe pressure on DePaul University (a Catholic institution) to deny Finkelstein tenure, and was successful. Finkelstein has been returning the favor ever since by exposing Dershowitz's dirty laundry. Finkelstein writes:

...if Israeli policies, and widespread Jewish support for them, evoke hostility toward Jews, it means that Israel and its Jewish supporters themselves might be causing anti-Semitism; and it might be doing so because Israel and its Jewish supporters are in the wrong. Holocaust industry dogma *a priori* rejects this hypothesis: animus towards Jews can never spring from wrongs committed by Jews. The argument goes like this: the Final Solution was irrational; the Final Solution marked the culmination of a millennial Gentile anti-Semitism; ergo, each

¹² Finkelstein says that *The Case for Israel* "grossly distorts the documentary record"... "and in Dershowitz's case this description applies only on those rare occasions when he adduces any evidence at all...Dershowitz is citing absurd sources or stitching claims out of whole cloth. Leaning on his academic pedigree to wow readers and in lieu of supporting evidence, he typically clinches an argument with rhetorical flourishes like 'This is a simple fact not subject to reasonable dispute' (p. 7)...almost invariably signaling that the assertion in question is sheer rubbish. Regarding his lecture tour...Dershowitz reports, 'Whenever I make a speech, the most common phrase I hear from students afterward is, 'We didn't know.'" One reason perhaps is that much of what he claims never happened" *Beyond Chutzpah*, pp. 90-91). On page 87, Finkelstein opens the chapter on Dershowitz with a quote from the famous attorney's book, *The Best Defense*: "Almost all criminal defendants—including most of my clients—are factually guilty of the crimes they have been charged with. The criminal lawyer's job, for the most part, is to represent the guilty, and—if possible—to get them off." Finkelstein's goal in *Beyond Chutzpah* is to show that the "criminal defendant" in this case is Israel, and demonstrates in instance after instance how Dershowitz consistently fabricates and distorts the evidence to defend this "guilty" client.

and every manifestation of anti-Semitism is irrational. Since anti-Semitism is synonymous with animus toward Jews, any and all animus directed toward Jews, individually or collectively, must be irrational. "Anti-Semitism...resembles a disease in being fundamentally irrational," Foxman typically asserts. "Those who hate Jews do so not because of factual evidence but in spite of it." Thus, according to Schoenfeld, Palestinians become suicide bombers not because of what Israel has concretely done but because it has been turned into a "diabolical abstraction." For Rosenbaum, anti-Semitism is an irrational, inexplicable, and ineluctable Gentile affliction: "The explanation of renewed anti-Semitism is anti-Semitism: its ineradicable pre-existing history – and its efficacy. It has become its own origin." Unsurprisingly, when billionaire financier George Soros, who is Jewish, suggested otherwise, telling a gathering of Jewish notables that the "resurgence of anti-Semitism in Europe" was largely due to Sharon's policies and the behavior of Jews, he incurred the audience's wrath. Committing the same sin, former Israeli Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg observed, "The unfavorable attitude toward Israel that exists today in the international community stems in part from the policy of the government of Israel." "Let's understand things clearly," Elan Steinberg of the World Jewish Congress retorted after Soros's speech: "Anti-Semitism is not caused by Jews; it's caused by anti-Semites." Foxman called Soros's remarks "absolutely obscene." If it's "obscene" for a Jew to say that Jews might be causing anti-Semitism, for a non-Jew to say it is – surprise, surprise – anti-Semitic. Manifestations [of the Pew Research Center] deplores a Dutch newspaper article entitled "Israel abuses the anti-Semitism taboo" because "the author used the classical anti-Semitic stereotype that the Jews themselves are to blame for anti-Semitism," as well as a letter to an Austrian newspaper because it "accused the Israelis of being themselves responsible for the emerging anti-Semitism."

Finkelstein continues:

[This] Gentile pathology...to quote Holocaust industry guru Daniel Goldhagen – is "divorced from actual Jews," "fundamentally not a response to any objective evaluation of Jewish action," and "independent of the Jews' nature and actions" (his emphasis)...Holocaust industry dogma maintains that "anti-Semitism" springs from Gentile envy of the Jewish aristocracy: they hate us because we're so much better. "The new anti-Semitism transcends boundaries, nationalities, politics and social systems," Mortimer Zuckerman explains. "Israel has become the object of envy and resentment in much the same way that the individual Jew was once the object of envy and resentment." It won't escape notice that Holocaust industry dogma bears striking resemblance to the politically correct interpretation of the U.S. "war against terrorism." The Arabs hate us either because they're irrational

fanatics or because they envy our way of life: it can't possibly be because we might have done something wrong – that's called apologetics for "Islamofascism." To supply the "cause of the attacks on America," Jeffrey Goldberg of *The New Yorker* digs up an Egyptian intellectual to say: "These are people who are envious...Talent gives rise to jealousy in the hearts of the untalented." The reciprocal "natural" sympathy that Israel and the United States have exchanged since September 11 – "Now they know how we feel" (Israel) and "Now we know how they feel" (United States) – is anchored in this chauvinistic and exculpatory ideology. Here are the anguished sighs of mutual recognition by those who imagine themselves to be not just innocent but too good for their own good... "Jews are not to blame for anti-Semitism," Dershowitz, echoing Sartre, asserts. "Anti-Semitism is the problem of the bigots....Nothing we do can profoundly affect the twisted mind of the anti-Semite" (his emphasis). In sum, Jews can never be culpable for the antipathy others bear towards them: it's always of their making not ours" (*Beyond Chutzpah*, pp. 78-81).

And how does Finkelstein propose to rid the world of true anti-Semitism? Listen to these sober words from a Jew who isn't afraid to call a spade a spade:

"Tell the truth, fight for justice: this is the time-tested strategy for fighting anti-Semitism, as well as other forms of bigotry. If, as all the important studies agree, current resentment against Jews has coincided with Israel's brutal repression of the Palestinians, then a patent remedy and quick solution would plainly be to end the occupation. A full Israeli withdrawal from the territories conquered in 1967 would also deprive those real anti-Semites exploiting Israel's repression as a pretext to demonize Jews....On the other side, the worse enemies in the struggle against real anti-Semitism are the philo-Semites. This problem typically arises on the European scene. By turning a blind eye to Israeli crimes in the name of sensitivity to past Jewish suffering, they enable Israel to continue on a murderous path that foments anti-Semitism and, for that matter, the self-destruction of Israelis. The philo-Semitic application of this special dispensation to American Jewish elites has proven equally catastrophic. As already noted, Jewish elites in the United States have enjoyed enormous prosperity. From this combination of economic and political power has sprung, unsurprisingly, a mindset of Jewish superiority. Wrapping themselves in the mantle of *The Holocaust*, these Jewish elites pretend—and, in their own solipsistic universe, perhaps even imagine themselves—to be victims, dismissing any and all criticisms as manifestations of "anti-Semitism." And, from this lethal brew of formidable power, chauvinistic arrogance, feigned (or imagined) victimhood, and Holocaust-immunity to criticism has sprung a terrifying recklessness and ruthlessness on the part of American Jewish elites. Alongside Israel, they are the

main fomenters of anti-Semitism in the world today. Coddling them is not the answer. They need to be stopped" (p. 85).

Without a doubt, Finkelstein's is one of the best books on the market to understand the Jewish mindset, both good and bad. The amount of research he had to do to put this book together is astounding. I'm going to give one more quote from it to make my point about Klinghoffer, who seems to be cut from the same mold as Foxman, Goldhagen, Zuckerman, Shoenfeld and Dershowitz. The only difference is that Klinghoffer has concentrated on the theological/biblical side of the debate as opposed to the political side. To be sure, Finkelstein also gives us an army of more reasonable and less prideful Jews, like Soros and Burg, who are not afraid to tell it like it is. Another such figure is Roman Bronfman, a member of Israel's Meretz party, who candidly reveals what are the real roots of the new anti-semitism:

How can this hatred toward us be explained, particularly in the developed European states? And why is it being expressed specifically now, and with such intensity?...After all, anti-Semitism has always been the Jews' trump card because it is easy to quote some crazy figure from history and seek cover. This time, too, the anti-Semitism card has been pulled from the sleeve of explanations by the Israeli government and its most faithful spokespeople have been sent to wave it. But the time has come for the Israeli public to wake up from the fairy tale being told by its elected government. The rhetoric of the perpetual victim is not a sufficient answer for the question of the timing. Why all of a sudden have all the anti-Semites, or haters of Israel, raised their heads and begun chanting hate slogans? Enough of our whining, "The whole world is against us."... The time has come to look at the facts and admit the simple but bitter truth – Israel has lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the world and we are guilty for what has happened...If anti-Semitism was until now found exclusively in the extreme political fringes, Israel's continued policy of the cruel occupation will only encourage and fan the spread of anti-Semitic sentiments.¹³

From the theological side, E. Michael Jones says much the same: "Instead of admitting that there is something wrong with being Jewish because the Jewish rejection of Logos disposes Jews to act in a way that antagonizes everyone they come in contact with, the Jews fall back on outdated theories of racism as a way of exculpating bad behavior. 'It is because of what we are, not of what we do,' a slogan recently appropriated by President Bush, has become the mantra that excuses bad behavior and hides from Jews the core of their essentially negative identity and why they have faced antagonism among every group they

¹³ "Fanning the flames of hatred," *Haaretz*, 19 November 2003, *Beyond Chutzpah*, p. 79.

have lived with throughout history.”¹⁴ In an ironic sort of way, Klinghoffer's book more or less confirms Jones', Meretz's, Jesus', Paul's and Stephen's assessment of many Jews today – stiffnecked and blinded to their own evils, yet always seeking to elevate themselves and their heritage as superior to everyone else. Israel Shamir, a Jew who recently converted to Christianity, says it simply boils down to this: “Christianity is the denial of Jewish superiority.”¹⁵ This is what holds the Jew back. It's not about “the 613 commandments,” *per se*, for the Jews never obeyed them. It's about what the Mosaic covenant represents to Klinghoffer – the primacy of the Jewish people over the rest of the world. That is simply too hard to give up, whether one is a devout orthodox Jew or a secular Neo-con Zionist. Christianity says “there is neither Jew nor Greek, for all are one in Christ Jesus.” Judaism says, “there is either Jew or Greek, and we can never be one, especially in Christ Jesus.”

Klinghoffer's Challenges from the Hebrew Bible

In the rest of my review I will answer some of the specific theological and biblical claims Klinghoffer makes against Jesus, Paul, and Christianity at large. I cannot answer all of them in this article because it would end up being as long as Klinghoffer's book. Perhaps someday I will devote a whole book to it. For now I will answer the more pertinent challenges just to give you an example of how Klinghoffer goes off the track and how you can best defend the Christian faith against these sorts of challenges. Dare would I want some Christian to read his book and believe that Klinghoffer has, as *National Review* put it, “a cogent intellectual explanation for why Jews reject Jesus.” There is little cogent about it. Klinghoffer's “explanations” are specious at best.

The Virgin Birth

In his dealing with many of the proof texts Christians use from Old Testament prophecy to back up the fulfillments that occur in the New Testament, Klinghoffer chalks them up to “the earliest Christians [who] searched the Hebrew prophets and found some saying of Isaiah that could be put to use, retrospectively salvaging Jesus's aborted career as messiah” (p. 79); and proud of his attempts to debunk them, concludes with some bravado: “Pointing out the imprecision of proof texts like these, one feels almost unsporting. It's too

¹⁴ *Culture Wars*, Nov. 2008, p. 23.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

easy....As the song says, 'Is that all there is?'" (p. 66). As we will see shortly, however, the "imprecision" comes from Klinghoffer.

First, I will deal with an argument Klinghoffer continually falls back on in his book (pp. 65, 167, 203, 212) as an example of shoddy Christian exegesis of the Old Testament, namely, his claim that Mary was not a virgin, and therefore Jesus could not be the Messiah stated in Isaiah 7:14. On p. 65, Klinghoffer says:

"But then what to do with Matthew's first explicit citation from a Hebrew prophet, Isaiah, with its doctrine of the virgin birth? This is a famous mistranslation: 'Behold, a virgin (Greek: *parthenos*) shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel'....The writer was working from his text of the Greek scriptures, the Septuagint. However, the Hebrew original calls the lady in question not a 'virgin,' but merely a 'young woman' (*almah*), who –as the word is used in Hebrew scripture—could be married or single, sexually experience or not. In Isaiah's words, there is no intimation of a virgin birth."

Although Klinghoffer does not mention it, a further claim of Jewish apologists is that if Isaiah 7:14 had a virgin in mind Isaiah would have used the Hebrew word *bethulah* (בתולה), a more specific Hebrew term for a virgin. That fact notwithstanding, what Klinghoffer misses is: (a) as *almah* (עלמה) is used seven times in the Hebrew bible (Gen. 24:43; Ex. 2:8; Ps. 68:25; Pr. 30:19; Song. 1:3; 6:8; Is. 7:14), in no passage does the context refer to a woman who is married or has had sexual relations, hence, the word could easily be used of Mary; and (b) many of the seven passages specifically indicate that *almah* refers to an unmarried woman who has had no sexual relations. For example, in Gen. 24:43, *almah* is used of Rebecca before she is married to Isaac. Yet in the same context (Gen. 24:16), Rebecca is also referred to as a *bethulah* ("An exceedingly beautiful maid, a virgin, and not known to man"). The interchange of *almah* and *bethulah* shows that the former was also understood as a virgin. Additionally, Rebecca is also called a *naarah* (נערה) ("maid") in the same passage, which is used elsewhere to designate a virgin (e.g., Deut. 22:15-29 in which the husband suspects his wife was not a virgin prior to marriage). Not surprisingly, *naarah* and *bethulah* are also interchanged (Deut. 22:23, 28; Judg. 21:12; 1Kg. 1:2; Sir. 2:3). Hence, Klinghoffer's argument is totally destroyed. The irony is noted in Klinghoffer's boastful anecdote about the Jewish woman who had converted to Christianity but was later told by Scott Hillman, director of Jews for Judaism, that the Hebrew of Isaiah 7:14 did not refer to a virgin, to which the woman was "taken aback and exclaimed, 'Mah pitom!' (what gives!)" (p. 203). "What gives" is that for centuries Jews have either been misreading their own Hebrew bible or deliberately fabricating the evidence against the Blessed Virgin Mary.

The above information isn't hard to find. All it takes are a few cross-checks of the Hebrew words. For more information, see the accompanying footnote.¹⁶

Jesus' Genealogy

In another place Klinghoffer tries to discredit the genealogy of Jesus by an argument from Nachmanides, which claims: "On what basis was Jesus to be identified with the final and greatest king from the line of Judah – that is, the Messiah? In the Gospel account, the man's claim to descent from Judah was through his mother's husband, Joseph. If he wasn't Joseph's son, he cannot be the Messiah. If he was Joseph's son, he cannot be the son of God: 'Understand, then, that they are refuted by their own words,' by 'the book of their error' – namely, the New Testament" (p. 164). This, of course, begs the question: where does the Old Testament state that the Messiah's line must necessarily come from the father and not the mother? The answer is, nowhere. Num. 27:3-8; 36:2-3 allow for both tribal identify and inheritance to go through a woman in the case when there is no male descendant.¹⁷ Hence,

¹⁶ The usage of *almah* in Pro. 30:19 also refers to a virgin. In this passage, "the way of a man with a maid (*almah*)," who is assumed to be a virgin since she is unmarried, is contrasted in the next verse, Pro. 30:20, with an "adulterous woman (*isha*)" who is understood as married but having sexual relations with other men. The usage of *almah* in Song. 1:3 leads to the same conclusion, since in the context the maidens are attracted to the loving man of Solomon's Song, implying they are refraining from sexual relations with him so that the loving man can be intimate with his one and only lover. The above passages also show that *almah* refers to more than identifying a girl or young woman. *Almah* has procreative overtones, referring in the main to a young woman who has the potential of engaging in sexual relations but who has refrained for one reason or another. This connotation, of course, would also fit the Blessed Virgin Mary who, tradition holds, took a vow of celibacy. The above analysis is confirmed by the fact that the LXX translates the Hebrew *almah* with the Greek *parthenos* (παρθένος) ("virgin") in both Gen. 24:43 and Is. 7:14, showing that the Alexandrian Jews understood the latter term to be identical with the former. Moreover, the LXX rendering includes the Greek article ἡ in the phrase ἡ παρθένος as does Matthew, following the article הַ in the Hebrew of Is. 7:14 הַעַלְמָה (ha-almah). Hence, the "sign" is not merely "a virgin," that is, she is not any young woman who shall conceive by normal means, but "the virgin." The stature engendered by the article coincides with the testimony of the greatness of her offspring (cf. Mic. 5:3; Is. 8:8; 9:5-6; 11:1-10).

¹⁷ Num. 27:3-8: "Our father died in the desert. Although he did not join those who banded together against the LORD (in Korah's band), he died for his own sin without leaving any sons. But why should our father's name be withdrawn from his clan merely because he had no son? Let us, therefore, have property among our father's kinsmen.' When Moses laid their case before the Lord, the Lord said to him, "The plea of Zelophehad's daughters is just; you shall give them hereditary property among their father's kinsmen, letting their father's heritage pass on to them. Therefore, tell the Israelites: If a man dies without leaving a son, you shall let his heritage pass on to his daughter"; Num 36:2-4: "The Lord commanded you, my lord, to apportion the land by lot among the Israelites; and you, my lord, were also

the Jews are refuted by their own words, the book of their truth, namely, the Old Testament. Similar objections have been raised by other Jews, namely, that the Messiah must come through Solomon's line, not Nathan's (the line leading to Mary). But in no place does the Old Testament say that it must be through Solomon.

Out of Egypt

Klinghoffer also belittles Matthew's attempt [Matt. 2:15] to make Jesus' departure from Egypt (after he had been sent there because of Herod's attempt to kill him) as a fulfillment of Hosea 11:1: "Out of Egypt I have called my son." He writes: "the 'son' was not Jesus or the Messiah, but Israel, as the rest of the verse from the prophet makes clear: 'When Israel was a lad I loved him, and from Egypt I called forth my son' – a reference to the Exodus" (p. 66). Was Matthew oblivious to the fact that Hosea 11:1 referred to Israel, or is Klinghoffer oblivious to the fact that Old Testament prophecy often has a dual fulfillment? I can assure you that the latter is the case. We already have a case of dual fulfillment in Isaiah 7:14 wherein the prophecy can apply both to the birth of Mahershalalhashbaz (Is. 8:2, 8) and the birth of Christ from the virgin Mary (Matt. 1:23). The dual method of fulfillment was already taught to the Jews in Genesis. For example, in Gen. 17:8, Abraham received a grand promise from God: "And I will give to YOU, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." Notice that the passage includes both Abraham and his descendants as recipients of the land of Canaan, but Abraham never stepped foot in the land of Canaan. According to the rest of Scripture, Abraham won't receive the promise of land until he is raised from the dead in the heavenly Canaan (*cf.* Heb. 11:13-16, 39-40; Rom. 4:13; Is. 65:17-25). But Scripture also assures us that Abraham's descendants had, as God promised, received the earthly land of Canaan (*cf.* Jos. 21:43-45; 1Kings 8:56; Neh. 9:7-8). Thus, the prophecy of Gen. 17:8 is fulfilled in two different ways, just as Hosea 11:1, Isaiah 7:14, many other Old Testament passages.¹⁸

commanded by the Lord to give the heritage of our kinsman Zelophehad to his daughters. But if they marry into one of the other Israelite tribes, their heritage will be withdrawn from our ancestral heritage and will be added to that of the tribe into which they marry; thus the heritage that fell to us by lot will be diminished."

¹⁸ Many Fathers and medieval theologians understood Scripture to be teaching multiple senses and fulfillments of the same literal text. The more prominent advocates of this hermeneutic are: Basil, Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine and Gregory the Great. Augustine has a lengthy discussion supporting its use in *Confessions*, Bk 12, Chs. 22, 30, 31 and *On Christian Doctrine*, Bk 3, Ch 27. Medieval theologians such as Bernard, Cano, Bañez, Molina, Cajetan, Lapide, *et al*, advanced the same hermeneutic. Aquinas gives a full treatment supporting it in the *Summa Theologica* (Bk 1, Q. 1, A. 10) and *De Potentia* (4:1). A preponderance of Klinghoffer's objections to the New Testament fulfilling Old Testament prophecy centers around his failure to recognize the existence of dual fulfillments (*e.g.*, his

The Nazarene

Klinghoffer also objects to how Matthew speaks of Jesus as fulfilling the prophecy of being a "Nazarene" [Matt. 2:23]. He writes:

"Matthew then offers another apparent citation of Isaiah. The Gospel says, 'And Jesus went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene.'" The prophets say no such thing. Perhaps, as scholars suggest, Matthew had in mind Isaiah's reference to the Messiah [in Is 11:1 in which] the Hebrew for 'shoot,' *netzer*, sounds kind of like 'Nazareth.' If so... 'A staff will emerge from Jesse and Nazareth will spout [sic] from his roots,' which makes no sense" (p. 66).

The problem here is that Klinghoffer has not paid close attention to what Matthew actually says. Matthew does not attribute the saying to Isaiah. In fact, he uses the plural "prophets" indicating that it was more than one prophet who said it (*cf.* John 1:45, Mark 14:67; Acts 24:5). Second, Matthew does not claim that the saying was *written* but that it was "spoken." Apparently, Matthew is following a traditional saying among the prophets at large. Klinghoffer shouldn't be surprised at this, since even the Palestinian Talmud refers to Jesus as Yeshu Hannotzri (*i.e.*, Jesus the Nazarene), a fact Klinghoffer himself admits on page 73.

The Donkey and the Colt

Klinghoffer makes quite a big deal over the fact that Matthew says Jesus came riding into Jerusalem "mounted on an ass, and on a colt, the foal of an ass." He claims that

"The proof text is confused on two counts. First in what's presented as a saying of 'the prophet,' there are actually the sayings of two prophets. 'Tell the daughter of Zion' is a phrase from Isaiah; the rest is from Zechariah. Second, in Hebrew, Zechariah speaks not of two animals, but one, 'a donkey, a foal, a calf of she-donkeys.' The colt thrown in there by the Gospel is extraneous" (p. 78).

First, there is no "confusion," since Matthew often takes the liberty of paraphrasing or conflating texts in order to make a theological point, while mentioning only the prophet that has the most relevance to the issue at hand (*e.g.*, Matt. 27:9). The reason for the substitution of Is. 62:11 at the beginning of the Zechariah quote is that Israel must be told that the king is coming before she can rejoice, for, according to the passage, Jesus is "telling"

claim on pp. 79-80 that Isaiah 6:9-13 only applies to Israel before 721 BC and thus cannot be used by Jesus in Matt. 13:14-15).

the Gospel "to the ends of the earth" (Is. 61:11a). Matthew also wants to make use of the term "Zion" instead of Zechariah's "Jerusalem," since the former represented the highest point in Jerusalem, above the Jerusalem temple. By his substitutions, Matthew is telling us that a change is coming. The Old is being superseded by the New. This change is also represented by the ass and the colt, the former representing the Old Covenant, while the latter, upon which "no one ever sat," represents the New Covenant. Practically speaking, Jesus rode only upon the colt (which is why Mark and Luke mention only the colt), but the colt would not have come without its mother, the full grown ass. Hence, Klinghoffer's claim that the "colt thrown in there by the Gospel is extraneous....the Hebrew doesn't speak of two animals" is grammatically erroneous.¹⁹

The Atonement

As noted earlier, there is a constant drumbeat in Klinghoffer's book that the Jews don't need Jesus as a savior, much less a savior who was a man. In one instance he writes:

"The purpose of the Incarnation, specifically of death suffered on the cross, was to address the primordial sinful nature of man. Adam and Eve had sinned against the Lord—an infinite crime. This required an atonement of sacrifice of infinite scale, the sacrifice of God's own Son. But the Jews asked how the Crucifixion met this requirement. Only the sacrifice of a God can be called infinite—but a God cannot die. If the sacrifice was not of a God, but of a man or a God-man, then it was not infinite. Thus, the alleged purpose of the terrible event was not met" (p. 176).

The problem here is with Klinghoffer's casual use of the word "infinite" (*e.g.*, "infinite crime," "infinite scale," "infinite sacrifice"). He is using the term in a quantitative and impersonal sense, as if it's part of a mathematical equation. But Scripture does not refer to Christ's atonement as an "infinite" sacrifice. Even Catholics sometimes get confused by this notion.²⁰ When various Catholic theologians use the term "infinite," it is for the sole purpose of giving a word picture of the incalculable separation between God's majesty and man's frailty. But in regards to what was actually necessary to atone for sin, a sacrifice that is "most fitting" or "most perfect" is more theologically accurate (Heb. 9:11-13; 10:1-8).

¹⁹ The Hebrew puts a *waw*-disjunctive (ו) between the two nouns "ass" (חמור) and "colt" (עיר), in addition to giving each noun the preposition "on" (על). There would be no better way to distinguish between the mother ass and her male colt in Hebrew.

²⁰ Some say, for example, that anything Christ would have offered in the way of sacrifice would have been sufficient, since, as the saying goes, "just one drop of blood would have had infinite value." This is a fallacious concept, for one drop of blood would not have resulted in the death of Christ. It was the death of Christ alone that was needed for the atonement, and nothing less would have been satisfactory, a condition predetermined by God himself in Scripture.

That is, whatever type of sacrifice God had previously determined would be sufficient to satisfy his justice and honor, so it was; nothing less, nothing more.²¹ Christ, for example, didn't have to spend an "eternity in hell to pay for the sins of an elect," as the Calvinists teach. Christ didn't need to become "sin itself" as the Baptists teach. Christ wasn't "vicariously punished for our sins" as the Lutherans teach. Rather, Christ was a sinless propitiation in order to appease the Father's wrath so that the Father would provide an open door for men, of their own free will, to accept His grace and be saved. As it stands, Scripture says that the only thing required was the suffering and death of Christ.²² Whether one thinks of it as finite or infinite makes little difference. It was sufficient to appease the wrath of God. But contrary to Klinghoffer's objection, the divine nature of Christ did not die. Christ is two separate natures and two separate wills, with no confusion or mixture. Hence, what happens to one nature does not necessarily happen to the other. The sinless human nature of Christ died, and in this way satisfied the need for an unblemished human victim to make the atonement for mankind.

In a related objection, Klinghoffer says:

"...there was no need to atone for the great sin by God's offering up the incarnate second person of the Trinity. God can forgive any crime, finite or infinite, if He wishes, but Christians made it sound as if He were bound by some law beyond

²¹ The **Catholic Encyclopedia**: "...Redemption has reference to both God and man. On God's part, it is the acceptance of satisfactory amends whereby the Divine honor is repaired and the Divine wrath appeased.... "Satisfaction, or the payment of a debt in full, means, in the moral order, an acceptable reparation of honor offered to the person offended and, of course, implies a penal and painful work" (1911 edition, vol. 12, p. 678). **Augustine**: "But what is meant by 'justified in His blood'?...Was it indeed so, that when God the Father was wroth with us, He saw the death of His Son for us, and was appeased towards us? Was then His Son already so far appeased towards us, that He even deigned to die for us; while the Father was still so far wroth, that except His Son died for us, He would not be appeased?" (*On the Trinity*, Book XIII, Ch. 11). **Thomas Aquinas**: "This is properly the effect of a sacrifice, that through it God is appeased, as even man is ready to forgive an injury done unto him by accepting a gift which is offered to him...And so in the same way, what Christ suffered was so great a good that, on account of that good found in human nature, God has been appeased over all the offenses of mankind" (*Summa Theo.* III, Q. 49, Art. 4; See also ST 1a, 2ae, 87, 1-6; 3, 48, 2; *De Veritate*, 28, 2). The **Catechism of Trent**: "...our heavenly Father, oftentimes grievously offended by our crimes, might be turned away from wrath to mercy" (CCT, p. 255). **Ludwig Ott**: "By atonement in general is understood the satisfaction of a demand. In the narrower sense it is taken to mean the reparation of an insult: satisfactio nihil aliud est quam injuriae alteri illatae compensatio (*Roman Catechism*, II, 5, 59). This occurs through a voluntary performance which outweighs the injustice done...Thus Christ's atonement was, through its intrinsic value, sufficient to counterbalance the infinite insult offered to God, which is inherent in sin" (pp. 186, 188). See my book, *Not By Bread Alone*, pp. 19-62 for more detailed information.

²² Matt. 16:21; Rom. 3:25; 4:25; 5:10; Phil. 2:8; Col. 1:22; Heb. 2:9, 14.

Himself, as if He could not forgive mankind without letting his Son die on the cross. Of course there is no law beyond God" (p. 176).

Despite what Klinghoffer heard from Christians that made him think that "it sounded as if He were bound by some law beyond Himself," the sound was only in Klinghoffer's head, since Christianity never taught such a thing. God wanted an Atonement because of the nature of God, a personal and honorable Being who is insulted and offended by our sin, but who, although willing to forgive, will not do so unless his honor is upheld and the insult appeased, hence the need for an Atonement. Klinghoffer would have known this just by reading a few passages of the Hebrew Bible. In Numbers 25, for example, Israel had sinned grievously by engaging in temple prostitution with the Moabites. In the midst of this sin, Phineas took a spear and killed one of the fornicating couples. God's assessment of Phineas' act was as follows. Notice the stress on appeasing God's wrath and preserving his honor:

"Phineas son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, the priest, has turned my anger away from the Israelites; for he was as zealous as I am for my honor among them, so that in my zeal I did not put an end to them. Therefore tell him I am making my covenant of peace with him. He and his descendants will have a covenant of a lasting priesthood, because he was zealous for the honor of his God and made atonement for the Israelites" (Num. 25:11-13).

There are many narratives like this in the Old Testament. One of the first appears in the incident we discussed earlier, Exodus 32, when the Israelites had worshiped the golden calf. As we noted, God had determined to destroy the whole nation, until Moses stepped in to intercede for them (Ex. 32:9-14). How was Moses able to intercede? Did he need an "infinite" sacrifice? No, he needed one that was sufficient enough to appease God's wrath, and he could only perform it if he himself was cleansed from sin. Of the two requirements, it was said that Moses was on such good terms with God that they would talk "face to face" (Ex. 33:9-11); and as for appeasing God's wrath, Moses gives us his own description of what he had to do:

"Then once again I fell prostrate before the Lord for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the Lord's sight and so provoking him to anger. I feared the anger and wrath of the Lord, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again the Lord listened to me. And the Lord was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too" (Deut. 9:18-20).

Psalm 22

Klinghoffer writes:

On Psalm 22:16, 'they pierced my hands and my feet (King James Version), Christians here found a famous example of an explicit prefiguration of Jesus's sufferings....*Nitzachon Vetus* answered that the word given in the Latin translation as 'they pierced' is written in the Hebrew original not as *karu* ('they pierced'), but as *ka'ari* ("like a lion"). The entire verse is properly translated, 'For dogs have surrounded me; a pack of evildoers has enclosed me, like a lion [at] my hands and my feet.' We could cite many other examples of allegedly Christological prophetic citations, to each of which the rabbis had their answer. On point after point, Christian exegesis was found to be dubious to anyone who could read the Bible for himself in its original language" (pp. 168-169).

First, this objection seems more like a red herring, since just two verses later, Ps. 22:18, the famous line, "They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots" was fulfilled verbatim at the Cross (*cf.* Matt. 27:35; Luke 23:34; John 19:24), but Klinghoffer has nothing to say about it. Second, the proper text of Ps. 22:16 is much more difficult to discern than Klinghoffer is making it to be. We don't know whether the Hebrew is always the more accurate text, since our only extant copies come from the Masoretes of the 10th century AD, whereas the Greek Septuagint (LXX) was written mostly in the 3rd and 2nd century BC and copies still survive today. Accordingly, the LXX text of Ps. 22:16 reads: ὠρυξαν χεῖράς μου καὶ πόδας ("they pierced my hands and my feet"). Where would the LXX have derived this reading, since the Latin version that Klinghoffer cites did not yet exist until the 5th century AD under Jerome? It is probably no coincidence, then, that the Hebrew word כרה (*kara*) means the same as the Greek ὠρυξαν ("pierce" or "dig"). Klinghoffer doesn't know whether *kara* is the true text or not, since the various Hebrew manuscripts themselves are not clear on Ps. 22:16. There are three variants: כארי (*ka'ari*), כארו (*ka'aru*), and כרו (*karu*), which is similar to כרה (*kara*).²³ The first, כארי (*ka'ari*), is the one Klinghoffer chooses as the correct word, but he has no certainty of this assertion.

But let's assume, for the sake of argument, he is right. What we have, then, is the word ארי ("lion") with the prefix כ, which means "like," so the phrase would read "like a lion," and it appears in three other places in the Hebrew (Num. 24:9; Is. 38:13; Ezk 22:25). The problem arrives when one has to make sense out of "like a lion" with "my hands and

²³ *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, R. Kittel, 1977, p. 1104.

my feet" in Ps. 22:16. Klinghoffer does so by inserting the preposition "at" between the two phrases, but it's not in the Hebrew. Consequently, we have at least three possibilities for why "pierced" was used in most translations: (a) the word "like" in "like a lion" implies that as lions bite through human flesh, so the soldiers put nails in Jesus' hands and feet, or (b) the form כָּאֵרִי ("like a lion") is corrupt and should be כָּרְהָ ("pierced"), or (c) the LXX's ὠρυξάν ("pierced") is the oldest and correct version and we must ignore all the Hebrew variants. All of this information would have helped the reader to see that deciding upon the correct word for Ps. 22:16 is a difficult task, at least before Klinghoffer concluded with: "On point after point, Christian exegesis was found to be dubious to anyone who could read the Bible for himself in its original language" (p. 169).

Jesus Didn't Do Anything

One of Klinghoffer's more common complaints is that Jesus and his Gospel never really fulfilled many passages in the Old Testament, such as Jer. 31:34 ("They shall teach no more every man his neighbor...saying, 'Know the Lord, for they shall all know me"), or Is. 52:13 ("Behold, my servant will succeed; he will be exalted and become high and exceedingly lofty"); or Micah 5:1 ("but from you someone will emerge for Me to be ruler over Israel") or Is. 11:6-9 ("And the wolf shall lie down with the lamb...they will not destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord") (pp. 160-162). Let's address a few of these passages and show how they were fulfilled:

Jeremiah 31:34 ("They shall teach no more every man his neighbor") is quoted in Hebrews 8:7-13 as being fulfilled in the New Testament period and there is good reason for this. The revelation given by Moses and the prophets was both incomplete and disseminated in primitive ways. A prophet, for example, would preach in the temple to a few scores of people and these hearers would go out and tell others, and so on to the rest of the nation, a very laborious and time-consuming task. As noted earlier, even the written law was hid from most Jews until the late seventh century (2Chr. 34:14), and the surrounding nations had practically nothing of God's revelation. But all this changed with the advent of Christ. Beginning at Pentecost, the revelation spread far and wide, first to Jerusalem and then to the "uttermost parts of the world" (Acts 1:8; Matt. 28:19-20; Col. 1:6). The final canon of Scripture was adopted by the Church and thus the peoples were no longer dependent on the oral word from the prophet. Everyone had access to this revelation, from children (Jer. 31:34's "the least of them") to theologians and clerics ("the greatest of them"). The same thing was prophesied in Is. 11:9; 54:13; Hab. 2:14; Joel 2:28, and it is the very reason Jesus said in John 6:45: "It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught of God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from my Father, comes to Me" (cf. 1John 2:20, 27). Today, who has not heard of Jesus Christ, save for some remote tribe of pygmies in Africa? Even an oppressive regime has to work very hard to keep

Christianity out. The Bible is the best-selling book year after year; there are churches on every street corner in some countries. If these things are not a fulfillment of Jer. 31:34, what else could be? Wasn't it Klinghoffer himself who said that the acceptance of Christ by the nations was "the turning point in Western history"?

The best Klinghoffer can do with Jeremiah 31's new covenant is to say it "is simply the ancient system of commandments, changed only by the fact that the Jewish people bring to it a renewed commitment," and then quotes Jer. 31:35 as proof: "If these laws could be removed from before me...so could the seed of Israel cease from being a people before me forever" (p. 127). The first problem is that the context is not talking about the Mosaic law but the physical laws that govern the circuits of the stars in the heavens (Jer. 31:35-37). Second, practically the whole book of Jeremiah shows that Israel did not keep the covenant, much less renew it (Jer. 11:2-10; 22:9-12; 34:10-18). It is in the midst of Jeremiah's tirades that the Jews are carted off to Babylon. Although the law was reestablished under Ezra and Nehemiah, this is not called a "new covenant" in their respective books, but the same "law of Moses" (Ezr. 3:2). The phrase "new covenant" only appears in Jeremiah 31 and it is contrasted against the Mosaic law (Jer. 31:32), not a renewed Mosaic law. Klinghoffer also complains: "if this was really the new 'Torah of Jesus' being referred to, why does the prophet not mention the other nations who supposedly will also have Jesus's law of love inscribed within them?" (p. 168). But Jeremiah *does* mention the nations. He says in Jer. 31:7-14 that the nations are included in the redemption and are God's mouthpiece to declare that Israel will be gathered and Jacob ransomed. It is the same thing about the nations that Isaiah and Hosea taught (Is 11:12; 49:6; Hos. 1:10-11). Moreover, the "Israel" that is saved by the New Covenant is not, as Klinghoffer believes, the *nation* of Israel, but the remnant of believers who come out of the nation of Israel, as Isaiah and Jeremiah made plain (*cf.* Is 10:20-22; 46:3; Jer. 23:3; 31:7; Rom 11:5-10). So intertwined are the houses of Israel and Judah with the nations in God's redemption that Amos 9:11-12 prophecies that the restoration of "David's tabernacle" will include "Edom and all the nations." Even Klinghoffer himself says at one point: "There is even a certain sense in which such nations...are to be considered under the designation of 'Israel'" (p. 181).

Whereas Klinghoffer complains that Christ didn't fulfill Isaiah 52:13 because "the only place that Jesus 'was lifted up and exalted was the tree on which they hung him'" (p. 161), what he obviously ignores is that this was only for three hours, and for the express purpose of offering a sacrifice for David Klinghoffer's sins, a sacrifice Klinghoffer allows his own messiah (Israel of Isaiah 53) to do, but doesn't allow Christ to do. Afterward Christ was raised from the dead and exalted as he sat at the right hand of God in majesty. Conversely, after Israel was rejected and despised, it was never exalted.

Isaiah 11:6

Klinghoffer also complains that Isaiah 11:6 ("the wolf shall lie down with the lamb") wasn't fulfilled, and if it is "understood allegorically, *i.e.*, that at that time evil and righteous men will live together, such situation would be nothing new" (p. 162). Nothing new? When did Israel ever enjoy peace with the nations surrounding it, except in the days of Solomon, a brief interlude of 40 years out of 2000 years? Conversely, as the New Testament Church grew in influence and power it competed handily with the secular powers, often times having the major influence over the people. For almost 1800 years the pope and the emperor ruled the world side-by-side, the lamb with the wolf. Even today, the church has a marked influence on the world as secular leaders seek out the advice and approval of the Roman Pontiff on various issues. As for Klinghoffer's supposed fulfillment, does he expect literal wolves and lambs to exist in the afterlife?

Klinghoffer quotes the Jew Nachmanides saying:

Yet while Christians asserted that the Messiah had come, the world had not changed its cruel, violent nature....'from the days of Jesus until now, the whole world has been full of violence and plundering, and Christians are greater spillers of blood than all the rest of the peoples, and they are also practicers of adultery and incest'" (p. 160).

But where did Christ promise that there would be no violence on earth? Christ promised to save us from this wicked world, not make this world our home. This world has been cursed with sin and death, and it will not be cured of those ills until a new world is created (*cf.* Rom. 5:12-20; 1Cor. 15:1-56). It is the very reason Jesus said to Pilate, "my kingdom is not of this world." But Klinghoffer complains: "This was not what the Hebrew Bible had promised for the messianic future" (p. 63). Of course, if one insists on disassociating all the references in the Hebrew Bible to the need for an atonement of mankind's sin before the glory of the "messianic future" could take place (Isaiah 53; Dan. 7:13-14; 9:24-27; Psalm 22, *etc.*), it certainly would be difficult to see that the Messiah's mission had to occur in two stages. But this has been the problem with the Jews since their inception. They have always been looking for some kind of earthly utopia in which all their physical needs would be satisfied and they would be rulers over the nations, but without the Messiah first atoning for their sins. This is why they rejected Christ at his First Coming. As Klinghoffer puts it:

Jews had always believed that the world would indeed be fixed – when the Messiah comes....enlightened Jews held Christians at fault for thinking, since the Messiah had already come, the world was satisfactory as it was. Joseph

Klausner (1878-1958), historian and Jewish nationalist...wrote that 'the Jews can and must march at the head of humanity on the road of personal and social progress, on the road to ethical perfection...The Jewish Messianic faith is the seed of progress, which has been planted by Judaism throughout the whole world' (p. 199).²⁴

This is little different than Israeli prime minister David ben Gurion's vision for the Jews in his interview with *Look* magazine on January 16, 1962: "In Jerusalem, the United Nations (a truly United Nations) will build a shrine of the Prophets to serve the federated union of all continents; this will be the scene of the Supreme Court of Mankind, to settle all controversies among the federated continents, as prophesied by Isaiah." To accomplish this superiority, Klinghoffer and his followers must make Jesus a fraud and a failure in the minds of Christians:

So he performed faith healings. So he's even reported to have revived two individuals thought to have died. Very nice! But let him do what the 'son of man,' the promised Messiah, had been advertised as being destined to do from Daniel back through Ezekiel and Isaiah and the rest of the prophets. Let him rule as a monarch, his kingship extending over 'all peoples, nations and languages. Let him return the exiles and rebuild the Temple and defeat the oppressors and establish universal peace, as the prophets also said....But let Jesus come up with the real messianic goods – visible to all rather than requiring us to accept someone's assurance that, for example, he was born in Bethlehem – and then we'll take him seriously" (pp. 71, 102-103).

Interestingly enough, Klinghoffer rejects the "two stage" concept of Christ's mission even though he admits earlier in the book that the Talmud's tractate *Sukkah* makes reference to two Messiahs, one called "Messiah son of Joseph" who eventually dies, and the other "Messiah son of David" who lives. Moreover, *B. Sanhedrin* 98B cites in reference to "Messiah son of Joseph" the same passage, Zech. 12:10, that the Gospel of John (19:37) cites at the crucifixion. None of this impresses Klinghoffer, however, because in the end, "a murdered messiah would have seemed a contradiction in terms" and "completely untethered to what the scriptural text [Zech. 12:10] actually says" (pp. 83-85). Nevertheless, he seems to have a tinge of guilt for his hardnosed position, asking himself: "Doesn't that suggest precisely the sort of willfulness, the refusal to believe in Christ despite all the evidence, that the Gospels themselves attribute to the Jews?" He admits that his only escape from this accusation is the reliance on Jewish oral tradition (which apparently tells him to deny a suffering Messiah but which he never proves to be

²⁴ Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, pp. 519-31.

uncorrupted); and that "Christian doctrines...need a firmer support in Hebrew scriptures than the imaginative interpretations of prophecy that the Gospels in fact offer" (pp. 85-86), a charge we have clearly rebuffed in this review by demonstrating quite easily that it is Klinghoffer himself who has no firm support from the Hebrew scriptures.

As for Klinghoffer's complaint that Christians commit sin, this is no news. The New Testament warns us of that possibility on almost every page. In fact, Paul uses the sinful experiences of the Jews and their subsequent punishment and damnation as an example for Christians not to fall into the same consequences, warning that they, too, can be cut off from God (*cf.* 1Cor. 10:1-12; Rom. 11:23-25; Hebrews 3-4). Christianity has nothing to hide. As it was in Israel so it is in the Church – only those who have faith and obedience will be saved, regardless if they go by the name Jew or Christian.

Contradictions in Luke?

In another place Klinghoffer complains: "In Luke [17:21], he [Jesus] says that the kingdom 'is not coming with signs to be observed' but rather 'the kingdom of God is in the midst of you' – yet four chapters later he says that observable signs will indeed be seen, such as 'the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.' Which is it?...a tendency to walk both sides of the street simultaneously. Heads I win, tails you lose" (p. 64). Obviously, Klinghoffer, as the Pharisees did on many occasions, hopes to catch Jesus in a contradiction, but as it was with the Pharisees, Klinghoffer is the one who gets trapped. We can start by pointing out that it is not only "four chapters later." It also is in the immediately following verses, Lk. 17:22-37, that Jesus describes the observable signs of his coming. Because the signs are part of the context, Jesus is making a specific point when he introduces the topic in *vr.* 21 with the additional fact that the "kingdom of God is in the midst of you," and the point hits right at the heart of the Pharisees' problem. They, like Klinghoffer, have a total misconception of the kingdom. Because of their distorted reading of the Hebrew Bible, they are looking only for a physical and political kingdom in which they can rule the world, as it was in the time of Solomon, and they want it ushered in with pomp and circumstance so that every eye can see and bow down to them. But as they look from their unspiritual observation towers for the physical kingdom, the Pharisees have hardly a clue of the internal spiritual kingdom of virtue and grace that is its real essence. It is right in front of their eyes, but they can't see it because they are blind. This was Jesus' point in verse 21, but Klinghoffer totally missed it.

The Scriptures Are "Cryptic"

Klinghoffer's main lines of argument are as follow:

"What are the key points that a reasonably informed Jew would have kept in mind in evaluating Jesus and, later, the early church? Judaism of the first century...can be boiled down to four points: that scripture is cryptic, that God is One, that religious commandments are the eternal essence of Judaism, and that a Davidic messiah may be expected" (p. 24).

Additionally, Klinghoffer also refers to "the cryptic text of the Pentateuch" with "its true meaning indiscernible" (p. 59), or "the text was merely shorthand, code, a mnemonic" (pp. 85, 147) unless interpreted by oral tradition "that originated at Mount Sinai, from the mind of God Himself" (p. 85). True, oral revelation certainly would have helped to explicate the written revelation, as long as the former remained confined to God's actual words and did not evolve into man's accretions. Klinghoffer assumes that the oral revelation could skip through the apostate generations of Israel without due harm. But as we saw earlier, even the written word had suffered emasculation until Hilkiah rediscovered it in the reign of Josiah, one of the last kings of Judah before the Babylonian captivity in the 6th century BC (2Chr. 34:14). How could the oral revelation from Sinai, which is even more difficult to preserve, have both escaped the same emasculation and prohibited human accretions? Klinghoffer treats oral tradition as if it was impervious to corruption, which is probably why he never mentions Jesus' most illustrative example of how it could become so – the Corban law (see Mark 7:9-13).²⁵ Additionally, because of Israel and Judah's continual apostasy, God himself limited the revelations he would give to the people (*cf.* Amos 8:11; 6:10; Is. 28:10-13). By the time of the Pharisees and Sadducees, the genuine word of God is so suppressed and the accretions of man are so abundant that Sinai is hardly recognizable. The problem, as Jesus pointed out to the Jews many times, is oral tradition began to contradict the Scripture, making up its own doctrines and practices. It wasn't tradition, *per se*, that Jesus condemned (Mark 7:1-13) but the traditions the Jews invented that set aside Scripture.

Did Jesus Break the Sabbath?

Interestingly enough, for all Klinghoffer's claims that Scripture is "cryptic" and cannot be easily deciphered without oral tradition, he later contradicts that stance by saying "the foundations of Jewish practice and doctrine are almost without exception stated plainly in the Hebrew Scriptures" (p. 86). In reality, it wouldn't matter if Scripture was "cryptic" or "stated plainly," since the Pharisees, by Klinghoffer's own admission, argued with Jesus over such hair-splitting minutia of law that it's a wonder Jesus didn't just

²⁵ Instead of providing financially for old age parents, the Pharisees taught that a man could lock up his money by making contributions to the temple (Corban). The Pharisees would benefit from these contributions, since they ran the temple.

throw up his hand in utter disgust. Unfortunately, Klinghoffer's own assessment of the encounters shows that he persists in the same pernicky mentality:

Healing on the Sabbath is a topic on which Jesus and his fellow Jews reportedly disagreed. In Jewish tradition, there is no problem with faith healing on the Sabbath since it involves no preparing of medications, which would be a problem. When Jesus healed a blind man by making a salve [medication] and touching it to his eyes, the Pharisees again objected: "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath." By the light of [oral] tradition, they were right. While the written Torah says nothing about using a medical salve, the oral Torah rules it out except in case of an emergency, which this clearly was not" (p. 57).

We have a good clue as to why Jesus purposely used the clay and spittle to heal the man instead of healing him instantaneously. He knew that oral tradition had made a superfluous distinction between healing with medicine and healing by miracle, and he wanted to expose this cancerous accretion for what it was. A day or so prior to this the Jews tried to kill Jesus in the temple, and they were relying on their oral tradition as justification (John 5-8:59). There was no better way of exposing their hypocrisy than by demonstrating how ridiculous their oral tradition was. As Jesus said in another place: "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27). That Klinghoffer would actually defend the Pharisees on this point of minutia shows that he is not seeking for a religion of the highest ethical and moral principles (for who in their right mind would begrudge medicine to sick people on the Sabbath, emergency or not?), but the institution of Judaism in all its mind-numbing and tedious trappings. Klinghoffer wants a religion of ritual and exclusionism, not a religion of loving God and loving one's neighbor. Once again, that is why God said: "I gave them statues that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live" (Ezk. 20:25) or, "But if you had known what this means 'I desire compassion and not a sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent" (Matt. 12:7).

Deuteronomy 6:4: God is One

As for the "God is One" issue, Klinghoffer's main argument is based on the traditional plea of the Jews found in Deut. 6:4: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is the One and Only" (p. 29).²⁶ The implication, of course, is that if Jesus is God, we then

²⁶ Klinghoffer's translation of this passage is a bit overdone. The Hebrew, literally reads: "The Lord our God, the Lord is one" or "Jehovah our Elohim, Jehovah is one." (Additionally, "Elohim" is in the masculine plural construct form, Eloheynu, suggesting a plurality in itself). As Keil notes: "The idea is not, Jehovah our God is one God, but 'one Jehovah'....Hence what is predicated here of Jehovah (*Jehovah one*) does not relate to the unity of God, but simply states that it is to Him alone that the name Jehovah

have an additional God to the "Lord" of Deut. 6:4, which automatically disqualifies Jesus as divine. The problem with this interpretation is that the context of Deuteronomy 6 does not concern the internal makeup of God (*i.e.*, whether God can or cannot be three Persons in one God) but the contrast between the God of Israel and all the false gods of the nations. Since the Israelites had already shown themselves to be prone toward accepting these false gods (as they exhibited in Exodus 32 with the golden calf), consequently, as they are about to enter the land of Canaan (a land full of false gods), God wants to reinforce in their minds that He is the only God and He will not tolerate any more idol worship from the Jews. Interestingly enough, the only other time the Old Testament uses the same grammatical form as it appears in Deut. 6:4 is in Zech. 14:9 ("in that day there shall be one Lord")²⁷ and for the same reason, for Zechariah's context concerns God's coming reign over all the earth, not the internal makeup of God Himself. God will be "One" because all the false gods of the nations will be destroyed and everyone will bow the knee to Christ alone (Phil. 2:9-11).

The Messiah of Daniel 9:25-26

As for the Jews expectation of the Davidic Messiah in the distant future, Klinghoffer must first set aside any link in Old Testament prophecy to Christ as the Messiah. In his attempt, Klinghoffer tries to tone down the meaning of the word "Messiah" in Hebrew. He says that it can apply to any "anointed" person or group. True enough. But the question Klinghoffer must convincingly negate is whether the "Messiah" of Daniel 9:25-26 refers to Jesus Christ, and in this he miserably fails. He claims that because the word "cut off (*yi'karet*) is the common Hebrew designation for spiritual excision (*karet*), visited by heaven on egregious sinners" (p. 33), he finds it "ironic that Christians apply Daniel 9:26 to their savior" (p. 225). So here we have two Hebrew words, *Messiah* (מָשִׁיחַ) and *karet* (כָּרַת). Both are very general in their usage, yet it is interesting to see Klinghoffer keep *Messiah* as a general term (*i.e.*, it can apply to any anointed person or group) but make *karet* an exclusive term (it can only apply to "egregious sinners"). *Karet* simply means "to cut." It appears 277 times in the Old Testament and is used in reference to cutting good, bad, and indifferent things. It is used of cutting off clothes, cutting down trees, making a covenant, and many other applications that are not dependent on the moral quality of the thing being cut. Just because many of the verses refer to cutting out bad things does not mean that

rightfully belongs, that He is the one absolute God, to whom no other Elohim can be compared" (Keil-Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, The Pentateuch, p. 323).

²⁷ The form is the Hebrew tetragrammaton יהוה (Jehovah or Yahweh) immediately preceding the Hebrew word for "one" (*i.e.*, "Jehovah one").

karet only refers to bad things. Daniel 9:25-26 simply means that the Messiah was killed; his life was cut off.²⁸

The Catholic Church

At another point, Klinghoffer attempts to bring the Catholic Church to his aid regarding the Messiah: "More recently, in 2002, the Catholic Church went even further in recognizing Judaism's dignity, declaring that the 'the Jewish messianic wait is not in vain'" (p. 190). Despite Klinghoffer's claim, the quote about the "Jewish messianic wait" does not represent official "Catholic Church" teaching, since it was written by the Pontifical Biblical Commission, an arm of the Vatican that was stripped of its authority on doctrine back in 1971 by Paul VI.²⁹ The PBC is now merely an advisory arm of the Vatican. Although the then Cardinal Ratzinger signed the PBC essay titled: "The Jewish People and the Holy Scriptures in the Christian Bible," his signature neither makes it official Catholic teaching, nor did the pope give it any official standing in Catholic Church doctrine. That being said, the PBC's statement that the "Jewish messianic wait is not in vain" is a typical example of the theological liberalism and biblical distortion for which that institution has become infamous. Cardinal Ratzinger himself cleared up the distortion when he was "asked if Jews must, or should, acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah" and "told an interviewer, 'We believe that. The fact remains, however, that our Christian conviction is that Christ is also the Messiah of Israel.'"³⁰ Obviously, then, someone needs to tell the PBC that, according to Cardinal Ratzinger, the only "wait" Jews can have for a Messiah is Jesus Christ, otherwise, the wait is certainly "in vain." As it stands, non-Christian Jews are not waiting for Jesus

²⁸ Klinghoffer later attempts to divorce Dan. 9:25-26 from any relation to Christ by arguing against Jewish convert Michael L. Brown's view in *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus* that the 70 weeks (490 years) of the prophecy ends in 63 AD. Klinghoffer objects saying that in Dan. 9:25-26 the "anointed one dies *after* the year 63...But Jesus died around the year 30" (p. 208), therefore Jesus was not the Messiah. But Klinghoffer fails to give us the starting date for Brown's 490 years, except to say that it "begins with the return of Daniel's compatriots to the holy land to rebuild Jerusalem." Starting from 458 BC when Nehemiah rebuilt Jerusalem and adds 483 years (the 62 weeks + 7 weeks of Dan. 9:25), subtracting 1 year for no year 0, equals 26 AD. It is after 26 AD that Jesus is "cut off" (crucified) in 33 AD, the traditional year of Christ's crucifixion (or even Klinghoffer's 30 AD). Moreover, if one starts from 458 BC and adds the 490 years of Dan. 9:24 (subtracting 1 year for no year 0), it comes to 33 AD, the year of Christ's crucifixion. See my book *The Apocalypse of St. John*, pp. 354-359 for more information.

²⁹ Apostolic letter, *Sedula Cura*, June 27, 1971, "On New Laws Regulating the Pontifical Biblical Commission." See for a brief and revealing history of the Pontifical Biblical Commission by noted scholar Monsignor John F. McCarthy at <http://www.catholicculture.org/library/view.cfm?recnum=4679> (*Homiletic and Pastoral Review*, Jan. 2003).

³⁰ As stated in "The Wait is Over: Jews' Messiah Now Kosher" in *The Jewish Week*, Jan. 25, 2002, by Eric J. Greenberg.

Christ. They are waiting for the G-D of Judaism who is anyone but Jesus Christ. The PBC's attempt to slide this potential heretical statement by everyone's notice was demonstrated by the fact that it was not publicized in its original Italian version. It made headlines only after that the Italian news agency ANSA printed a small report of it on a Wednesday in January 2002 after it was noticed in an Italian book store.

Isaiah 53

Klinghoffer then goes to work on the famous passage of Isaiah 53, which he says "has probably been adduced more often and with greater conviction in support of Jesus's claim than any other passage" (p. 164). First Klinghoffer claims that neither the title "Messiah" nor "king" nor "son of David" nor "any other expression that would point to a messianic interpretation" appear in the passage. Of course, this objection only shows that when such expressions *do* appear in Scripture, Klinghoffer should perform due diligence and give them a messianic interpretation, but rarely does. As we noted, the word "Messiah" appears in Dan. 9:25-26, but Klinghoffer quickly tries to arrest any hint that it might apply to a savior, much less Christ, choosing rather, to say that it refers to "an egregious sinner," all based on his fallacious lexical analysis of the Hebrew word *karet*. But let's take Klinghoffer's criterion of missing names and titles to heart. The word "God" does not appear in the book of Esther, yet Esther is the basis for one of the highest Jewish holydays, Purim, a feast to which Klinghoffer refers on page 53. Perhaps Klinghoffer should reject that holyday for the same reason he rejects the divine identity of the "servant" in Isaiah 53 – a missing name. The fact remains, Klinghoffer himself said that "scripture is cryptic" (p. 24), so it should come as no surprise that Isaiah might be a little more cryptic in chapter 53 than Klinghoffer is willing to admit. It would be better than resigning himself to conclude Isaiah 53 is "a most peculiar way for a writer to compose his work" (p. 167).

Irrespective of the cryptic element of Isaiah 53, Klinghoffer prefers the interpretation of Rabbi Solomon bar Isaac (aka Rashi, 1040-1105), *i.e.*, that the "servant was none other than the Jewish people," citing passages such as Is 41:8 ("Israel, my servant") or Is 44:2 ("My servant, Jacob"). But the issue is not whether these particular passages refer to Israel (since they clearly do) but whether the "servant" of Isaiah 53 refers to Israel. Whereas Isaiah 53 does not specify "Messiah" or "son of David," by the same token it doesn't specify "Israel" either, yet Israel is conspicuously mentioned before and after chapter 53 (*e.g.*, Is 52:12; 54:5). Obviously, Isaiah is avoiding the name "Israel" in chapter 53 as much as he is avoiding the name "Messiah" or "son of David" in Isaiah 52 and 54.

Klinghoffer tries to make a big issue of the fact that in Isaiah 53 many words are chosen which portray the servant as "sick" or a "victim of disease." Although Klinghoffer agrees that such minutia "may seem like hairsplitting," nevertheless, he concludes from his

word study that "it's natural to assume that Isaiah is speaking about a sick person, which Jesus was not" (p. 206). It would be "natural" only if the Hebrew words chosen referred exclusively to sickness. In Is 53:3, for example, the description: "a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity" is not in a context of physical maladies but of personal rejection and mental anguish, since *vr. 3* reads: "He was spurned and avoided by men, a man of suffering, accustomed to infirmity, One of those from whom men hide their faces, spurned, and we held him in no esteem" (NAB). Hence, it is no surprise that "infirmity" is a Hebrew word (חֲלָה) that is frequently used to refer to mental anguish or grief.³¹ It is used again in Is 53:10: "the LORD was pleased to crush him in infirmity" or "grief." What better crushing in grief could there be than when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane pleading to the Father for another way, under such strain that his sweat poured out like great drops of blood, and which eventually led to the scourging at the pillar and the walk to Calvary? In fact, all the instances of Hebrew words that Klinghoffer questions in Isaiah 53 (except for *vr. 3*) are prophetically confined to the immediate events leading up to and including the crucifixion, not Christ's prior experiences. In the end, of course, Klinghoffer has to admit that "there is enough ambiguity, enough veiled and cryptic language in the prophets, to allow the scripture to be so construed." Klinghoffer just finds it "very hard to believe" (p. 210).

Is it any harder to believe than the sinful nation of Israel being the Messiah? Of the many things that are not "cryptic" in Isaiah 53, the passage speaks of an individual who "did no violence" and was "without deceit" (53:9), and can thus atone for the sins of the people by being sacrificed as a "guilt offering," the antitype to the sacrifice of unblemished lambs in Leviticus. But how and when was Israel, the nation, ever "without deceit," and when was it ever "without violence"? It was precisely for the Jews' own sins that God allowed the nations to oppress them, a theme that is repeated *ad nauseum* in the Old Testament. How could sinful Israel ever serve as an unblemished sacrifice for atonement? In reality, Klinghoffer's plea is just another case of how the Jews at large are oblivious to their own sins.

All in all, there is simply no instance in Jewish history that satisfies the numerous details of Isaiah 53, details not seen in any other "servant" passage.³² In fact, Rashi's

³¹ 1Sam. 22:8; Eccl. 5:13, 16; Is 17:11; 57:10; Amos 6:6. The word appears over 100 times in the OT.

³² Klinghoffer cites Abraham Ibn Ezra and his claim that Isaiah 53 could not refer to Christ since "Isaiah spoke of the servant's reward – the latter would 'see his seed,' that is, have children; 'prolong his days,' that is, live a long life; and 'divide the spoil with the strong,' a reference to divvying up the booty of war (53:10,12). Jesus did none of these things" (p. 166). But this is where the Jew always gets trapped, constantly looking for earthly, human, physical or national fulfillments. Christ's "seed" was fulfilled heavenly, divinely, spiritually and eternally (*cf.* Ps. 22:30; Mt. 12:50; Gal. 3:29). Christ's days were

interpretation is typical of the Messiah complex that the Jewish people have had in their collective psyche for most of their history. It is even evident in Klinghoffer's own thesis, for like the servant of Isaiah 53 who was "despised and rejected," he believes the despising and rejection of Judaism in the first century led to the flourishing of Western civilization. Perhaps it is also why some modern Jews interpret the Nazi internment as a case in which the Jews are the "suffering servant," the "Messiah" that is sacrificed for the rest of the world (and which is the very reason their apologists chose the word "holocaust" for its memorial title),³³ but are now raised from the dead, as it were, to reoccupy the land of Palestine. Or perhaps it is why Rashi says, "that the peoples should be forgiven through the sufferings of Israel" or "At the End of Days...the gentile nations in particular that oppressed Israel...will express their dread and amazement at how they have 'despised and rejected' the 'man of sorrows'...namely, the exalted nation of Israel" (p. 166). In essence, then, Klinghoffer and the Jews have given us a choice for who our Messiah is going to be: the nation of Israel or Jesus Christ. Sadly, it seems today that a lot of Jews are choosing the former over the latter.

The Person of Jesus

In order for Klinghoffer to reject Jesus as Messiah he must invariably attack Jesus as a person, and have a rebuttal for the teachings and acts that distinguished Jesus as divine. In doing so, Klinghoffer cannot posit, as the Muslims do, that Jesus was a good prophet, since the Muslims do not expect a Messiah. Klinghoffer, as a Jew, must attack Jesus as a complete fraud, worthy to be stoned under Jewish law for impersonating the coming Messiah. And, of course, this is what distinguishes Jews and Judaism from Islam and every other religion. Judaism must decide whether or not Jesus was the prophesied Messiah of the Old Covenant.³⁴ If he is not the Messiah, the Jew says, then Jesus is not merely deluded,

"prolonged" because he rose from the dead to live eternally in heaven. He "divided the spoil," ironically, at the very time the Pharisees were accusing him of being under the power of Beelzebub (cf. Lk. 11:14-22; Mt. 12:22-29; Eph. 4:8; Ps. 68:18). Klinghoffer's alternative is that Is. 53:12 merely means that the Jews were "willing to die" but didn't actually die (pp. 81-82). The text in Hebrew says otherwise: "he poured out to death (לְמוֹתוֹ) his life or his soul (נַפְשׁוֹ). Other statements in Isaiah 53 confirm that it was a real physical death, e.g., *vr.* 8: "he was cut off from the land of the living" and *vr.* 9: "His grave was assigned to be with wicked men, and with a rich man in his death."

³³ "Holocaust" is originally derived from the Hebrew **הֶעֱלָה** OLAH and was normally translated as "burnt offering" (e.g., Lev. 1:4; Num. 6:11). OLAH literally means "that which goes up," referring to the smoke of the offering that ascends to heaven. Incense used in Catholic churches has the same intent. Greek adopted a similar word, HOLOKAUTOMA (Heb. 10:6-8; Mk. 12:33).

³⁴ Klinghoffer says: "What are the key points that a reasonably informed Jew would have kept in mind in evaluating Jesus and, later, the early church? Judaism of the first century...can be boiled down to four

he is evil, an anti-messiah or anti-christ. There is no other choice for Klinghoffer. As such, he must make a vicious attack upon Jesus to save face for Judaism. To do so, Klinghoffer declines the "ethical" Jesus of liberal Protestantism and the "apocalyptic" Jesus of "Jewish scholar Paula Fredriksen" for his own invention of Jesus as the "complicated person" or "the foxy, ambiguous Jesus" who he says "is the Jesus whom the Jews of his time period rejected, to the extent they could understand him" (pp. 42-43).

Not Much of A Sensation?

Klinghoffer's other ploy is to portray Jesus as much less of a sensation than he really was. Hence, he claims Jesus began his ministry in Galilee because "if you were going to set up a new Jewish charismatic movement that departed...from biblical authenticity" (p. 43) Galilee was the place you would find your die-hard enthusiasts. Accordingly, instead of Jesus' entrance into Galilee being a fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1-2 (as Matt. 4:12-17 says it is), Klinghoffer claims (thanks to the Historical Critical methodology he adopts throughout his book) that a sect of second or third generation "Christians" in the late first century merely made it look like Jesus was fulfilling Isaiah's words. Countering even the Pharisees' exclamation: "Look, the world has gone after him!" (John 7:31; 12:19), Klinghoffer says that "Jesus's core following was small" and "Christians did not seem of enough significance as a population group to register [in Josephus] as a fifth philosophy" to the "Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes and...the nationalists" (p. 46). He also claims that Jesus' "public ministry lasted only a year or so" (p. 47) yet the Gospels are reasonably clear that it lasted for 3.5 years, an option Klinghoffer doesn't even consider.

No Premeditation of Plotting Jesus' Death?

In the face of the clear testimony in the Gospels concerning the murderous designs of the Jews against Jesus, Klinghoffer turns this around to say, "Their rejection of him arose not from a definite decision, but from a combination of simple unawareness of his activities and skepticism about the roles he was casting himself into" (p. 48). One wonders how many times Klinghoffer has to read in the Gospels that the Jews tried to kill Jesus before it sinks in that their rejection was done with malice aforethought. One need only read the sequence of conversations Jesus had with the Pharisees to see that they hated him with passion. He not only upset the façade of religious ritual with which they had surrounded themselves, he dared to claim he was the fulfillment of messianic prophecies. As John 5:18 says: "For this reason the Jews tried all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but he also called God his own father, making himself equal to God." Ironically, Klinghoffer later admits that the Jews did, indeed, want to kill Jesus: "One thing is clear. To

points: that scripture is cryptic, that God is One, that religious commandments are the eternal essence of Judaism, and that a Davidic messiah may be expected" (p. 24).

say that Jewish leaders were instrumental in getting Jesus killed is *not* anti-Semitic. Otherwise we would have to call the medieval Jewish sage Moses Maimonides anti-Semitic and the rabbis of the Talmud as well....the Romans, in bringing about Jesus's death, were not acting alone" (p. 73).³⁵ So which is it?

From the Pharisees' perspective, the reasons to have Jesus killed were plain. It is right before his entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday that the climax arrives. After getting the Pharisees to admit that the Messiah is the son of David, Jesus then asks them how David, under the inspiration of the Spirit, can say to the Messiah: "The Lord said to my Lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet" (Matt. 22:41-46). In other words, if David calls the Messiah "Lord," then how is the Messiah also David's son? That is a very logical question, but an impossible one to answer for a Jew who believes that Deut. 6:4 allows only One Person in the Godhead. This was the moment of truth for the Jews. They could not deny that David, under the Spirit's direction, spoke of two "Lords," both divine, both reigning together, one working for the other, and yet one of the Lords both pre-exists David and is a descendant of David. How can that be true except that the Messiah is both God and man? As it stood, Jesus demonstrated that their own Hebrew Scriptures prophesied, in one solitary line, that the Messiah had to be both God and man, and there THAT man stood right in front of them, the Man who had fulfilled not only Psalm 110:1, but all the prophecies of his coming in the Old Testament.³⁶ But the Jews simply could not admit this possibility, even though the logic of it stared them in the face. That is why, of course, Matthew concludes the chapter by saying: "And no one was able to answer him a word, nor did anyone dare from that day on to ask him another question." At this point the Jews could either accept him and everything he claimed, or plan a secret plot for his death. There were no other practical choices. Jesus had set the perfect trap with the very Scriptures they so treasured. As he said to them in John 5:39: "You search the scriptures, because you think you have eternal life through them; even they testify on my behalf." It was the moment of no return. As we all know, it was here that the Pharisees and chief priests planned for Jesus' demise – this time by inciting the Romans to get involved.

³⁵ Klinghoffer also admits what many other Jews deny today, that "the Talmudic text was long ago censored and excised for fear of Christian anger, along with the related passage in Mishneh Torah [Maimonides' acceptance of the Talmud's version of the Crucifixion in *Sanhedrin*] but can now be found in very small Hebrew type in the back of some editions of the Talmud." Klinghoffer admits that the Talmud says Jesus' "sentence was that he should be stoned to death, then hung up briefly on a wooden scaffold....shaped like a T" for the "charges against him" such as "he performed magic, enticed, and led astray Israel" (p. 73).

³⁶ Gen. 3:15; 49:10; Num. 24:17; Deut. 18:15; Psalms 2:7; 16:10-11; 22:15-17; 22:18; 34:20; 35:19; 68:18; 69:4; Isaiah 6:10; 7:14; 9:6; 11:1f; 40:10-11; 50:6; 53:1-12; Jeremiah 19:1-13; 23:5; Micah 5:2; Zechariah 11:13; 12:10; Malachi 3:1, to name a few.

Jesus knew this was coming, for he had prophesied it several times (*e.g.*, Matt. 16:20-21). Because the Pharisees and chief priests had reached the hypocritical climax of their rejection of Jesus, it is in the next chapter, Matthew 23, that Jesus unleashes the Bible's harshest tirade ever given to a group of religious adherents.

Casting Out Demons

Klinghoffer says the claim "what was unique about Jesus was that he could command demons without resorting to spells or magic" is really nothing special since there were "rabbinic wonderworkers" like "Hanina ben Dosa, a Galilean like Jesus whose deeds have been compared with the Christian savior's." Hence, "it is hard to see why a Jew would follow or reject Jesus because of his powers as an exorcist" (pp. 50-51). We wonder if Klinghoffer would say the same about his beloved Moses (Ex. 7:11). Should Pharaoh have been dissuaded against siding with Moses since Pharaoh's magicians could perform some of the same miracles as Moses? Be that as it may, the New Testament never makes such a claim for Jesus. If Jesus were merely an exorcist, no one should have followed him. Even Jesus allowed people who were not of his immediate followers to do exorcisms (Mark 9:38-41).³⁷ It is the obstinate rejection of Jesus in the face of all his other tremendous deeds and divine teachings that makes the added dismissal of his exorcisms a sign of Jewish blindness. When the Pharisees were confronted with one of Jesus' exorcisms they didn't make any counter-appeal to Hanina ben Dosa or his contemporaries. They instead claimed Jesus was under the power of Satan, an accusation which earned them a place among those who committed the Unforgiveable Sin (Mark 3:20-29).

Interestingly enough, when it is to his seeming advantage to call upon Pharaoh's magicians, Klinghoffer does so when he has to account for Jesus' "catalog of miracles [which] is impressive." To Klinghoffer, "a Jew who believed in the Hebrew scriptures would know that not all such acts...came from God" because "the Egyptians king's magicians at first match the Jewish leader [Moses] miracle for miracle." Hence "to ascribe magical powers to forces apart from God would not have strained the imagination of a Jew in Jesus' day" (pp. 51-52). Perhaps – that is, if we use Klinghoffer's shoddy exegesis of the incident in Egypt. First, the magicians, according to Klinghoffer's own Hebrew bible, were not doing miracles "apart from God" but against God, hence they were under satanic forces, an evil personality well attested by the Hebrew bible (*e.g.*, Gen. 3:1; 1Chr. 21:1; Job 1:6). They were certainly not acting as forerunner's of Hanina ben Dosa. Second, and most important, the

³⁷ "John said to him, 'Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us.' But Jesus said, 'Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us.'" Who knows? Perhaps John was referring to Hanina ben Dosa, since he lived in the first century! (See *Jewish Encyclopedia* at <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=239&letter=H>).

magicians may have "at first" matched Moses' miracles, but they failed on every other occasion. Of the ten miracles Moses performed, the magicians only could do three (Ex. 7:11, 22; 8:7). In fact, after they could not duplicate subsequent miracles, the magicians were converted and finally saw Moses for who he really was, saying to Pharaoh: "This is the finger of God!" (Ex. 7:18-19, cf. 9:11). Hence, Klinghoffer's conclusion does not match that of the Hebrew Bible. Whereas Klinghoffer says that knowledge of the magicians' miracles would lead a Jew to "know that not all such acts...came from God" (and therefore Jesus' miracles should not lead a Jew to accept Jesus), the Hebrew Scripture says the very opposite – the magicians saw Moses' many and unrepeatable miracles as the reason to accept God!

The Resurrection

Klinghoffer also tries to dismiss the resurrection of Jesus. Even though he admits that he doesn't "know of a sage of this [first] century to whom the rabbinic sources attribute the power of resurrection," Klinghoffer goes on a desperate search to find a competing resurrection in Jewish literature and settles on one account, the story of Rabbi Rabbah who, being drunk, killed his friend, Rav Zeira, and the next day raised him from the dead. Since this is the only competition to Jesus' resurrection that Klinghoffer can find, he casually concludes: "Unlike the Gospel writers, the Talmud doesn't make a fuss about this" (p. 53). Perhaps the Talmud and other Jewish writers didn't make a fuss about it for the simple fact that they argue amongst themselves whether the story is true, since "many other authorities interpret the passage as a mere allegory."³⁸ Of course, even if it were true, why should they make a fuss about it, since Rav Zeira would have only died again, whereas Jesus lives forever? Why make a fuss if Rav Zeira was neither fulfilling prophecy nor atoning for the world's sins?³⁹ Why make a fuss if Rav Zeira's resurrection was a one-time event that left the rest of the world in their graves? Why make a fuss if Rabbi Rabbah's feat shows an inconsistency in God's favor by allowing a drunken man in sin (*cf.* Pro. 20:1; 31:4; Is. 5:11) to use God's power and raise someone from the dead? Consequently, in Klinghoffer's desperation to play down the resurrection of Jesus by comparing it to Rav

³⁸ <http://www.sichosinenglish.org/cgi-bin/calendar?holiday=purim13305>

³⁹ Later Klinghoffer tries to accuse the New Testament of having no Hebrew scriptures to back up its claim that the Messiah would die and be raised on the third day (e.g., Lk. 24:46). Klinghoffer says the Christian appeal to Hos. 6:1-2 ("on the third day he will raise us up") "violates the obvious meaning of the text." This objection has no merit if there is a dual meaning to the text (*cf.* Hos. 6:1-2; Lk. 13:32), a not uncommon feature of Old Testament prophecy. In addition, Jonah 1:17 is quoted by Jesus to verify the length of time he would be in the grave (*cf.* Matt. 12:39-40). Of course, in such cases, Klinghoffer would conveniently insist that the "Hebrew Scriptures" must be "stated plainly" (p. 86) as opposed to what a "reasonably informed Jew" of the first century would see as "Scripture is cryptic" (p. 24).

Zeira, he only succeeds in elevating it that much more. His efforts are even more pathetic when he resorts to saying, "Perhaps the tomb wasn't sealed as tightly as the Gospels say. Perhaps, like historians today, the Jews speculated that the ubiquitous wild dogs that haunted the city had got to the body. This would explain why archeologists have recovered almost no remains of crucified bodes from this time and place. They were torn apart and consumed by the dogs....We don't know" (p. 77). Unfortunately, Klinghoffer's book offers no counter-hypothesis to the "dog ate it" theory, such as "Perhaps the Gospels were correct and Jesus really did rise from the dead" to dispel the obvious bias that permeates his pages.

Praying in a Quorum

Time and time again Klinghoffer demonstrates the same blindness to God's ways of which the Pharisees were guilty. In another instance Klinghoffer complains that "the oral Torah values sociability and thus calls upon the individual to pray in company with a minimum of ten men" but "Jesus advised his followers, 'when you pray,' to pray to yourself, 'in secret'" (p. 57). As is usually the case when Klinghoffer goes on a nit-picking escapade, he avoids the context when it is not to his advantage. In this passage (Matt. 6:1-7), Jesus is not condemning Jewish quorums. After all, it was Jesus who taught Christians to pray together in groups (Matt. 18:19). Rather, in this particular context, Jesus is teaching against hypocrisy, a common trait among the Jewish religious leaders (*e.g.*, verse 5: "When you pray, you are not to be as the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogue and on the street corners, in order to be seen by men"). Jesus said the same in Matt. 23:14: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you devour widows' houses, even while for a pretense you make long prayers; therefore you shall receive greater condemnation."

Let the Dead Bury Their Dead

In many instances Klinghoffer's attempts to obfuscate Jesus' intent are clearly deliberate. For example, he says "the oral Torah laid great stress on honoring life by showing reverence to those who have passed away, not allowing their bodies to lie out like carrion....Jesus had no patience for it. To a man who had just lost his father and hadn't yet attended to the burial, he said, 'Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead'" (p. 57). Obviously, Klinghoffer wants to portray Jesus as an uncaring, impetuous renegade who trampled all over the Mosaic law, at the same time he hides from the reader the moral import of the passage. First, Jesus did not deny the man's desire to bury his dead father. He merely told the man to give that responsibility to others. Surely the man's wife, his other children or the townspeople would see that the father was properly buried. Second, the context concerns the man's commitment as a disciple of Jesus. Jesus is now leaving the vicinity (*vr.* 18) and the man must decide whether he will go with Jesus. Is he truly

committed or do the concerns of the world still rule his motivations? Additionally, after having partially traveled through Israel, Jesus knew of the destitute spiritual condition of its inhabitants (see *vrs.* 10-12).⁴⁰ As such, he did not want the man to be unduly influenced, and more or less reveals this concern when he labels the people as "dead," that is, spiritually dead. This, most likely, is the reason Klinghoffer doesn't like the passage, for Jesus is making a social commentary on the spiritually decrepit state of Israel. But Klinghoffer, in his blindness, actually thinks it is Jesus who is spiritually decrepit.

Jesus' Reluctance to Claim Himself the Messiah

Klinghoffer then claims that "nowhere...is there a reference to Jesus's saying he was the Messiah. Maybe that's because he didn't. In the traditions that later were written down as the Gospels, Jesus is cagey. Never in a public setting does he volunteer to identify himself as 'the Christ'" (p. 60). Although Klinghoffer admits that, in answer to Caiaphas' question to Jesus, "Are you the Messiah?" that Jesus answers clearly in the affirmative with "I am" (Mark 14:62), and does the same with the Samaritan woman "I who speak to you am he" (John 4:25-26), he still complains that "Jesus was never so direct, much less in his public preaching. Why?" "Hence the foxiness, the reluctance to go public. He was pleased by the idea, but not entirely confident that it was true" (pp. 61-62). Whereas Klinghoffer interprets Jesus' "reluctance" with doubt about whether Jesus believed he was the Messiah, it never crosses Klinghoffer's mind that the real answer is in the very next chapter of John's Gospel, for there we find that the Jewish leaders were on a relentless mission to kill Jesus before his time, precisely because he had been claiming to be equal with God and thus the Messiah! (*cf.* John 5:8; 7:1, 25; 8:40).⁴¹ As the savior, Jesus had a mission to perform, and it was his purpose to minimize instigating the Jewish leaders until he was ready to be sacrificed. Thus, it is not by happenstance that much of John's Gospel is placed at the tail end of that mission.

⁴⁰ "When Jesus heard him, he marveled, and said to those who followed him, 'Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith. I tell you, many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.'"

⁴¹ John 5:18: "the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he not only broke the sabbath but also called God his Father, making himself equal with God"; John 7:1: "After this Jesus went about in Galilee; he would not go about in Judea, because the Jews sought to kill him"; John 7:25: "Some of the people of Jerusalem therefore said, 'Is not this the man whom they seek to kill?'"; John 8:40: "but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth which I heard from God; this is not what Abraham did."

Of course, when the New Testament is rather clear about Jesus' divinity, Klinghoffer tries to downplay it by resorting to the Historical Critical theory that his divinity was merely added to the New Testament by second or third generation Christians. Hence, he claims, "This suggests that the equation of Jesus with God is an artifact of decades long after Jesus died" or "Clearly the idea of the divine Jesus is the product of an intellectual evolution" (pp. 67-68). So, for such clear passages as Matt. 28:19 ("baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit"), Klinghoffer says this merely "reflects relatively advanced Christian thinking and was not part of the original Gospel text" (p. 68), yet he offers his reader no proof for such a crucial textual assertion. Similarly, when Jesus says "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30), Klinghoffer tries to escape its obvious impact by saying "It is hard to believe that he did say that" (p. 69) based simply on the fact that Matthew, Mark and Luke do not mention it, thus making his reader believe that unless a statement is recorded by a preponderance of writers, it is ineligible as a truth statement. Perhaps Klinghoffer also believes that passages in which the Pharisees are attributed as having recognized Jesus' claim to divinity (e.g., John 5:18: "This was why the Jews sought all the more to kill him, because he...called God his Father, making himself equal with God") were also added by later anonymous plagiarizers. At other times Klinghoffer seems to admit the force of the New Testament passage since he offers no further comment: "John's Gospel advances another step with its magisterial opening sentence, giving Jesus as God's divine 'Word,' or Logos, somehow identical with Him... 'and the Word was God" (p. 68). When he deals with Paul's description of Jesus (2Cor. 4:4: "the likeness of God" and Col. 1:15: "the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation") he chooses passages that were not intended to elaborate upon the divinity of Jesus as much as Jesus' human side serving its part in His mediating role. When Paul wants to discuss the divinity of Jesus, he is more direct, as he is, for example, in Titus 2:13: "looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus" (*cf.*, Titus 3:4: "God our Savior" and Titus 3:6: "Jesus Christ our Savior" and Isaiah 45:21: "a righteous God and Savior"), which is among the many passages teaching Christ's divinity that Klinghoffer does not mention.

The Attack on St. Paul

Klinghoffer saves an even more vicious attack for the Apostle Paul, for it is his thesis that "Paul's conception of Jesus Christ was the very turning point of Western history" (p. 97). Where Jesus "inspired" a departure from the Sinai covenant, Klinghoffer says Paul put the nails into the coffin. So Klinghoffer does his best to portray Paul as a bumbling, stumbling, pseudo-intellectual, and even more sinisterly, "a faker who didn't understand the faith he so passionately critiqued" (p. 115). Klinghoffer claims Paul "was among those who could not read Hebrew" simply because "whenever he cites from the Bible, it is evident that he was consulting the Greek translation, the Septuagint, which does not always

adhere to an accurate rendering of the original meaning" (p. 96). The truth is, Paul switches back and forth between the Hebrew and the Septuagint (LXX), and it is always for theological reasons. Klinghoffer would have known this had he examined just a few of Paul's quotes in detail. Paul also had two audiences to satisfy: the Alexandrian Jews who knew Greek and little or no Hebrew, and the Palestinian Jews who knew Hebrew and little or no Greek. As for accuracy, we noted earlier that we do not know if the Hebrew is the more accurate, since our only extant copies come from the Masoretes of the 10th century AD, whereas the LXX was written mostly in the 3rd and 2nd century BC.

Klinghoffer continues: "With Paul, the hints that he was not what he claimed to be were right on the surface....Take his claim to be the son of Pharisees....Or consider the boast that his family came from the tribe of Benjamin....This is hard to believe simply because sometime after the return from the Babylonian exile in 536 BCE, such tribal distinctions were lost" (pp. 95-96). If they were lost, why does Ezra 6:17-20 mention the Levites, a northern tribe dispersed almost 200 years earlier? Why does Neh. 11:4-36 distinguish between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin? Why does 2Macc 3:4, written in 124 BC, hundreds of years after Nehemiah, mention a "Simon of the tribe of Benjamin"? If lost, how could the Levitical priesthood, and thus the authenticity of Israel, have survived without knowing who was really a *bona fide* priest to continue the temple cult? Accordingly, Luke 1:5 tells us Zacharias was one such priest and his wife Elizabeth was from the "daughter of Aaron." Luke 2:36 tells us that Anna was from the tribe of Asher, yet Asher was a northern tribe already in the Diaspora. Unfortunately, Klinghoffer does not address these anomalies.

Was Jesus Coming "Soon"?

Klinghoffer, inserting the word "soon" before he quotes from Paul's words from 1Thess 4:16: "the Lord himself will descend from heaven" (p. 97), works off the image of Paul as one who mistakenly thought the end of the world was coming in the first century AD, which supposedly accounts for his zeal to convert as many Jews as possible before the end. If Klinghoffer had read from Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians he would have seen that his assessment of the first letter is incorrect, since Paul corrects the Thessalonians' own mistaken notion of a quick end to the world (see 2Thess 2:1-11). Of course, those of us who believe Paul was divinely inspired would necessarily understand that the Holy Spirit would not lead him to put mistaken notions in Holy Writ.

Klinghoffer's big beef, as we said, is with Paul's theological insistence that "we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive" (p. 108). Here Klinghoffer goes right for the jugular, for he argues against Paul's rationale for the "discharge," which was nothing less than the very core of Paul's teaching. He writes:

The first alien premise was that from a Jew who seeks God through the medium of the commandments, 'under the law,' God requires nothing less than perfection. What was needed in order to be 'saved' was absolute, total conformity with the law. Paul taught, 'For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written [in Deuteronomy 27:26], 'Cursed be every one who does not abide by all things written in the book of the law, and do them.'" The second repugnant premise was that under the economy of the law, God can't, or won't, freely forgive the penitent sinner. From these postulates there logically followed the need for some sort of intervention from heaven, the circumventing of the law. This was accomplished through the death of Christ, which offered a new route to salvation. As Moore argues, this was Paul's 'predetermined conclusion,' but the apostle 'can hardly have expected the argument to have effect with Jews, who would deny both premises.'

For one thing, Paul had misunderstood the verse just quoted from Deuteronomy....The Hebrew word that he took to mean 'abide by' really means 'uphold.' In other words, the Jew was expected to uphold all the Torah's commandments, affirming they were God's will. But there was no expectation of perfect conformity in his actions. The rabbis made this clear (pp. 110-111).

Did Paul misunderstand Deut. 27:26 or is Klinghoffer misunderstanding it? First, for the record, in Gal. 3:10 Paul is quoting Deut. 27:26 from the Septuagint, not the Hebrew, but the meaning is virtually the same.⁴² In the Hebrew version, the word in question is QUM (קִּיַּם) in the Hiphil imperfect. It is one of the more frequently used words in the Hebrew Bible, appearing over 450 times. Yes, it can mean "uphold," but it can also mean "perform."⁴³ The context will help determine what shade of meaning is being employed in a given verse. But for the sake of argument, let's just say it means "uphold," "confirm," or "establish" in Deut. 27:26. In that case, the remainder of the sentence specifies the only way the law can be "upheld." One must "do them," that is, do the laws (the "doing" here represented by the Qal infinitive לַעֲשׂוֹת, which makes it an unending requirement). Unfortunately, Klinghoffer forgot to mention that part of the grammatical structure. He

⁴² The LXX's Greek is: Επικτάρατος πᾶς ἄνθρωπος ὃς οὐκ ἐμμένει ἐν πᾶσι τοῖς λόγοις τοῦ νόμου τούτου ποιῆσαι αὐτούς. The Greek adds "all" (πᾶσι) but the Hebrew grammatical structure implies it without it having to be denoted.

⁴³ Gen. 26:3; Deut. 9:5; 1Sm. 3:12; 15:11, 13; 1Kg. 6:12; 8:20; 12:15; 2Kg. 23:3, 24; 2Chr. 6:10; 10:15; Neh. 5:13; 9:8; Jer. 11:5; 23:20; 28:6; 29:10; 30:24; 33:14; 34:18; 35:16.

makes it sound as if the only thing the Jews had to do was wave their hand at God and acknowledge that the laws existed or, as he puts it, "affirming that they were God's will," without giving God any commitment to fully obey them or even be required to fully obey them. Again, this was precisely the problem with the Jew. He was more interested in the institution of law than he was in honestly obeying the law, and this was St. Paul's chief complaint against them as well.⁴⁴

Klinghoffer's second objection is as follows:

As for God's attitude of strictness toward those 'under the law,' that idea was explicitly contradicted by the Hebrew scriptures themselves. The Psalms speak of this with special eloquence: 'God has not treated us according to our sin, nor repaid us according to our iniquities' [Ps. 103:10]. 'And do not enter into strict judgment with your servant, for no living creature would be vindicated before You' [Ps. 143:2]. Obviously the Psalmist, traditionally held to be King David, would not have prayed this way if God's standard operating procedure was indeed to hold humans to 'strict judgment.' Elsewhere David cried out, 'Let me fall into the Lord's hand, for His mercies are abundant; but let me now fall into the hand of man' [1Chr. 21:13](p. 111).

But all that this proves for Klinghoffer is that David, not the Jews at large, did not fall under the strict judgment of God. It is the same reason that the 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal in Elijah's day had not come under strict judgment; or why Joshua and Caleb did not come under strict judgment and thus were the only ones who could enter Canaan out of the millions of adult Jews who left Egypt. David had repented of his sins. The Psalms are filled with his total love of God and remorse for his own sins and shortcomings. The Psalms are also filled with David's constant battle against his Jewish enemies trying to trip him up. Even his own sons turned against him. This is precisely why St. Paul contrasts David's repentance over against the Jews at large who did not repent and insisted that doing 'works of the law' was the way to please God (*cf.* Rom. 3:28 to 4:8; Gal. 5:1-4). The upshot is this: it is only through repentance of one's sins and unfeigned faith in God that one can experience the mercies of God. If one does not repent yet feigns faith in God by following a regimen of external rituals, he is a hypocrite. He will receive no mercy from God. Law provides no mercy. It is an uncompromising and exacting judge. If you do not follow its precepts to the letter, it has no choice but to condemn you. Law, by itself, will condemn you for the slightest transgression against its decrees. Law is impersonal. It doesn't care whether you almost obeyed or whether you were weak one day but tried your best. It has no room for

⁴⁴ *cf.* Rom. 2:17-29; 9:30-10:21; 11:5-11.

pity and mercy, nor can it have room. If one lives by the law, he will die by the law. Only a personal being, who possesses mercy and compassion, could possibly forgive transgressions.

But personal beings don't give their forgiveness cheaply. The transgressor must show humility and repentance. And in the case of God, he is so very great that there must first be a sufficient atonement to appease Him for all past sins so that He will be willing to offer forgiveness. At this point Klinghoffer has another objection:

...the anonymous Letter to the Hebrews...An extended polemic against Judaism, it asserted that 'without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.' God needed blood, as in blood sacrifice, foremost the blood of the crucified Jesus, His sacrificed Son....the idea that penitence was not enough would have come as a surprise to the large majority of first-century Jews, who lived in the Diaspora and therefore had no regular access to the Temple rites. In not availing themselves of these rites at all times, they were relying on scripture, which taught that forgiveness could be secured without sacrifice. King Solomon had said that when the Jews were in exile from their land, without a Temple, they 'should repent...saying, 'We have sinned; we have been iniquitous; we have been wicked,' and they will return to You with all their heart and with all their soul...May You hear their prayer and their supplication from Heaven...and forgive Your people who sinned against you.' [1Kgs. 8:47-50] (p. 111)

The first problem with Klinghoffer's analysis is that he has made the exception into the rule. Obviously, if the Jews are in exile they cannot do sacrifices, but Solomon, the very king that did more sacrifices than anyone, is certainly not making the general rule that "forgiveness could be secured without sacrifice." In fact, the very first thing that the returning Jewish captives from Babylon did was to reestablish the cultic sacrifices, since that was the normal means through which sins could be atoned, at least temporarily. Second, the very fact that God may forgive them in the future is because Solomon prayed this mighty prayer of intercession to God, which was based on the very Temple which he built that offered sacrifices for sin. The same thing happened when Israel was about to enter Canaan. Moses told them that it wasn't for their righteousness that God was allowing them to take possession, but because of the (a) wickedness of the nations in Canaan, and (b) because He had made a promise to Abraham (Deut. 9:5-6). Along those lines, we don't even have an indication in the Hebrew Bible that the Jews in captivity had, indeed, called upon God for forgiveness. We only have the promise of God that the captivity would last no more than 70 years (*cf.* Jer. 25:11; Dan. 9:2). Third, it is obvious that the Jews in captivity cannot depend on the law to provide the basis upon which they could come back to Israel

or to forgive their sins, for the law offered no forgiveness. It would have to be a direct appeal to God, based on His compassion, the very thing Solomon acknowledged (1Kgs. 8:50).

As it stands, Klinghoffer has not shown any evidence that sacrifices were unnecessary or incidental for the forgiveness of sins. In fact, the very passage to which Klinghoffer appeals for forgiveness without sacrifice (1 Chronicles 21) is one of the most heart-wrenching narratives of sacrifice in the Hebrew Bible. To begin, God allows David to choose one of three punishments: three years of famine; three months of being chased by enemies; or three days of the sword of God. David decides on the third, since he believes it better to fall into God's hands rather than man's. Accordingly, God sends the avenging angel with a plague that begins by killing 70,000 men. The slaughter is so severe that God becomes grieved and commands the angel to cease. David then sees the angel rise between heaven and earth. Not knowing precisely what is happening, David pleads to the angel that he not come down again. In answering, the angel commands David to build an altar to the Lord for sacrifice, in order to stop the plague. David goes to the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite and pays him 600 shekels of gold for the animals to sacrifice. Thus, "David built an altar to the Lord there and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. He called on the Lord, and the Lord answered him with fire from heaven on the altar of burnt offering. Then the Lord spoke to the angel, and he put his sword back into its sheath" (1Chr. 21:26-27). As David hoped for, God has mercy and compassion on him. Yet David is not presumptuous toward God. He does not know if the angel will come back to continue the plague. When David admits his guilt for ordering the census and pleads to God not to destroy people who are innocent of his folly, God does not automatically rescind the plague, but tells David to offer a sacrifice. We should add that the prerogative of sacrificing to appease God's anger remains true, however, only because David was very close to God and lived a righteous life, as we also saw with Moses (1Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22; Ex. 32-33; Deut. 9:18-20).⁴⁵

If it takes that much sacrifice to appease God for David's one sin of taking a census when he shouldn't have, how much more sacrifice would it take to appease God's wrath for the sins of the whole world since the beginning of time? As St. Paul said, the blood of bulls and goats could never appease God sufficiently. They could only do so on a temporary basis. It is the very reason the High Priest had to go continually into the Holy of Holies, year in and year out, on the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur. Only the most supreme sacrifice by an unblemished victim could atone for the world's sins, which was accomplished by the very person prophesied by those cultic sacrifices, Jesus Christ. As such, He needed to enter only once (Heb. 9:12-14). Once he is in the Holy of Holies, he never goes out of it, and thus

⁴⁵ See my book, *Not By Bread Alone*, pp. 57-62, for more detail on Old Testament sacrifices.

he can re-present His one sacrifice to the Father, what we today call the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass (Heb. 9:23-24).

Jewish "Foci" Out of Focus

Finally, quoting the Jewish philosopher, Martin Buber, Klinghoffer concludes:

"the Jewish soul was unique in two ways. First by its nature it sees God as at once 'beyond the grasp of man, and yet...present in an immediate relationship with these human beings who are absolutely incommensurable with him.' Second, also by nature the Jewish soul feels the worlds, in a remarkably visceral way, as unredeemed....Taken together, these 'foci of the Jewish soul' tend to rule out an acceptance of Jesus as Messiah. The first precludes a belief in the Incarnation, God walking as a man on earth, a foreign concept that violates what the Jew knows about the transcendent yet immediately present God. The second precludes the Christian opinion that the Messiah has already come to redeem the world....Because of this twofold essence of the Jewish soul...Jews alike feel the same reaction, the same refusal, the same instinctive turning away. In a word: No" (p. 217).

So the rationale for the Jew in not accepting Christ is that God is so great that he could not have become a man. But as we have seen, it is precisely the greatness of God that the Jew does not understand and that leads him to reject Christ. The Christian religion says God is so very great that we cannot presume to have an "immediate relationship" with Him in the face of our sins that separate us from Him. In fact, the Jews were told the same thing at Sinai. If they even tried to touch the mountain that Moses climbed to get the Commandments, they would be put to death on the spot (Ex 19:12). God is so great, so holy, so totally-other, that we cannot expect intimacy from Him without first preserving His honor and appeasing His anger for sin to the degree He requires. Yet it is precisely the presumption that no such supreme sacrifice is needed which is at the core of the Judaistic religion. The Jew believes the "immediate relationship" is a right, an inheritance, an entitlement, given at Sinai simply because they are Jews. Sacrifice for the Jew is merely an act of appreciation, not an act of redemption. As for Klinghoffer's second "foci," it is precisely because this supreme sacrifice was a necessity that the Messiah's mission had to come in two stages: one which appeased God for the sins of man and one that inaugurated the complete fruits of that appeasement for all eternity. But if the Jew cannot see the need for the divine sacrifice, then he will be forever hampered with the futile "foci of the Jewish soul" that will leave him wandering in Sinai's desert instead of meeting God on Sinai's mountain. It is my hope that Mr. Klinghoffer will choose Christ, just as Moses did:

By faith Moses...considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward" (Heb. 11:24-26).

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