

# A refutation of Christopher Sparkes

## Introduction

Christopher is a self-appointed Bible translator, who has recently launched his new Bible version, *'The Keys to the Kingdom: Holy Bible'*.

I came across him watching an interview of him by Richard Vobes (the Bald Explorer) on his YouTube channel.

Christopher not only claims that all Bible translations are wrong and only his is correct (hubris or what) but also has heterodox views on theology.

I have no time to read his version or study anything else. I am simply reacting to what he said in a long interview with Richard. This is enough to start a number of ringing bells.

## The wrong order of OT books

His first claim is that the books of the OT are placed in the wrong order. He states that Jesus affirmed that the order is: the Law, the prophets and the psalms. This based on the verse:

Then He said to them, 'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.' Lk 24:44

Jesus refers to the division of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jesus is here paraphrasing using 'Psalms' to represent the Ketuvim or Hagiographa (holy writings). Psalms is put for the whole; a division often seen in the Talmud, and other writings.

The Hebrew Bible consisted of:

- The Law (*Torah*; five books of Moses).
- The Prophets (*Nabiim*; Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, which were called the 'former prophets'; and Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve smaller books from Daniel, to Malachi, which were called the 'latter prophets').
- The Hagiographa or Writings (*Ketuvim*; Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, and the two books of Chronicles).<sup>1</sup>

Christopher is correct in affirming this (though he omits 'Ketuvim').

What he ignores is the fact that by the time of Christ the most widespread version of Hebrew Scripture was the Septuagint (LXX). This was a Greek translation of the OT initiated in Alexandria for the use of the many Jews in the Diaspora<sup>2</sup> across the Mediterranean. It was originally made for Greek-speaking Jews in Egypt in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Jews numbered only twenty-two books of the whole, to bring them to the number of the letters in the Hebrew alphabet. They did this by joining Ruth to Judges, making the two books of Samuel only one; and so of Kings and Chronicles; joining the Lamentations to Jeremiah, and making the twelve minor prophets only one book.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2:5, 'And there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven'.

centuries BC. The Greek Empire of Alexander had resulted in Greek being the vernacular written language and this continued even in the Roman Empire. Jews that could not read Hebrew could read Greek. Thus many of the OT quotes in the NT are from the LXX.

The book order of the LXX equates to that of our Bible versions. In other words, the book order follows that used by the apostles.

Christopher ignores a principle that he avers to himself, that of the divine preservation of the Bible throughout history. God not only preserved the text but the order of the books. The order we have is the order God desired.

In the ancient past the book order of the Bible varied from place to place. Longer books (e.g. Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles) were sub-divided because the whole book could not fit into a scroll. Thus there was diversity in book order. This changed when the printing press became available. After that time book order became consistent. This was under the providence of God.

## A new translation

With the plethora of modern Bible versions, most of which are appalling, we need another one like a hole in the head. However a new one claiming to be the only correct one is a serious and worrying matter.

Christopher, who appears to be a decent chap and a genuine believer in Christ, rails at translations by committee. However, there is a reason for this, New translations by individuals tend to be full of errors because it is difficult for one person to correct bias and avoid agendas. When a whole committee has to reach consensus over every verse, there is more chance of avoiding bias and making mistakes.

Christopher gave one important example in his translation of John 11:26. He says that all translations get this wrong. He, based on his heretical theological foundations, claims that this text does not say 'will never die'.

Here is the actual text. [Greek characters will not appear correctly unless you have the same Greek font available.]

*NKJV*

And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?  
Byzantine text.

*KJV*

And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? Byzantine text.

*NSB*

And everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this? Alexandrian text.

*RSV*

And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?  
Alexandrian text.

*Young's Literal Translation*

And every one who is living and believing in me shall not die--to the age.  
Byzantine text.

*Greek NT Eclectic text: UBS4-NA27*

kai. pa/j o` zw/n kai. pisteu,wn eivj evme. ouv mh. avpoqa,nh| eivj to.n aivw/na\ pisteu,eij tou/toË

*Greek NT: Scrivener 1881 – Beza 1589*

kai. pa/j o` zw/n kai. pisteu,wn eivj evme.( ouv mh. avpoqa,nh| eivj to.n aivw/naÏ pisteu,eij tou/toË

*Interlinear (Scrivener)*

kai.	and
pa/j	every
o`	This, that, he, she, it, one
zw/n	alive
kai.	and
pisteu,wn	believing
eivj	Into, in, at, upon
evme	me
ouv	not
mh	not
avpoqa,nh	Die, face death
eivj	Into, to, in, at
to.n	The, this, that, he, she, it
aivw/na	Age, eternity, world
pisteu,eij	believe
tou/to	this

Christopher states that there is no Greek word for 'never'. That is not true. The NT usually uses *oudepote* for this. Do you think that the Greeks, using Koine Greek for transactions and commercial business, could not indicate 'never'. Preposterous! Actually he means not in this verse and even refers to *oudepote* in passing.

Here 'never' is actually indicated by two words together (*ou me*) making a double negative for impact and emphasis. It is strongly indicating a negative response.

Here is what the great Greek scholar AT Robertson had to say about this verse.

**Joh 11:26 - Shall never die** (ou mh apoqanh| eij ton aiwna). Strong double negative ou mh with second aorist active subjunctive of apoqhskw again (but spiritual death, this time), "shall not die for ever" (eternal death). **Believest thou this?** (pisteueij toutoË) Sudden test of Martha's insight and faith with all the subtle turns of thought involved.

Archibald Thomas Robertson, 'Word Pictures in the NT'.

The translators mostly ignore 'into the age' because it is redundant (Christopher rails at this). 'Shall not die no not ever into the ages' is the same as saying 'will never die' but it is stylistically clumsy.

This form appears elsewhere, such as 2 Pt 1:10, 'Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble'. 'Never' is again *ou me*.

So everything Christopher says about this verse, and one that is his best example for his translation, is completely false. The text strongly indicates 'never' by using two words for emphasis.

## **Denial of the immortality of the soul**

### **The soul that sins shall die**

Christopher claims that there is no immortality of the soul, a cardinal Christian doctrine. He believes this because Ezekiel 18:4 says, 'The soul that sins shall die'. The verse is 'Behold, all souls are Mine; the soul of the father as well as the soul of the son is Mine; the soul who sins shall die.'

This is quite facile.

'Soul' in Hebrew can be translated many ways: soul, life, living being, person, self, creature, appetite, mind, the seat of emotions, man, breathing person etc.

The verse thus means: Behold, all souls (persons) are Mine; the soul (life) of the father as well as the soul (life) of the son is Mine; the soul (person) who sins shall die

Clearly Ezekiel is talking about people not about the inner life of a man.

Christopher needs a verse to defend his claim that the soul is not immortal. He needs to do this because he hates the cardinal doctrine of Hell. But this verse gives no foundation for denying the immortality of the soul.

Now I have fully explained this doctrine elsewhere and will not go over this here. I will simply make some basic points.

### **The immortality of the soul / spirit is a cardinal Christian doctrine**

The Bible everywhere teaches that the soul and spirit are immortal (many Christians unite these two separate items as one inner life). It makes these points:

#### *OT*

- Sheol / Hades ('grave') is a place of departed spirits that have a conscious existence (cf. Lk 16).
- It teaches a resurrection after death (Job 19:23-27; Ps 16:9-11; Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2).
- It teaches the constant bliss of believers after death (Ps 16:9-11, 17:15, 73:22, 24, 26).

#### *NT*

- The souls of believers survive death (Matt 10:28; Lk 23:43; Jn 11:25ff, 14:3; 2 Cor 5:1-8).
- The souls of the wicked survive death (Matt 11:21-24; Lk 12:4-5; Rm 2:5-11; 2 Cor 5:10).
- Believers are blessed after death (Matt 13:43, 25:34; Rm 2:7, 10; 1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21; 2 Tim 4:8).
- The wicked endure everlasting punishment after death (Mk 9:43, 46, 48; Lk 12:4-5, 16:19-31; Rev 20:12-15).

The immortality of believers is not just endless life, but a fulfilled life of pure bliss in communion with God the Father and Jesus in a restored Earth where heaven and Earth meet. It is fulness of life. The resurrection of believers is in a new spiritual body that is like that of the resurrected Jesus (1 Cor 15:44; Phil 3:21; 1 Jn 3:2).

The immortality of unbelievers is endless punishment for sins. Sinners are raised in a new body that will sustain an eternity of suffering. Jesus words 'where their worm dies not and their flame is not quenched' clearly teaches endless punishment and conscious existence. This punishment is what is meant by the 'second death' (Rev 20:14).<sup>3</sup> Though it is a conscious existence, it is not life, not bliss and is eternal separation from God.

The sentencing of the guilty to eternal condemnation, where there are degrees of punishment according to sins committed, accords with natural justice. Christopher's claim that sinners are treated the same as the righteous at the end not only impugns God's righteousness and justice but even human justice. How can it be acceptable that Chairman Mao, who killed anything up to 50 million, people would receive the same treatment as a person who lived a quiet, life committing no crime?

### *Historic affirmation*

The whole historic Christian church has understood and accepted this for 2000 years. It has only been denied by a small cadre of heretics from time to time. All sound church confessions, catechisms, dogmatics and creeds teach this clearly. For example:

The bodies of men, after death, return to dust, and see corruption:(1) but their souls, which neither die nor sleep, having an immortal subsistence, immediately return to God who gave them.

Westminster Confession, 32. Death and the Resurrection from the Dead, 32:1.

In affirming this error, Christopher puts himself outside the consensus of historic Christianity and makes himself a heretic.

## **Denial of the doctrine of Hell**

Again I have recently written a new paper defending the doctrine of Hell as everlasting punishment.<sup>4</sup> I refer readers to this paper. Here are some simple texts which clearly claim this.

Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels'. Matt 25:41

He himself shall also drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out full strength into the cup of His indignation. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. Rev 14:10

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<sup>3</sup> The first death is natural death after living on Earth. The body is then raised for the final judgment and the second death is Hell.

<sup>4</sup> 'Hell: why it is everlasting.'

The cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death. Rev 21:8

For whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Jude 1:13

The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast. Rev 14:11

Where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched'. Mark 9:44

Where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched'. Mark 9:46

Where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched'. Mark 9:48

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell [Gehenna], into the fire that shall never be quenched -- where 'Their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' Mk 9:43-44. Also 45-46, 47-48.

His winnowing fan *is* in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire. Matt 3:12

It is impossible to ignore the clear, rational statements in these verses teaching that Hell is everlasting in duration.

## Conclusion

I am all for mavericks as my readers will know, but the mavericks must be sound and Biblical. Christopher is not sound, not Biblical, but follows a small minority of would-be Bible scholars that deny essential Christian doctrines. We must call such folk heretics; they promote doctrines that are heretical: a dogma that is at odds with what the Bible teaches.

Now I do not suggest censoring Christopher or attacking him on the street or doing anything at all. In this day and age this needs saying. Christopher can say what he likes, but he should not pretend that it follows the historical Biblical consensus; it does not; in fact it completely opposes the historic consensus of apostles and prophets.

My paper is to warn the Lord's people about what he saying so that they are not tricked into purchasing his version and getting deceived by it. Be warned.

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