

# Gospel Truths

## Front Page

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by H. E. Phillips

### **The Menace of Men's Business Meetings to Oversee the Work**

**S**INCE the days of the apostles men have struggled to reform, refine, rearrange, rebuild and refurbish the organization and work of the church Christ built. Every effort has ended in apostasy and the creation of hundreds of manmade religious bodies to curse humanity. Many became angry and left the foundation of the faith for the religious fields open to them from the minds and works of man.

A principle adopted by some in the beginning of the Restoration Movement is: *We speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent.* That involved doing Bible things in Bible ways. This principle is also stated in inspired scripture: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (I Peter 4:11).

Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven (Matt.

7:21). "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (II John 1:9). "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

The above verses plainly teach that none of us may go beyond or come short of the revelation of Jesus Christ without incurring the wrath of God and eternal damnation.

In addition, the apostle Paul wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after men. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:6-12).

The above passages clearly establish these facts: 1) Nothing can be done without Bible authority; 2) In no instance may we go beyond what is written by the authority of Christ; 3) In no instance may we come short of the authority of Christ; 4) The only

authority recognized by Christ is His word revealed to us in the "word of the truth of the gospel" (Colossians 1:5). It is complete and will furnish each of us unto every good work (II Timothy 3:16-17).

#### Substitutes for the Eldership

I am not trying to be negative about the work and worship of the church, but no one can be scriptural without being negative when the inspired scriptures are negative. We dare not try to "eliminate the negative" in an appeal to the "positive" minded brethren who do not respect all the inspired word of God.

God sent Jeremiah to His people with a clear message: "Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth. See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:8-10).

Jeremiah was sent to require four negative things first: 1) "to root out" 2) "to pull down" 3) "to destroy" 4) "to throw down." He then was to require two positive things: 1) "to build" and 2) "to plant." His mission required twice as much negative preaching as positive preaching. The New Testament requires much negative preaching to provoke "repentance" and "obedience" to the gospel of Christ.

The continual effort since the beginning of the Restoration to implant some new and different oversight in the local church has resulted in division after division. The process continues. Often such departures come from within the eldership because some are not qualified or have left the truth. Paul spoke of this in Acts 20:28-30.

"Leadership" may be a dangerous word when applied to any effort at oversight or

supervision of the work and worship of the local church. It implies improper authority in the hands of a few who assume they are qualified to act as "overseers" when the church has no bishops (Acts 20:28). Sometimes they are called "chairman" or "committees" or "directors" or "leaders." Someone asks, "What can they be called?" That is a good question! What do you call anything relating to the church that has no basis in scripture? Whatever it is called, it is unscriptural and wrong as applied to the oversight!

Scripturally appointed elders who are qualified exercise the only authorized "leadership" in the oversight of the church. No one else has the divine right to claim the leadership in the church except those who can scripturally be appointed overseers the elders of a local church. Christ made it that way, and it cannot be changed! Scriptural teachers, preachers and deacons who exercise some direction in a Bible class are "leaders" in the limited sense of leading the study of the Bible in the class. Absolutely no authority is stated or implied beyond that Bible class. This is not a "leadership" in ruling anybody.

Faithful members of the church who set a good example by their words and deeds exercise some "leadership" by setting the spiritual examples of what following Christ means. None of this "leadership" has any authority or oversight in the work and worship of the church of Christ.

When we speak of "leaders" in the church, we should designate the character of such leadership, for if we speak of "leadership" as the governing power of the congregation, we should make sure we are speaking of the eldership.

There is a practice that "LEADERS" should be appointed in the church in the place of elders, if none are qualified, and that they should be called Leaders instead of Elders. This is another way to avoid obeying

the Lord by appointing men to the eldership who are qualified. Many qualified men are never appointed elders because of jealousy and envy on the part of some others in the church. However, in the case where no man is scripturally qualified to be appointed to the eldership, what scriptural principle could be used to substitute another "office" called "Leaders" in the place of the elders? Any such would do violence to the word of God. Also the "Office Of The Leaders" provides a way of placing in the oversight men who can not qualify to be elders. It is disobedience to God! ❌

## Editorial



by J. T. Smith

### A.D. 70 Doctrine # 2

**A**S we observed last month (October, 10) the A.D. 70 doctrine is a new doctrine. It is listed with several designations — A.D. 70 doctrine, Realized Eschatology, and the Max King Theory (so named because Max King of Warren, Ohio is the father of it). The doctrine, "in a nutshell" is that when the destruction of Jerusalem took place in A.D. 70, all Bible prophecy was fulfilled including: 1) the kingdom of Christ not being fully set up until A.D. 70; 2) the second coming of Christ; 3) the resurrection of the dead; 4) the judgment day; 5) and the end of the world! If this theory doesn't make sense to you, it is because these common

biblical terms have been *redefined* by King as he presents his theory.

Of the five things listed above, we dealt with the first three in our last article. In this article we want to deal with numbers four and five.

### The Judgment Day

The word "judgment" is used 186 time in the Bible. God brought "judgment" on His people throughout both Old and New Testaments. The first time the word was used was in Exodus 12:12 "For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I *am* the LORD." This is not , however, the first time God had executed judgment. The first time was in the Garden of Eden when He brought judgment on Adam and Eve when they sinned. Because of their sins they were cast out of the Garden (Genesis 3). Then of course we remember the judgment that was brought upon the world by God during the days of Noah in Genesis 6.

In Isaiah and Jeremiah God spoke of judgment that was to come upon the His people because of their disobedience. In 722 B.C. God brought judgment upon His people. They were taken into Assyrian captivity. Again in 606 B.C. God brought judgment on His people when they were taken into Babylonian captivity. And, it is true that again God's judgment against His people was promised because of their disobedience.

Jesus foretold the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24. But was this simply another of God's judgments against a disobedient people or *the* judgment day? That's the question that must be settled. If the Scriptures teach that it was *the* judgment day then Max King's theory may be correct.

From the Old Testament we read about "judgment" that will come. Ecclesiastes

12:13-14 “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.” So, God is going to bring even “secret things” into this judgment. Also from the New Testament, “But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment” (Matthew 12:36). “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (II Timothy 4:8). The Lord, the righteous judge, will reward Paul and all those who have loved His appearing. II Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”

#### **Who Will Be In *The* Judgment?**

Those who reject the Lord's Word. “He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him -- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

In a context where Jesus was speaking of judgment He said, “Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth -- those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation” (John 5:28-29). Is this what happened in A.D. 70? Did *all* those in the graves hear His voice and come forth?

God has already warned us about those who would teach that the resurrection has already passed. II Timothy 2:16-18 “But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. <sup>17</sup>And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; <sup>18</sup>Who

concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.”

**All Nations.** “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left” (Matthew 25:31-33). Now if the final judgment was in 70 A.D., isn't it a fact that the above passages and many more that could be cited are made to be non-sense? Only the Jews were involved in God's judgment when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem — NOT ALL NATIONS. How can Max King's theory be true? And, if that is true, why would Paul say, “. . . For we shall **all** stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Romans 14:10). (bold type mine for emphasis, jts). You see, the farther we go, the more ridiculous this theory becomes.

#### **What About A.D. 70 And The End Of The World?**

Yes, what about it indeed? Obviously those who believe this Realized Eschatology theory make Peter's statement null and void. “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up” (II Peter 3:10). Thus if the judgment on Jerusalem in A.D 70 represented “the day of the Lord” in this passages, we are no longer here. Everything that our eyes look upon is just a figment of our imagination. I am not here, you are not here. Isn't that brilliant?

Also consider, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works,

by the things which were written in the books” (Revelation 20:12). I ask you, can anyone be serious in believing that this took place in A.D. 70?

So, what has happened to all the people who have lived since A.D. 70? Well, they are not quite sure. Perhaps we are in the first phase of eternal life. Perhaps the Lord has left us here to cleanse the earth and make it a better place to live. Well, then, what will happen to those who have died since A.D. 70? They have probably gone into the second phase of eternity! Brilliant!

In the fifty-nine years I have been preaching the gospel I have heard lots of false theories set forth. However, I believe this one is the most far-fetched I have ever heard. As I said last month, when I first heard this theory a number of years ago I wondered if anyone in his right mind would believe it. Never having personally spoken to anyone who believes it, I am not in a position to say. However, I still have my doubts. ❧

## Women’s Page



### Honesty

by Geneva Brown Smith

He was a middle-aged businessman of average appearance and intelligence working in a nearby town. His faithful wife of thirty years had given him three beautiful and talented children who had long since married and started families of their own.

Was he happy? No one seemed to know for sure. At least to all appearances, he was. But, as is often the case, “the grass being always greener,” he found himself involved with another woman in the town where he worked. This continued for several months, but because things just did not seem right with him, his family became suspicious. There had been little “clues,” but so far, they had been ignored. His daughters decided to follow him one evening, and he was caught! His good wife divorced him, his lady-friend who had not known he was married dumped him, and his children would not speak to him. This man had lost everything for being dishonest about his marriage and immoral in his dealings.

This word “honesty” “denotes dignified seriousness, the ethical meaning of what is fair, right, and honorable, of such conduct as deserves esteem” (W.E. Vine). “Characterized by integrity and straightforwardness in conduct, thought, and speech...free from fraud” (Webster)

All of us have seen dishonesty in our highest officials. Presidents have cheated, lied, and broken the law, setting for our youth a perverted example of leadership.

We have seen dishonesty in business. Men embezzle money from their companies, then lie about it in court...therefore breaking two laws. Some of them are imprisoned. Some probably think they will never be exposed. They usually are.

We even see dishonesty in the church. Some people become members of a church to promote their business interests. They scheme and play politics in order to obtain some economic advantage. Sometimes it works for them, but they profess concern for others in order to fill their own pockets.

Honesty is essential to the well being of people today. Whether or not one is honest affects his self-image, conscience, relation-

ships with others, and ultimately his final destiny.

Dishonesty is a learned behavior. One must come to a point in his life where he feels the need to hide something before he behaves dishonestly.

There are several areas in which one must be honest. We will name a few:

One should be honest in his relationship to God. He knows our hearts, anyway. "Providing for **honest** things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (II Corinthians 8:21).

One should be honest with self. Many people are deluded because they are not honest with themselves. "As a man thinks in his heart, so it he" (Proverbs 23:7). "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are **honest**, whatsoever things are just...think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

One should be honest with family members. Trust and confidence should characterize the relationships of families. It would be a terrible tragedy if one could not trust his family. "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live **honestly**" (Hebrews 13:8)

One should be honest with fellow Christians. "But have renounced the hidden things of **dishonesty**, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (II Corinthians 4:2).

Honesty is born in the heart of a child. He comes into the world pure, clean, and honest. Young children always tell the truth. They will tell you exactly how they feel even when it is not considered "politically correct." Do not expect flattery from a young child. It has never occurred to him to be dishonest. Jesus said, "suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them

not, for of such is the kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 10:14).

Wouldn't the world be a wonderful place if all people were as honest and straightforward as the little children? Are we? ❧

### **"Concerning This Sect ... Everywhere It Is Spoken Against"**

Acts 28:22

by Paul R. Blake

**F**ROM the time we begin listening and understanding as children, to the time when hearing and comprehension fade in age, we hear faithful gospel preachers teach that the church of Christ is the "one body" spoken of in Ephesians 4:4 and is not a denomination of men. We know this, but the world does not. God has made it our responsibility to teach the lost that salvation can be found only in the body of the Lord. Satan tries every way he can to hinder us in the carrying out of this task and chief among these hindrances is ignorance. The world, in its ignorance of truth, equates the church of Christ with denominations of human origin, and we, in ignorance due to a lack of serious Bible study, fail to properly answer them in this matter.

In Acts 28, Paul encounters countrymen who belonged to a "mainline" religion of that era, Judaism. They were guilty of the same mistake that so many repeat today, calling the Lord's church a sect, assuming that it was created by men. "We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against" (Acts 28:22). But more serious than the problem of confusing the church of Christ with a sect of men is the difficulty seen in the second half of verse twenty-two — "everywhere it is spoken against." Men, in their ignorance, take partial doctrines and half-truths and develop them into accusations against the body of Christ. Compounding this problem

is the fact that many professed members of the church (I include elders, deacons, teachers, and preachers as well) are unable to fully answer these accusations. They have failed to keep Peter's admonition to "be ready always to give an answer," as thus the world continues on ignorant of the truth concerning the church of Christ.

For instance, when someone says to us, "Alexander Campbell was the man who founded your church," what is our stock answer? "Oh no! Jesus Christ founded our church; Alexander Campbell just restored it." Brethren, we have given an incomplete answer. The church was not restored by Campbell or any other man for it never went out of existence. In Daniel 2:44, the inspired prophet clearly states in four different ways that the kingdom of Christ would have no end. I have heard brethren concede to sectarians that they believed that the church went out of existence between the years 200 A.D. to the year 1850 simply because they don't read about it in secular history. They are forgetting that their faith is based on the Word of God and not secular history. Written history records few of the events noted in the Bible, but we don't need the word of an uninspired man to cause us to believe in the flood, exodus, or the resurrection. Why, then, do some feel that we need it to believe the words of Daniel when he states that the kingdom would last forever? Where were the faithful Christians during those silent years? They weren't at the Council of Nicea or at any other human doctrine adoption forum. They weren't part of the mainline religions and thus written history didn't notice them.


We can be thankful for Campbell and other sincere, godly men who sought truth, for without their efforts at study and preaching many would be lost today. But to assume that the Lord's church went out of existence until it was restored by Campbell is presumptuous to say the least.

Another accusation we poorly defend the church against is, "You believe that yours is the only right church and that you are the only ones going to heaven." Instead of completely answering this statement, we again fall short with one of our standardized form defenses. "Members of the church of Christ ARE going to be the only ones in heaven because it is the only church you can read of in the Bible." The scriptural answer to the accusation should be made thus: "No, members of the church of Christ are not going to be the only ones in heaven. There will be faithful ones who lived under the Patriarchs, the faithful under the Mosaical priesthood, the Gentiles who were a law unto themselves, children who died before reaching the age of accountability, the thief on the cross, the beings and beasts of power spoken of in Old Testament and New Testament prophecies, angels and all of the other hosts of heaven. Tally up all of those beings and you may find members of the church of Christ in a minority up there. But for our time, the only way a sinner can gain access to that blessed realm is through the body of Christ." Begin with the basic Bible principles taught in Ephesians 4:4 and Acts 2:47 and an answer to this accusation will easily follow.

We are sometimes told that "you Church of Christ's are too narrow-minded." Our trite answer usually comes quickly back, "that's because the way is narrow." We are not a narrow people; that's a misuse of Matthew 7:13-14. We are a free people, following a perfect law of liberty and don't have to carry the same burden the world does. Christians who are faithful to the law of liberty are free from death and will live with the Father forever. We are free from sin and its consequences: we sleep well at night for we have had our guilt removed, we are free from sin induced physical afflictions because we flee the sin. Narrow-minded? If anything, the Lord's body is the

single most unprejudiced institution this world will ever see. Christ accepts anyone into His fold in spite of what he or she was in the past. Christ does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, occupation, wealth, social status, or former religions and creeds. He will save and make a part of His church anyone who submits to His will.

Now, what if we have done our best to completely answer the accusations of the world against the church and the accuser is still unconvinced? Paul had the same problem with the Jews of Acts 28, "Some believed the things that were spoken, and some did not" (verse 24). He simply told them that Isaiah had talked of the close minded hundreds of years previously and Paul knew that there would still be people who would listen and profit by it in spite of those who did not.

Let us praise those who will accept the truth concerning the church and pray for those who do not. Let US be ready to give an answer to those who question (I Peter 3:15). Let US earnestly contend for the faith (Jude 3) and let US be set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians 1:17). "Concerning this sect... everywhere it is spoken against." Are you ready to defend it? 

## **Studies In Biblical History**

by Bob Price

### **In Search Of The Bible**

#### **The Dead Sea Scrolls:**

#### **Part 3 'Khirbet Qumran**

**A** study of the Dead Sea Scrolls, however brief, would be incomplete without some mention of the men who were responsible for the manuscripts we call The Dead Sea Scrolls. Therefore, to enlarge our understanding of the scrolls I want to devote this article, and the next, to an overview of the site of Qumran and those who worked and lived in the ruins known as

Khirbet Qumran. After the initial discovery of the scrolls in the nearby caves it was to be expected that excavations at Khirbet Qumran should follow. The Qumran ruin (Khirbet Qumran) had been noted by travelers for years. It is located on a northern terrace on the Wadi Qumran, twelve hundred yards from the Dead Sea.

In 1857 Feleceen de Saulcy, describing his travels in the Dead Sea area, identified Qumran as the site of ancient Gomorrah. This view has since been completely discredited both on geographical and linguistic criteria. Gomorrah was situated at the southern end of the Dead Sea, and Qumran is near the northwest corner of the sea. Linguistically there is no resemblance to Gomorrah in the name Qumran. The German orientalist, Gustav Dalman, reasoned that the ruins of Qumran, with the cemetery nearby, must have been a Roman military outpost. While this guess was not to prove completely correct, evidence does suggest that, for a short time, the tenth Roman legion did occupy it as a military outpost. A preliminary investigation of the ruin in 1949 by G. Lankester Harding proved inconclusive, but serious work began in November 1951 under the auspices of the Jordan Department of Antiquities and the Archaeological Museum of Palestine. It was quickly determined that the site was occupied by the people (some think the Essenes) who used theaves, and that the cemetery nearby was contemporaneous with the site. Further excavations in 1953 and 1954 enabled a reasonable, but limited, reconstruction of the life of the members of the Qumran community.

Qumran was a rectangular community center, roughly 30 x 37 meters in size, built of large roughly hewn stones fixed with mud plaster (indicative of its time), as the focal point of the building complex. A massive defensive tower stood at the northwest corner. East of the tower was a kitchen with

several fireplaces, and southwest of the tower were assembly rooms or refectories for the community. At the east is a large room which at first puzzled the excavators. When the archaeologists pieced together fragments of a plaster table and bench and discovered two ink wells (one bronze, one terracotta), they concluded that this was the scriptorium, or writing room, one of the ink-wells actually contained dried ink. Here many of the scrolls found in the nearby caves must have been produced.

Southeast of the main building two cisterns, several large sinks, and a latrine with a kind of "septic tank" were found. Water, collect-ed in the natural reservoirs at the base of the cliffs, was channeled by means of a remarkable stone aqueduct to the intricate system of reservoirs which served such an important function in the Qumran com-munity. Not only was it necessary to provide for normal needs of water but also the ceremonial washing which provided ritual purity for the members of the community.

The stairs, cistern floor, and several rooms of the ruin offer evidence of a disastrous earthquake. It is felt that the clearly defin-able cracks at Qumran date to the year 31 B.C. Josephus described an earthquake which shook Judea in that year.

Archaeologists have excavated about twenty graves in the nearby cemetery. Male as well as female skeletons have been identified. The absence of jewelry and ornamental objects indicates that this community. Pottery and coins have enabled the excavators to assign specific dates for the settlement of Khirbet Qumran. Present indications are that the site was occupied in three periods, with some evidence of sporadic occupation at other times. It has been suggested, on the basis of the archaeological evidence, that the settlement was built in the days of Alexander Jannaeus (110 B.C.) and occupied until the earthquake

of 31 B.C. Then the tower was ruined, the pool cracked, and the entire area was rendered useless. The building complex and the area were presumably abandoned at that time.

In the time of Archelaus (4 B.C.- A.D. 6) the Qumran area was re-occupied. Extensive repairs were made and the community center was enlarged. The evidence indicates that this second occupation was by the group that had occupied it before the earthquake. About A.D. 68, however, the settlement came to an end. Roman armies were bent on humbling the Jews who had dared to defy them. The Qumran community hid its precious manuscripts in nearby caves, perhaps with the thought that they would return, when the clouds of war had lifted, and continue their monastic life. However, they never returned. While some of these caves were doubtless discovered in anti-quity, others remained undisturbed by human hands until the mid-twentieth century.

There is evidence that Roman soldiers occupied Khirbet Qumran after A.D. 68. Their presence, however, contributed nothing to its history.

It is now clear that the caves, cemetery and community center are related. The people who lived in the caves and carried on their communal activities in the community cen-ter were the ones who copied the manu-scripts found in the caves, and hid them there when they saw that their community was going to be destroyed by the approaching Roman legion. In the next article we will briefly discuss "The People of Qumran."

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## Watch out for the “Quick Fix”



by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

“And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not loose heart.” – Galatians 6:9 (NKJV).

Someone has said, “The American prayer is: ‘Lord, give me patience and give it to me right now’”. We want results right now, rather than in due season. We want our problems solved immediately, if not before.

The electrical system blows a fuse. Why spend valuable time and gas going for a new fuse? There is that penny in your pocket. Place it behind the old fuse and everything is fine – for now. So what, if the real problem is ignored? So what, if there is risk of burning your house down? It works! The lights are burning, the refrig is cooling, and the stove is cooking – what better evidence can you have than that!

God promised Abraham and Sarah a son. But God surely was taking his own good time to make good his promise. So, Sarah went for the quick fix. She persuaded Abraham to father a son by their handmaid. It worked! Ishmael was born! But he was not the son of promise. God still carried out his plan in due time. But, Sarah’s quick fix to the problem brought sorrow upon sorrow to her and her descendants.

The Lord’s church has had crisis after crisis beginning with the first congregation at Jerusalem. God gave the perfect plan for the church, but those who work that plan are not perfect. They make mistakes, some with

little adverse consequences, others with major consequences. There are attendance problems, problems with getting folks to be baptized, with divisions, with fellowship, with internal sin, etc.. We would all like to see these problems resolved – right now! How I would like to go to the next assembly and find every Christian along with every outsider in this community present! How I would like to baptize every sinner that I know! How I would like to announce to the congregation that all divisions have been healed, all controversies among brethren settled, all problems with internal sin solved! Would that not be wonderful? But that is not likely to happen and I need to be careful of “quick fixes” in an effort to make things happen.

Differences arise between brethren. Some are contained without open division. Others are not. Every Christian, who loves the Cause of Christ is concerned about any division. This tempts one to go for the “quick fix” – more love. Now that does sound good! It **would** solve all the problems – **if** the root cause of all division was a lack of love for brethren. But, the problem is seldom that simple and the love-togetherness approach is not always adequate. It may ignore the real cause of the division in the first place. The cause may be conflicting “minds” – carnal vs. spiritual (Cf. I Corinthians 3:1-5). It may be conflicting attitudes toward Scriptural authority, by brethren who dearly love each other. It may be conflicting concepts of the mission of the church. It may be over matters of conscience that carry people in different directions and cannot be resolved without basic change in convictions. The quick fix is to encourage someone to squelch his conscience for the sake of peace. It takes longer to educate consciences. But until that happens one cannot afford to override his conscientious misgivings even for the sake of peace. (cf. Romans 14:23).

Of course, if it is a matter in which one can yield his preference, without overriding conscientious doubts, then he should give in for the sake of peace now! Even where there are other basic causes for conflict, hatred sometimes raises its ugly head, then love must be restored.

I know of no congregation that would not like an overflow crowd at every service. Most would like to find some way to motivate folks to attend. It is a big problem. But, beware of the “quick fix”. Most of these folks are carnally minded, so appeal to the carnal mind with the gimmicks of social activities, recreational opportunities, making it “fun” for them. Give material rewards and pride-appealing recognition to motivate them. Such may get them to “church”, but not to the Lord. Only those taught, having heard and learned, are drawn to the Lord . (John 6:44-45). This method is usually slower, and less appealing to many, but it is the Lord’s way of getting people “to church” and keeping them there!

There are problems with applying the New Testament teaching on “fellowship”. In today’s atmosphere, one is bound to be charged with inconsistency in his application of the matter. If one is not careful he will try to find a “quick fix” to the consistency problem. On the one hand he may decide that he should not fellowship anyone who is mistaken on any Bible subject. He reasons that since he does not fellowship some who hold different views on other subjects then he will not fellowship this brother – to be consistent. It saves the time of finding out the nature of the man’s “error” and its effect upon the church, etc. Another knowing that he “fellowships” some brethren with whom he differs on what the Bible teaches on **some** matters, decides that to be consistent then we must fellowship **all** brethren with whom he has differences. Again, this saves the time of investigation and consideration for each

matter. The truth of the matter is that several factors must be taken into consideration before deciding whom to fellowship. Attitudes, maturity, opportunity, ability, the effect upon the gospel and the church, etc. But, it is much easier to go for the “quick fix”; for the fellowship - **all** - with - whom - we - differ or the fellowship - **none** - with - whom - we - differ approach. But, Jude 22, tells us that some distinctions have to be made.

I Thessalonians 5:14 shows that different ones need different approaches. “**Warn** the unruly, **comfort** the fainthearted, and **support** (uphold) the weak.” It is quite possible for each class to be doing the same thing, overtly:

1. Sister Worldly seldom shows up for services. She is approached and gives you to understand that what she does is her business and no business of the church. She and her husband like to go boating on weekends and she intends to do it as long as the weather is pretty. She will be at services when and if she gets ready. She knows what the Bible says about assembling as well as you do and when she gets ready to start attending she will let you know.

2. Sister Battered seldom shows up for any services. She is approached and you find out about her husband. He hates the church with passion. He makes sure that she pays dearly for every service she attends. The ones she does attend are attended over his protest and sometimes physical abuse. When she gets home 5 minutes later than usual because of a long-winded preacher, she catches the full blast of his fury. She is near the point of “throwing in the towel” and saying it is not worth it to attend.

3. Sister Novice seldom shows up for services. She is approached and you see that she just does not understand the importance of attending. She has not been a Christian very long. She was a member of a religious order that did not stress attendance to all

services. While she learned and understands what she needed to do to become a Christian in the New Testament sense of the word – she still has a bit of the old concept of attendance as a hold-over from her former religious life. Once convinced of the necessity and importance, she would likely attend every service.

Now, all three sisters are doing the same thing outwardly. But the approaches taken to the problem are quite different. Sister Worldly is **unruly** (disorderly), so you warn her and if she doesn't heed the warning you withdraw from her (II Thessalonians 3:6). Sister Battered is about to give up. She is fainthearted. You comfort and encourage her at this stage. Sister Novice is a weak babe, who needs teaching, so you set about to teach her, with patience, her responsibilities as a Christian.

Now the “quick fix” approach to the problem would be that since all are not attending as they should – that we will just treat them all alike. If we comfort one – comfort all. If we withdraw from one, then withdraw from all – regardless to any extenuating circumstances. That might simplify matters for those who have to make the day to day judgments about church discipline – but would it be right?

Brethren let's be careful with “quick fixes”. ❄️



## A Secular Godless Society



by James P. Needham

**T**HERE is a determined movement by a vocal minority of our citizens to turn America into a secular Godless society. They are making some headway by opposing everything in the government arena that has any actual or symbolic reference to religion, such as "in God we trust" on our money, "one nation under God," in the pledge of allegiance, and everything that makes any reference to Christ such a Christmas, or any display of any religious symbol on public property, public prayer in public school activities, etc.

If you wonder what would happen to our country if this movement succeeds, take a look at the country of Holland, a country that is about 90 per cent secular.

1. **Religion** in Holland was formerly predominantly Catholic with 90 per cent of Catholics attending mass regularly. Now it is down to 8 percent, and the Protestants are not doing much better. Religion is characterized as toxic in Holland, and all believers are ridiculed.

2. **Euthanasia** (assisted suicide) is legal in Holland; doctors can legally help an individual take his/her own life for any reason whatsoever. There is now talk of an over the counter suicide pill.

3. **Infanticide** is legal, and parents can enlist the assistance of doctors to put to death any defective child .I think I can guarantee that this will evolve to the point that the child won't have to be defective, just unwanted!

4. **Prostitution** is legal, and it is said that shopping for sex in Amsterdam is as easy as shopping for clothes.

5. **Drugs** of all kinds are legal in Holland. It is probably the most drug addicted society in the world.

6. **Same sex marriages** are legal for couples, and even for three individuals who want to form a triple same-sex marriage.

I ask you candidly, is this not where we are headed as a country? Holland, a very clean, and morally upright country in the past, is now in the sewer and on the brink of destruction. How long will God put up with a Godless society is a question that no man can answer. But we do know that all nations are under God, and He will do whatsoever He will.

If we don't want to live in a secular Godless society, it is time for those who deplore such an idea to stand up and be counted. In view of the opposition registered against the secularists over Christmas in 2005, I believe I can begin to see a little light at the end of the tunnel. John Gibson, a TV Talk-show host, wrote a popular book entitled "The War on Christmas." It has sold well, and people are beginning to register their complaints against the secularists.

A Gallop pole recently showed that 80 per cent of Americans believe in a higher power, namely, God. This does not surprise me; it has always been that way. Believers need to come forward and overwhelm this Godless element that, along with the Islamics, that are determined to destroy our traditional values.

### **"The Days Are Evil"**

Paul admonished the Ephesians, (Ephesians 5:16) "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil." If one does not keep up with the news, he may not realize just how evil the days are in our time. It would be pleasant to cover up and ignore the conditions of the world in which we live, but it wouldn't be very smart. Europe is described as having no moral boundaries. It has accepted wholeheartedly the Humanist philosophy that there is no moral standard; everyone should do what feels good with no strings attached. Sadly, America is well on its way to that same destination. Immoral conduct in our country has reached epidemic stage. In England a thirteen year old kid had fathered a child with a fifteen year old girl,

and It has received a circus atmosphere. It has been featured in newspapers all over the world, not in condemnation, but as a phenomenon to behold, and marveled at. Children are being abducted, raped and killed. New cases are featured in the news every day. Parents are being killed by their children, and children by their parents. Our president is for abortion of all kinds, and it appears that to be qualified for his cabinet one must have cheated on his/her income tax, or is being investigated for some other crime. These crimes are excused by the president and his cohorts as "innocent oversights." So the majority of his cabinet is made up of people who ought to be in prison! That's exactly where you or I would be under the same circumstances.

A Muslim executive of a Television station existing in the US and owned by Muslims for the purpose of trying to convince people of the virtues of Islam, has beheaded his wife, and is in prison charged with second degree murder. (I don't know how it could possibly be 2nd degree; it looks first degree to me). This happened in the good old USA! This character even called the police and told them where to find the headless body. To cap the climax, Muslims call it an honor killing, and are commending the dirt bag that did it. This is supposed to give us a better view of the virtues of Islam? (Give me a break!) The reason he is being commended for this dastardly act is that he is practicing true Islamic religion regardless of those who like to call it "radical Islam." It is not "radical Islam," it is true Islam because it is following the teachings of their so called "holy book."

This is the society in which Christians must exist (And the half has not been told in this short article). It is my desire to keep people apprised of what is coming up down the way, and to strongly admonish one and all "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the

midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:15). ॐ

## Jesus As the “I AM” # 2



by Maurice Barnett

**I**N John 3:31-32, John the Baptist tells us that Jesus came from above— “He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is of the earth, and of the earth he speaketh: he that cometh from heaven is above all. 32 What he hath seen and heard, of that he beareth witness; and no man receiveth his witness.”

The spirit that inhabited the physical body of Jesus of Nazareth had existed before His birth by Mary. He was thus able to speak of things He knew of in heaven from personal experience whereas John had to rely on being informed of heavenly things by the Holy Spirit. Further, Jesus says in John 17:5— “And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

Jesus had not existed in the physical body of Jesus of Nazareth before the world was created. It is thus obvious that the one who was in the beginning with God is the preexistent person known as the Word. It should also be obvious that there are two distinct persons spoken of in this passage. Was God a deceiver, attempting to leave the impression with the disciples, and us, that there was just one person that was both Jesus of Nazareth and God, Himself? To use such deceit amounts to a lie and that makes

God a liar and consequently not worthy to be trusted on anything.

But, let’s see how I Am connects with the related statement in Exodus 3:14 – “And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.” Jehovah’s Witnesses, as do others who deny the Deity of Jesus, insist that the phrase here, “I am that I am” (*heyeh asher heyeh*), should be understood as, “I shall become what I shall become” or “I shall prove to be what I shall prove to be.” Others are even further off base. That’s playing loose with word usage to prop up a doctrinal theory. God is eternal and does not change. Malachi 3:6 says, “For I, Jehovah, change not.” Of Jesus it is said, Hebrews 13:8, “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and forever.” He isn’t talking about the human form of Jesus but rather the spirit person who inhabited that body. The statement of yesterday, to-day and forever simply declares what “I Am” says elsewhere. “I shall become what I shall become” is directly contrary to that.

In Exodus 3:14, the Hebrew verb of being shows action. The fact that it is imperfect shows action from past time that continues. “That,” (*asher*), can be translated as that or who. So, the phrase, “I am that I am,” or even “I am who I am,” wrapping up past, present and future in one present tense statement, I am that I am. It does not matter about the point of time in eternity. At whatever time it may be, He is. It is not “I was,” nor “I will be,” nor “I shall become” but I AM.

To add to the facts of the case, note in the same verse that God says that Moses is to tell Israel “I AM (*heyeh*) hast sent me unto you.” Remember now, *heyeh* is on both ends of the sentence I AM that I AM. He did not say that Moses was to tell Israel that “I AM that I AM has sent you” nor “I shall become has sent you” nor “I was” nor any

other like combination. It is just “I AM,” *heyeh*—past, present and future wrapped up in one declaration. Seeing that this statement is made by Jehovah God about Himself, why would any believer in God want to explain away the force of this declaration of His eternal existence? Well, they do that because they recognize the association of the language with Jesus in John 8:24, 58 and they don’t want to accept that Jesus is Deity!

In Exodus 3:6, in the same context as verse 14, God told Moses, “I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” “I am” in this passage is from another Hebrew word, *anokiy*, a first person, personal pronoun. This statement from Exodus is quoted by Jesus to the Sadducees in Matthew 22:32. The three patriarchs mentioned were already dead when God said that to Moses at the burning bush. It is not, “I was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Jesus used our familiar phrase, *ego eimi*, in Matthew 22:32 to express it. It is an inspired translation of Exodus 3:6 by the Lord, Himself. It is used by Jesus to educate the Sadducees about the nature of spirits that continue to exist after death. Just so, John 8:58 declares that I Am referred to Jesus, not just before the death of Abraham, but before the birth of Abraham. So, we must understand the continuous, present tense nature of the phrases in Exodus 3:6, 14, a declaration of Jehovah’s eternal being and consequently, Jesus’ as well.

Oneness advocates then shift the argument to the Septuagint, a translation from Hebrew to Greek before the first century. The Septuagint translates the phrase in Exodus 3:6 as *ego eimi* and in verse 14, first, as *ego eimi ho on*, I am the one who is, or I am the being one and then as just *ho on*, the being. No one knows why they did this. They first translated *heyeh* as I am and in the same sentence translated the same term as the being one. Though there is no grammat-

ical necessity for doing it that way, it still presents God as the eternal one. Oneness advocates do not have a case here.

Let’s switch now to the other end of the Bible, Revelation 22:13 and then verse 16—“I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end.” “I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright, the morning star.”

Jesus identifies Himself as the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. In Revelation 20:11-15, John saw a great white throne and one who sat on it judging all mankind and having control over death and Hades committing the ungodly to the lake of fire, the second death. The identity of the one on the throne is clear from the fact that Matthew 25:31ff, Acts 17:30-31, and other passages, show that it is Jesus who will be that judge. Then, Revelation 21:3 says that John heard a great voice out of the throne before mentioned. In verse 6, the voice says, “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end.” Now slip back first to Revelation 1:17-18 and then to 2:8—“And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as one dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying, Fear not; I am the first and the last, 18 and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.” “And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write: These things saith the first and the last, who was dead, and lived again.”

It is the resurrected and glorified Jesus. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end. Yet, this is the same claim made for Lord God, the Almighty, chapter 1, verse 8! In these passages where it is said “I am...,” the phrase is *ego eimi*. Predicate nominatives are supplied in the text but do not detract from the present tense of *ego eimi*. It is a

claim for Deity in both the Old and New Testaments, for God in the Old and Jesus in the New. Keep that in mind as we continue the investigation. First, Isaiah 44:6 and then 48:12- 13— “Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God.” “Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called: I am he; I am the first, I also am the last. 13 Yea, my hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and my right hand hath spread out the heavens: when I call unto them, they stand up together.”

Here is Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, who is the first and the last. Take note also that His hand laid the foundation of the earth and spread out the heavens. It is the one who became Jesus who was the agent for the Godhead in creation, John 1:1-3, Colossians 1:13-18, Hebrews 1:6-13.

The Jews understood what Jesus was claiming in John 8:58 because they took up stones to kill Him. Why did they do that? They did it for the same reason as in chapter 5:17-18 when He called God His own father, making Himself equal with God and in 10:30-33 when He said “the Father and I are one.” The Jews saw only a human standing before them and did not understand His true nature. Jesus asked them why they wanted to stone Him. They answered, “...for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God.” That is exactly what the Jews thought in John 8 when He said that before Abraham was born, I am, and took up stones to throw at Him. They understood it to be a claim that He was Deity, and they were correct in that conclusion.

Jesus said it in John 8:24, “Except ye believe that I am, ye shall die in your sins.” In verse 28, this declaration of identity is made again. If some insist on adding someone’s opinion of a predicate nominative to that sentence, instead of being

ambiguous about it with supplying just the pronoun, “he,” let’s use the predicate nominatives the Bible uses. “Except ye believe that I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the creator of all things, the eternal one, Jehovah of hosts, equal with God, you will die in your sins.” Now, that clearly states the truth and is what we are to believe about Jesus. Jesus was not the Father but He was as much God as the Father. ❧

## The Spiritual Focus of the Church



by Steven Harper

**M**ANY religious errors exist simply because men do not comprehend the spiritual nature of the Lord’s kingdom, the church. Some religious organizations, in fact, teach that Christ came to set up an earthly kingdom but, because He was rejected by the Jews, chose instead to establish the church [dispensational premillennialism]. Those who do so are demonstrating a willful ignorance of Scripture that teaches us the church is, in fact, what Christ came to establish and that He never intended His kingdom to be earthly, or material, in nature (cf. John 18:36). Even when directly asked by the Pharisees as to when the kingdom would come, Jesus pointed them to the spiritual nature of it when He answered, “The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed, nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:20, 21).

When John the Baptist was preparing the way of the Lord, it is said that he preached, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” (Matthew 3:2), and Jesus delivered that same message when He began preaching and teaching (cf. Matthew 4:17). If we honestly consider the meaning of the phrase “at hand” as it is used in that context [and other passages, such as II Timothy 4:6 and Revelation 22:10], we can understand that John and Jesus spoke of something that would occur soon — not in 2000+ years! Jesus also plainly said, “Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power” (Mark 9:1). Now, did that happen, or are there some really old people somewhere on this earth? Logic would lead us to conclude that the events of which Jesus spoke happened within the normal lifetime of those standing there when He spoke those words; if that did not happen, then Jesus was a liar, but if it did happen [and the Bible teaches that it did], why do some

The simple answer is, some still preach about or are waiting for this earthly kingdom of Jesus because they misunderstand — just like the Pharisees — the nature of the kingdom, the church. It is frustrating to hear professing believers talk anxiously about the fact that they await the “coming kingdom” of Jesus, but it is not a new thing. At the end of Jesus’ time on earth — right before He ascended back into heaven — He was asked by the ones closest to Him, “Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6). It seems that many disciples (Luke 24:21) and even the apostles misunderstood the nature of His kingdom — until the Holy Spirit later revealed to the apostles more fully the plan of God and an understanding of why Christ had come to earth; when that was revealed to them, they correctly preached that Jesus had already received the kingdom and was already sitting on the throne, in heaven, not Jerusalem (cf. Acts 2:30-36).

It is possible that this misunderstanding of the nature of Christ’s kingdom has caused many to see the work of the church in a material [rather than spiritual] way, focusing on physical and material needs, rather than the spiritual needs, of those who profess to be seeking and/or following Christ. Some, apparently, believe that it is the primary duty of the church [either on a local or a universal sense] to take care of the physical, material needs of anyone and everyone, but what does the Scripture say? Is it the primary task of the church [whether on a local or universal sense] to look out for these needs, or is it something else — something vastly more important?

To fully and properly answer the question, we must first take a look at the work and words of our Lord and Savior, our Master, Jesus Christ, whom we claim to follow and whose life ours should imitate (Matthew 10:24, 25). We also must consider what is said in Scripture about the church [the body of believers] and how they are viewed by God. Combining these two things, we may understand what should be the primary focus of the church, the body of believers — the saved.

First, let us note that Jesus plainly told us He “came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). Scripture also tells us God “sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (I John 4:10). From just these two passages, we can clearly see the primary purpose of Jesus coming to this earth was to save us from our sins and to remove God’s anger from us, who were all guilty of sin. Let us note that He was not sent to earth to remove all physical pains, cure all those who were sick, to ease all political tensions, to bring justice to everyone who had been wronged, or to feed all who were hungry. His primary reason for coming to earth was to die for our sins and offer salvation to all men.

But let us also note that while this was His primary purpose, he did do more than just die for our sins. We read of many occasions where

Jesus did feed the hungry (Matthew 14:13-21), did heal many who were sick (Matthew 8:16), did chastise those who oppressed the poor (Matthew 23:14), and He urged His followers to consider the needs of others as a way of life (Matthew 5:42). Certainly, the teachings of Jesus point all disciples to a life of service to others and selflessness, and when we do what we should be doing, as His disciples, then God will be glorified (Matthew 5:16). Let us note that these expectations and commands are directed at us, individually, and not as the collective body we know as the church. We will be judged as individuals for having done or not done these things, not as a church.

Consider also how God views the church, the body of believers and all those who are true disciples of Jesus Christ. First, let us note that God's people are supposed to be spiritual people; Paul chastised the Corinthians for being too spiritually immature and acting rather as carnal, fleshly people instead (I Corinthians 3:1-4). The people of God are to also be considered a spiritual house, or dwelling place. Peter said we "are being built up a spiritual house...to offer up spiritual sacrifices" (I Peter 2:5). It is not a material dwelling place, it is not materially - and earthly-minded, but spiritual in nature and in focus. Paul called us "a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit" (Ephesians 2:21-22). When we consider further that His house is identified as the church (I Timothy 3:15), we must admit and confess that the church itself is spiritual in nature. Its focus is spiritual because its nature is spiritual.

When we also consider that our blessings are spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3), that our worship must be in spirit (John 4:24), and that our fight is a spiritual fight (Ephesians 6:11-13; II Corinthians 10:3-6), surely we must admit that the church [that is, the body of believers], by God's design, is spiritual in nature and, thus, should have a

spiritual focus. Churches — or even individual disciples — that forget this and begin focusing on material matters have strayed from their primary focus and are no longer doing the work God intended, no matter how sincere or well-intended the effort.

So, does the church, then, have no consideration whatsoever for material, physical things? Do disciples or churches ignore or simply "pass by on the other side" when they see a physical need? Of course not, but we must do all things according to the pattern God has given us. Local churches can take an active role in benevolence, helping out its own where they were (Acts 2:44, 45; 4:32-35; 6:1-6) and to saints in other locations (Acts 11:27-30; Romans 15:25-27), and individual Christians must help when able (I John 3:17; Matthew 5:42). There are some things the body of believers [the church] may do as a collective body in a particular location and some things individual disciples must do, and each must do its part that the other is not taking on the responsibility of the other (I Timothy 5:16).

But these things are not the primary focus of either the individual disciple or the church [whether in a local sense, or talking about "the church" as inclusive of all believers]. While we must certainly be compassionate and caring and willing to look out for the interests of others (Philippians 2:4) and be concerned for their physical needs, we should care most of all for their souls — their spiritual needs.

When Jesus came to this earth, He came to save us from our sins — not so He could make this world a better place so we can live here without fear of harm, poverty, sickness, or even death. Let us, as God's people, be caring enough to help others whenever we have opportunity because the world must see the love of God in us that He may be glorified; but let us also love others enough to act with the greatest concern for lost souls and their spiritual condition. Even if we fed the world, eradicated poverty, healed all

diseases, ensured justice for all, and guaranteed the safety and earthly happiness of all men, without the gospel message, they would still be lost in sin.

Let's focus! ☩☩☩

## **The Incarnation: Apollinaris and the Catholics**

by Jere E. Frost

THE study of history, even church history, is not to be confused with the study of the Bible. But when appeals are made to history as though some insight into Scripture is to be gained thereby, one is obliged to take a look. One of the church fathers was the bishop of Laodicea, a learned man named Apollinaris. He took a position on the incarnation of Christ that some say is being recycled today, but that it was exposed as heresy by the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD.

Several thoughts cross the mind just here. First, if the facts are clear from Scripture, why not just present the Scripture? Second, what was this heretical position Apollinaris taught that was repudiated? Third, just who repudiated it, and by what authority and on what basis did they do so? Fourth and finally, if we accept the authority of ecumenical councils' branding of heresy, are we not equally bound to accept their authority as to acceptable doctrine?

### **The Background**

Believers in Christ had survived the cruelties of centuries of persecution, and even prospered. When Constantine issued the famous Decree of Toleration in 313 AD, and became emperor in 324 AD, Christianity in effect had won. Church buildings were erected throughout the empire, and pagan temples on a massive scale were either abandoned and became ruins, or were converted for the use of Christians. But then

a controversy about the nature of the incarnation erupted and raged for well over a hundred years. Edward Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (hereafter Gibbon) devotes chapter 48 to it under the heading, "Theological History of the Doctrine of the Incarnation - The Human and Divine Nature of Christ".

### **The Incarnation Turmoil**

The Ebionites acknowledged the humanity, but "obstinately rejected the preceding existence and divine perfections of the *Logos*" and the Gnostics "deviated into the contrary extreme, and betrayed the human, while they asserted the divine, nature of Christ" (Gibbon, page 595). Cerinthus of Asia "laboured to reconcile the Gnostic with the Ebionite, by confessing in the same Messiah the supernatural union of a man and a God." (Gibbon, page 1556) Carpocrates held that Jesus had two natures (spirits), and at his crucifixion his divine spirit "forsook his earthly tabernacle.. and left the solitary Jesus to suffer, to complain, and to expire." (Gibbon, page 1557) Arius maintained that Jesus was a created being, and of a different substance than God, (Catechism of the Catholic Church, item 465, hereafter Catechism), but was otherwise the creator of everything else. (Gibbon, page 599) At this time "the faith of the Catholics trembled on the edge of a precipice ... they hesitated to pronounce *that* God himself... was manifested in the flesh; *that* a being who pervades the universe had been confined in the womb of Mary .. that the Almighty had been scourged and crucified .." (Gibbon, page 1557) Apollinaris "affirmed with unblushing simplicity" what they hesitated to say. He held that "the *Logos*, the eternal wisdom, supplied in the flesh the place and office of an human soul." (Gibbon, page 1557) But he is also credited with believing and teaching that "Jesus on earth was not man, but God alone in human form." (The Story of the Christian Church, Hurlbut, page

87.) Gibbon also records this contradiction and says Apollinaris contended that Jesus' body "came from heaven, impassable and incorruptible, or was absorbed and as it were transformed, into the essence of the Deity." (Gibbon, page 1558). Nestorius "regarded Christ as a human person joined to the divine person of God's son." (Catechism, item 466) Cyril believed that the Word united to himself "flesh animated by a rational soul" and thus "became man." (Catechism, item 466)

### **The Irrelevance of Apollinaris**

Who today believes the position ascribed to Apollinaris, namely, that Jesus' body "came from heaven, impassable and incorruptible, or was absorbed and as it were transformed, into the essence of the Deity"? I do not know of a single soul. Gibbon says he was "skilled in all the sciences of Greece" and that his "eloquence, erudition, and philosophy, conspicuous in the volumes of Apollinaris, were humbly devoted to the service of religion." Unfortunately, we do not have those volumes, nor can we correct the apparent contradictions of positions ascribed to him, for his enemies destroyed them. We do not know his arguments, nor the counter-arguments used against him. All we have is the bottom line of positions ascribed to him by his enemies and historians. And all of it proves nothing. It's still "back to the Bible" for us. The Irrelevance of Ecumenical

Councils The Councils were no solution at all. They were in the vein of political power struggles, and they added to the problem. Issues were decided by voting, and only bishops had votes. The Council of Nicea in 325 AD was supposed to settle it, but it failed to even clarify the issues, much less settle them. But they voted and condemned Arius. His outvoted supporters were not persuaded and "the faith of the Catholics trembled on the edge of a precipice". They awaited an authoritative council to tell them

what to believe (instead of looking to the Scriptures themselves) and the vote went against Apollinaris at the Council of Constantinople in 381 AD. (Gibbon, page 1557) But it proved nothing, either way, as to what is right or wrong.

### **Ecumenical Councils:**

#### **Studies in Political Correctness**

Cyril and Nestorius were men of great ambition and furiously opposed each other both physically and intellectually, and precipitated the Council of Ephesus in 431. Nestorius "was offended with the rash and recent title of mother of God" being applied to Mary (Gibbon, page 1563). But the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD decided that "Mary truly became the Mother of God by the conception of the Son of God in her womb." (Catechism, item 466) The councils, by their very nature, were dominated by political correctness, and political correctness always depends on who the principle players are. Cyril assembled intimidating physical force, hastened to convene the council numerous but far-distant bishops favorable to Nestorius arrived. He ousted 68 bishops favorable to Nestorius and carried the day "without a dissenting voice." (Gibbon, page 1566) When the far-distant bishops favorable to Nestorius finally arrived, they were enraged and "degraded Cyril and Memnon from their episcopal honours ... and described [Cyril] as a monster, born and educated for the destruction of the church." "Ephesus .. was defiled with rage and clamour, with sedition and blood; the rival synods darted anathemas and excommunications from their spiritual engines." (Gibbon, Page 1567) As the historian says, "the sword of persecution, which Nestorius so furiously wielded, was soon turned against his own breast. Religion was the pretence; but... ambition was the genuine motive of episcopal warfare" (Gibbon, page 1563). Even a casual reading

confirms this. So much for any respect for these high-sounding *ecumenical councils*.

### **A Two Edged Sword**

One cannot cite the councils' denunciations as proof *against* anything without logically obligating himself to accept their approvals as equal proof *for* everything.

### **The Surviving Catholic View**

The Council at Ephesus proclaimed that Mary truly became the Mother of God by the human conception of the Son of God in her womb." (Catechism, item 466) If I accept councils' rulings, that means I should start saying, "Holy Mary, mother of God, blessed art thou ..." For a further enunciation of the Catholic view, we submit the following from the new Catechism of the Catholic Church, *Imprimi Potest* Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, copyrighted in 1994:

- (1) "Christ... has a human intellect and will..." (item 482)
- (2) He "possesses two wills and two natural operations, divine and human." (item 475)
- (3) "This human soul that the Son of God assumed is endowed with a true human knowledge. As such, this knowledge could not in itself be unlimited." (item 472)
- (4) "Because 'human nature was assumed ..' the Church was led over the course of centuries to confess the full reality of Christ's human soul, with its operation of intellect and will..." (item 470) Note that the emphasis is that the soul (not the body) is human.
- (5) Again, "The Son also assumed a rational, human soul." (item 471)
- (6) "Jesus Christ possesses two natures, one divine and the other human, not confused, but united in the one person of God's Son." Note again that they argue two natures as issuing from two spirits in one body; they do not address the nature of the body as relating to his having human nature, (item 481)

### **Not Recycled, But Up-to-date**

It is incorrectly alleged by some that maintaining that Jesus was deity in the flesh

is Apollinarianism recycled. As noted earlier, Apollinaris believed the flesh itself was deified and changed. However, the view that Jesus had two spirits, one divine and one human, and that he had a human will, is Catholicism, not recycled but current and up-to-date.

### **The Incarnation Issue**

There are only two basic elements to decide relative to the incarnation, namely, (1) the body and (2) the spirit.

(1) The body: What kind of body did Jesus have? Was it really human in all aspects, or was it special and ethereal?

(2) The spirit: Did "The Word," deity, actually occupy that body? Was he really what the name Immanuel means — "God with us"?

If one would contend that Jesus had a human spirit and will, let him forget philosophy and ecumenical councils, and let him cite the Scripture. And if he had two spirits, one human and one divine, would not the human spirit be meaningless? Would not the divine spirit prevail all the time, every time and in every way?

**The Scriptural View** The announcements of Jesus' birth by Matthew, Luke and John are simple and understandable, but profound. Matthew recorded that an angel told Joseph that Mary was pregnant of the Holy Spirit; the child's name was to be called Immanuel, which means "God with us." (Matthew 1:18-23.) Luke said that an angel told Mary that the "power of the Highest" would overshadow her and that the child would be called "the son of God." (Luke 1:35.) John wrote, "the Word [God] became flesh." (John 1:1.) Acceptance of these accounts is a matter of faith, not of personal philosophy. By all accounts, he was (is) God. Paul added that "all the fullness of the Godhead" dwelt in him "bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

As to (1) the body, the question was whether or not it was a real, fully human body. Jesus often claimed to be the son of man, a

reference to his humanity and fleshly body. As evidence of humanity, he invited the apostles to examine his body to see for themselves that it was not spiritual or illusory, but real flesh and bones, and ate some of the real food they had on hand (Luke 24:39-43).

As to (2) the spirit, Jesus unequivocally claimed he was the unchangeable, eternal, self-existent one in that body (Hebrews 13:8; John 8:24,58). He claimed to be God! His enemies understood this well enough to charge him with blasphemy John 10:33). The apostles understood it well enough to worship him and call him Lord and God (John 20:28; Luke 24:52)).

### **Conclusion**

Jesus was God (fully God, possessing *all* the fullness of God in His body, Colossians 2:9), and He was man (fully man, knowing full human nature, hunger, weariness, pain and death). "The Word was God." Make no mistake about it. God!

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# Writings From Yesteryear

I recently read the following article in a church Bulletin.  
I do not know the author.

## Fetus

Author Unknown

They call his name "*Fetus*". It is a Latin name. But since I don't speak very much Latin, I will call him by the English translation of that name, which is "Little One". At conception, he was only about the size of a grain of salt. He began with 23 chromosomes from each of his parents. In that one little cell was the complex genetic blueprint for every detail of Little One's development - the color of his eyes and hair, his height, his skin tone - it was all there in the first miraculous moment of the beginning of life.

From the time of his conception, Little One has been quite a remarkable young man. At only three weeks after conception his heart began to beat and the foundation of his brain, spinal cord and nervous system were already established.

At one month he had become 10,000 times larger than the original fertilized egg that was his beginning. When he was only 40 days old his brain waves could be detected and recorded. At seven weeks he began to move spontaneously. At eight weeks he was little more than an inch long, yet all his body had formed, and everything was present that will be found in a fully developed adult.

He is so cute. He will soon be sucking his thumb. If an object touches the palm of his hand, he will grip it with his little fingers. He even has fingerprints.

At twelve weeks, he exercises energetically – turning his head, curling his toes, and opening and closing his mouth. In another week hair will begin to grow on his head. Now all Little One has to do is grow in the safety and warmth of his mother's womb.

What will Little One be? Maybe he will be a great leader who will help the world find peace and guide more people into freedom. Maybe he will be a medical research scientist who will find a cure for cancer. Maybe he will be a teacher and train others to experience the wonders of life and truth. With those little fingers he has, maybe he will be a pianist and thrill thousands with his music.

O, what potential Little One has! Maybe he'll be a .OH NO . this is the end of our story.

Little One just became one of the 4,400 fetuses who each day in America have their potential ended by the tools of the abortionist.

According to an internet report by a group called "*Women on Waves Foundation*," there are 52 million abortions in the world every year. That figures out to 142,466 babies killed each day. Do you suppose that God is going to continue to tolerate that? In fact, there are more than one and one-half million abortions in the United States every year. And we are supposed to be a "Christian" nation.