



MORMONISM'S FREE RIDE FAMOUS PEOPLE - INFAMOUS RELIGION

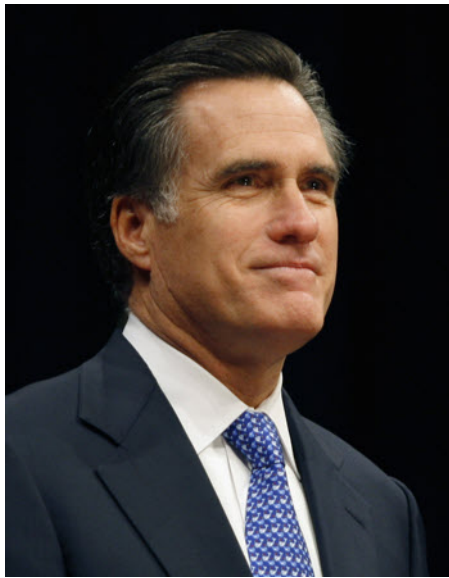
When Glenn Beck held his Restoring Honor rally in 2010, he was joined on the platform by patriots of every stripe, including many prominent Christian leaders. Those leaders lauded him not only for his commitment to morality and Constitutional government, but for his faith in God. There was no question of Beck's religious commitment to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS), or Mormons. His religious beliefs were certainly made all the more evident in his book, *The 7: Seven Wonders That Will Change Your Life*, co-authored with psychiatrist Keith Ablow, M.D. Beck's popularity rates high among Christians who, because of their fondness for him, have been willing to overlook the blasphemous doctrines of the religion he so vociferously professes.

The current candidacy of former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney for the office of President of the United States has again brought Mormonism into the spotlight. Taking advantage of the moment, the LDS is currently conducting a vigorous campaign of its own with constant ads on radio and television depicting their members as everyday citizens who end their treatise on their occupations with the words, "And I'm a Mormon."

As much as believers in the true Jesus are vexed by these ads, we recognize that they are just another appeal to another false religion, expected of the world system. Our concern is not as much with the world's response to all the hype promoting Mormonism as a valid Christian religion, as it is with the response of many Christians. There is a growing tendency within Christianity to overlook the spiritual threat of Mormonism in favor of a perceived temporal benefit by joining with it for moral and political purposes.

On stage with Romney throughout the various debates among Republican contenders are a number who claim to be Evangelical Christians. Adhering to proper campaign etiquette, none of the professed Evangelical Christians running against him has made an issue of Romney's religion. When the pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, Robert Jeffress, was interviewed shortly after

introducing Rick Perry at the Values Voter Summit in October, he pointed out that his denomination, the Southern Baptist Convention, "has officially labeled Mormonism as a cult." Adding that Romney is a "non-Christian," he created a media flap that put Perry on the spot. In response, Perry campaign spokesman Robert Black quickly dissociated Perry from Jeffress' comments, stating, "The governor does not believe Mormonism is a cult. He is not in the business of judging people. That's God's plan."



PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MITT ROMNEY

Although Evangelical Christianity has historically held that Mormonism is indeed a religious cult according to several benchmarks, the presidency of Barack Obama has contributed greatly to Christians accepting Mormonism on the grounds of a shared conservative political philosophy and moral ethic. Major voices that claim fellowship within Evangelical Christianity have backed off exposing Mormon doctrine, and have tried to find whatever common beliefs they can in order to justify their social and political agendas.

Since 2000, even before Obama took the office of president, teams of Mormon scholars have held closed-door dialogue sessions with evangelical teams led by Fuller Theological Seminary president Richard Mouw. And although these sessions have not been officially sanctioned by the LDS, Mormon president Thomas S. Monson permitted an ecumenical group of 90 Utah evangelical churches to use the Salt Lake City Tabernacle for a revival meeting in September, 2009. Evangelicals and Mormons sang Christian songs and prayed together.

World-famous pastor Rick Warren openly promotes his church growth training series to all churches including the LDS. In regard to this ecumenical approach, Warren stated in a 2003 interview with *USA Today*, "I'm not going to get into a debate over the non-essentials. I won't try to change other denominations. Why be divisive?" He cited as his model Billy Graham, whom he called, "a statesman for Christ ministering across barriers."

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WHY MEDIA SPOTLIGHT?

Media Spotlight is a ministry to the Body of Christ, bringing understanding of the ways in which the world shapes our thinking and lifestyles through the influence of the mass communications media.

God's Word exhorts, "buy the truth and do not sell it" (Prov. 23:23). Therefore we do not sell *Media Spotlight*. Begun in 1977, *Media Spotlight* was the first ministry on a national scale to address the ungodly nature of the secular media—motion pictures, television, toys, games and myriad other things that contribute to Christians living no differently than the rest of the world.

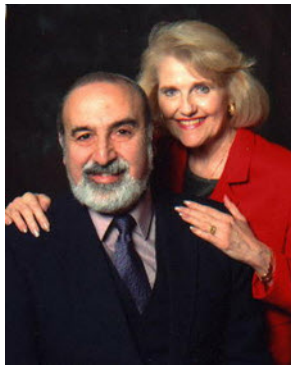
The mass media have impacted the Body of Christ as much as they have society. Many Christians are so dependent upon the media that they aren't aware of how lukewarm they have become. We have many testimonials from readers who tell us that, because of *Media Spotlight*, they have become aware of the effect the media have on their thinking, and are now more selective in their choices.

But the problem of ungodliness is not exclusive to the secular media. Of major concern are the religious media that present messages contrary to God's Word. *Media Spotlight* addresses the impact that religious teachers have upon believers in Christ, whether for good or for evil.

It has escaped the understanding of many Christians that what they believe is more often shaped by the teachings and traditions of religious men and institutions than by Scripture. Most teachers in the institutional churches rely more upon their theological disciplines than on the pure Word of God. Yet the wisdom of the world is no substitute for God's Word, even if offered from the pulpit or in the Christian media.

Jesus tells us in Matthew 24:24 that in the last days false Christs and false prophets would arise and would show great signs and wonders, "so that, if possible, they will deceive the very elect." He also states in Matthew 24:12 that in the last days the love of many toward Him would grow cold because evil would increase in the world. If we believe Him, then we would be foolish not to guard ourselves against deception. There is little time to waste in the short span of life granted us by God. We must choose today whom we will serve. **MS**

Scripture quotations in *Media Spotlight* are from the King James Version of the Bible, rephrased in modern U.S. English unless otherwise stated.



A Personal Note

Dear Friends,

Yes, it's said every December: "Where has the year gone?" *Tempus fugit* for sure. Especially as we get older. And every holiday season the ever-optimistic greeting, "Happy New Year!" rings out.

Would it be pessimistic to say that in spite of the new year optimism, each succeeding year seems to be worse than the previous one? Or at least no better?

Perhaps the latter sentiment is more accurate. As the wise Solomon said, "The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done. And there is no new thing under the sun .

"Is there anything of which it may be said, 'See, this is new'? It has already been from old times which were before us.

"There is no remembrance of former things; neither shall there be any remembrance of things that are to come with those that shall come after." (Ecclesiastes 1:9-11)

We don't believe it is pessimistic to acknowledge this truth: men forget the mistakes of the past and continue to make the same mistakes over and over again. There has never been a time in earth's history that men have not waged warfare, and to what end? Every power that has arisen has fallen. The short span of one empire contrasts with the eternal nature of God's Kingdom.

And that's why, in spite of what may seem like pessimistic words with which we began this message, we are filled with optimism for the future. Our citizenship is not on this earth; it is a citizenship in the Kingdom of God. We look toward the day when our Savior will return to establish that Kingdom visibly on the earth.

Yes, there are those who think this is a foolish pipe dream. They believe it is pessimistic to think that the world cannot be changed for the better through the proclaiming of the Gospel and the takeover of the world system's various spheres of influence. But is such thinking on their part really optimistic? Must mankind suffer countless centuries into the future as it awaits enough truly righteous men to rule over them? Would mankind even welcome such a conquest? It is to laugh.

No, as we look at the plight of mankind from year to year, it may seem pessimistic to say that nothing will ever change. The same evils plague us year after year.

In that regard, the "News" section of this issue deals exclusively with various items related to Islam. Sorry, but that's what is most in the news today—from the U.S. Government's acquiescence to Islamist demands, to its support of Islamist advances through the Arab Spring, to reports of Islam's persecution of Christians.

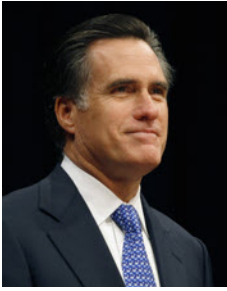
Between the Arab Spring uprisings in the Middle East and the Occupy Wall Street uprisings throughout the West, as well as the current financial crises plaguing virtually every nation on earth, any discerning student of Scripture must sense that something huge is on the horizon. We are living in exciting times, seeing biblical prophecy being fulfilled before our eyes. In spite of the bad news we are optimistic.

The optimism that comes in the spirit is far greater than the realistic thinking that acknowledges man's inability to govern himself righteously. Now, more than ever, as believers in Jesus Christ we should be looking up.

And in spite of what transpires here on earth, our faith in the Lord allows us, above all other men, to convey to one another that we hope you have, not so much a "happy" new year, as a truly blessed new year in the Lord.

In Jesus' love,

Al and Jean



MORMONISM'S FREE RIDE

(Continued from page 1)

I suppose Warren considers “non-essential” the nature of God, particularly who Jesus and the Father are, the meaning of salvation, the ultimate achievement of deity for faithful Mormons, etc.

During the 2008 presidential campaign the divide crumbled further. One among many examples is an article that appeared in *Christianity Today* written by Mormon Robert Millet, professor of ancient Christian Scriptures at Brigham Young University, and evangelical Gerald McDermott, professor of religion at Roanoke College. The two co-wrote the book, *Claiming Christ: A Mormon-Evangelical Debate* (Brazos Press, 2007). In their *Christianity Today* article the two disregarded the essential differences between biblical faith and Mormonism. They gave a false impression that there is a unity of beliefs:

...Mormon beliefs are not as un-evangelical as most evangelicals think. Unlike Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons hold firmly to the deity of Christ. For Latter-Day Saints, Jesus is not only the Son of God but also God the Son. Evangelical pollster George Barna found in 2001 that while only 33 percent of American Catholics, Lutherans, and Methodists agreed that Jesus was “without sin,” Mormons were among the “most likely” to say that Jesus was sinless.

Most evangelicals would also be surprised to learn that the Book of Mormon contains passages that teach salvation by the merits and grace of Christ (“There is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” 2 Nephi 2:8) and others that require personal trust in Christ for salvation, such as 1 Nephi 10:4-6: “All mankind were in a lost and in a fallen state, and ever would be saved they should rely on this Redeemer.”

Of course there is still doctrinal distance between Mormons and evangelicals. But this has not stopped important evangelical leaders—such as Richard Land, the late Jerry Falwell, Franklin Graham, Chuck Colson, and Cal Thomas—from saying that these doctrinal differences should not by themselves disqualify Romney from a presidential nomination. As Marvin Olasky, editor of *World* magazine, put it, “If he faces Hilary Clinton, I’ll vote for him in a Utah minute.”¹

¹ Robert Millet and Gerald McDermott, “Mitt’s Mormonism and the ‘Evangelical Vote’: Can conservative Protestants vote for a member of what they consider a cult?” *Christianity Today*, May, 2007. (Web only: christianitytoday.com/ct/2007/mayweb-only/122-42.0.html?Start=2)

These are but a few examples of how evangelicals’ dissatisfaction with the direction American politics has taken the past several decades—particularly the election of Barack Obama—coupled with Mitt Romney’s candidacy, is steadily eroding the once sacred distinction between biblical faith (or at least “orthodox Christianity”) and blatantly false religion. If Christians are going to support Romney, or any other candidate who is a Mormon, they should be aware of the spiritual impetus that propels their lives.

There have been many excellent exposés of Mormonism, so I need not go into detail here. But a refresher on just a few critical Mormon doctrines is in order.

God Is an Exalted Man

Mormonism teaches that God the Father is a “perfected man” (Doctrines & Covenants 130:22). This means the Father was at one time a sinful man, but attained godhood through the resurrection according to his faith and works. He has a resurrected body of flesh and bones (D. & C. 88:27). “God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens!...I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil so that you may see....God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible (Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, pp. 345-347). Smith “proves” that God was a man who dwelt on an earth (not **the** earth) by allegedly quoting Jesus: “As the Father hath power in Himself, even so hath the Son power.” He then asks, “to do what?” then answers, “Why what the Father did. The answer is obvious—in a manner to lay down His body and take it up again.” In other words, Jesus had power to raise Himself from the dead; ergo, the Father must have been raised from the dead. That is quite a reach. Besides, there is no such saying of Jesus. What Smith may have been trying to reference was John 10:17-18:

Therefore My Father loves Me because I lay down my life so that I may take it again. No man takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.

There is no proof from Scripture that the Father was ever a man who died and was resurrected. The god of Mormonism is a false god of Joseph Smith’s imagination.

God the Father Has a God Over Him

Joseph Smith claims to have received “a testimony concerning Abraham,” which supposed that “Intelligences exist one above another, so that there is no end to them.” He continues: “If Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and John discovered that God the Father of Jesus Christ had a Father, you may suppose that He had a Father also. Where was there ever a son without a father? And where was there ever a father without first being a son? Whenever did a tree or anything spring into existence without a progenitor? And everything comes in this way. Paul says that which is earthly is in likeness of that which is heavenly. Hence if Jesus had a Father, can we not believe that He had a Father also?” (*Teachings*, p. 373). (Continued on page 13)



Obama pulls reference to Islam in training manuals

The Obama administration is recalling all training manuals used by law enforcement and national security agencies that make references to Islam.

Deputy U.S. Attorney General James Cole told a panel at George Washington law school in October, “I recently directed all components of the Department of Justice to re-evaluate their training efforts in a range of areas, from community outreach to national security,”

The administration is acting in response to complaints by Muslim advocacy organizations, including the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), which has been identified as a front group for Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood.

In an October 19 *Los Angeles Times* op-ed, Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) president Salam al-Marayati threatened the FBI with a total cutoff of cooperation between American Muslims and law enforcement if the agency failed to revise its law enforcement training material. “If this matter is not immediately addressed, it will undermine the relationship between law enforcement and the Muslim American community,” al-Marayati wrote.

CAIR and MPAC have been guests of honor at numerous Federal events, symposiums, and Obama administration dinners.

COMMENTARY

Al-Marayati’s denunciation of Al Qaeda is a smokescreen designed to mask the subversive motives of Islamic groups such as CAIR and MPAC. Otherwise, why would MPAC join hands with CAIR, knowing its involvement with Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas, both of which are terrorist organizations.

Al-Marayati did voice disdain for “the corrupt and bankrupt ideas of cults such as Al Qaeda.” But I suspect they may (or may not) dislike Al Qaeda because it is somewhat of a rogue movement, not subject to the greater worldwide Islamic conspiracy for world domination. Also, Al Qaeda’s reputation has suffered greatly among Western nations because of the 9/11 attacks. It is politically correct for other terrorist groups to distance themselves from Al Qaeda. The truth is that Al Qaeda

is not as much a threat to the West today as are more seemingly benign groups like CAIR and MPAC, that are working like moles to undermine the security protocols of Western nations.

By caving in to Al-Marayati’s threats of non-cooperation Barack Obama and his administration have effectively become Islamic dhimmis—slaves to their Muslim masters. And talk about jumping at their masters’ commands. AG James Cole’s announcement came the same day as al-Marayati’s diatribe. It couldn’t possibly be that this was all orchestrated. Could it?

To what other Islamic demands might the the U.S. Government submit? Perhaps allowing Sharia to replace American jurisprudence for Muslims? Perhaps making any negative statement about Islam a hate crime—even disallowing ministering the Gospel to Muslims?

Christians in America have no idea how close we are to surrender of our religious freedoms for the sake of political correctness. ❖

Mass. school district closes for Islamic holiday

The Cambridge Public School District in Cambridge, Mass., closed on November 7 in honor of Eid al-Adha, one of two “high holy days” observed by Islam. The decision to close schools on that day came after Muslim students met with administrators, staff, and students in the district. It was based on the fact that there is a large Muslim population in the district. It was deemed unfair that the district closes for some Christian and Jewish holidays but not for Islamic holidays.

COMMENTARY

Who can argue with this policy? After all, the United States is no longer a “Christian nation” according to Barack Obama. And all religions must be placed on an equal footing in a pluralistic society. No doubt, pretty soon the “religion” of humanism (atheism; agnosticism) will have its holidays.

Christianity is on the wane in the United States. Certainly the vast majority of those who call themselves “Christians”—the alleged 85% of the populace—have abandoned the biblical ethic that once guided the cultural mores of the nation. I am not promoting “Christian” holidays; I am recognizing the reality of a changing culture for the United States.

By caving in to the demands of Muslim students, the nominal Christians in the Cambridge Public School District are not advancing Islam as much as they are undermining the culture of the nation. They are setting in motion another ungodly element that will eventually render biblical truth irrelevant to public policy and polity. These have already been surrendered to abortion, homosexuality and treason, among other evils.

Perhaps those critics who suggest removal of all religious holidays from government indoctrination centers are right. The students should be in school, learning how to read, write, and do math.

Oh, right.

They don’t do that anymore.

Well, maybe every day should be a “school” holiday. ❖

Fatah member speaks candidly

Abbas Zaki, a member of the Fatah Central Committee that oversees the largest faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), made threats toward Israel on Muslim television Al-Jazeera, September 23, 2011, that he admits can't be said to the world. Said Zaki:

If Israel withdraws from Jerusalem, if Israel uproots the settlements—650,000 settlers—if Israel removes the [security] fence, what will be with Israel? Israel will come to an end. If I say that I want to remove it [Israel] from existence, this will be great, great. It is hard. This is not a policy. You can't say it to the world. You can say it to yourself.

Zaki was speaking in relation to the “great goal” that “Israel will come to an end.”

COMMENTARY

So much for the legitimacy of Muslim sympathizers' demands that Israel withdraw to its 1967 borders as if no threat exists. All Muslim nations are awaiting the day Israel succumbs to those demands so they can again try to drive the nation into the Mediterranean Sea. The deluded Muslims do not realize that according to God's Word Jerusalem will be held by the Jews until anti-Christ arises to war against them, which will herald the return of Messiah Jesus. There will never be peace in the Middle East between Israel and her enemies. It is fruitless to think otherwise. And if the non-Muslim nations understood the spiritual nature of that conflict they would have to choose to either side with YHWH or with Allah. But their eyes are blinded by the god of this world, and they will continue the conflict. There will always be another Iraq, another Afghanistan, another fruitless waste of lives and draining of the Western nations' resources to further weaken them. Believers in Jesus must see this for what it is and trust the Lord for His will in our lives. ❖

Administration training Islamist militants for Egypt takeover

William Taylor, the U.S. State Department's newly appointed Special Coordinator for Middle East Transitions, has been giving Egyptian Islamist parties training to prepare for the elections which began on November 28, and will continue through three stages ending in January. Taylor has justified his office's actions by saying that assistance is open to all parties, and that the U.S. would not pick sides. “Sometimes Islamist parties show up; sometimes they don't,” he said glibly.

When asked how the U.S. Government would feel if the Muslim Brotherhood won the elections, he said, “I think we will be satisfied if it is a free and fair election. What we need to do is judge people and parties and movements on what they do, not what they're called.”

COMMENTARY

Is Taylor naive, or complicit with Islam? He certainly isn't a stupid man. The Obama administration has favorably backed the Arab Spring revolutions, all of which are tending toward strict Islamic states in place of the more secular governments they deposed. Our own government is selling us out to Islam.

We have to understand something here. The Islamist parties taking over the Middle East may not be associated with Al Qaeda, or presently engaged in terrorism, but they are fundamentalists who want Sharia imposed not only throughout the Middle East, but throughout the world. Here is a very possible scenario: Islamist parties gain control throughout the Middle East; they hold the vast oil reserves; they bring America to its knees unless American Muslims are granted every desire, including Sharia for themselves and anyone else who enters their enclaves. And we'd better stop supporting Israel. America is ripe for the picking. ❖

Christian pastor languishes in Iran prison

Youcef Nadarkhani, pastor of the 400-member Church of Iran, was sentenced to death in September, 2010, after a court of appeals upheld his earlier conviction for converting to Christianity. Since that judgment he has been languishing in prison awaiting a decision on his appeal of the death sentence. A final decision by the court was expected in October, but the court instead sent his case to the nation's religious authority, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei. A ruling is expected sometime in December.

There have been reports of physical and psychological torture as Nadarkhani has been held in almost total isolation.

Nadarkhani was arrested in October, 2009, on charges of apostasy. Under Iranian law a person may be sentenced to death for apostasy if he was a practicing Muslim prior to his conversion. Although the court found that Nadarkhani was not a practicing Muslim before his conversion, he was still found guilty of apostasy based on his Muslim ancestry. The court has stated that his death sentence could be annulled if he recanted Christianity in accordance with Shariah, but he refused to do so.

Nadarkhani's plight has received worldwide attention, garnering support from governments and non-government organizations including Amnesty International.

COMMENTARY

The Iranian government engages in systematic persecution of Christians, with arrests often coming in waves. December and January are favored times for the government to crack down especially hard on Christian house assemblies. While we believers in the United States are presently immune from government persecution for our faith (small-scale attempts by a few local governments to hinder house assemblies aside), our brethren in Iran and other countries, particularly Muslim and communist countries, live in constant fear of death and various forms of torture. We must not forget to pray for them. Nor must we forget to pray for Christians in the West whose faith is threatened by a life of prosperity and worldliness. ❖

HAROLD CAMPING'S EXCUSES, EXCUSES

After the failure of his prediction that the end of the world would occur on October 21, Harold Camping went into seclusion and has refused to speak to the general media. According to information from sources close to Camping, he has said he is no longer able to lead Family Radio Stations, Inc., or his ministry. *The Christian Post* reports that Brandon Tauszik, a documentarian who has been attending Camping's Oakland, California church for the past eight months, spoke with Camping on October 16, just a few days before the Lord was to come according to Camping. Tauszik states that when he asked Camping what would happen on Oct. 21, Camping said that God has not given anyone the power to know exactly when the Rapture would come.

Originally, Camping had predicted May 21 as the day of the Rapture and October 21 as the day when the world would come to an end. On May 22, after Camping's first prediction failed, he said the Rapture and the end of the world would come simultaneously on October 21. Camping revealed to Tauszik that he was in shock after the May 21 date had passed, and was bewildered that the great earthquake he had expected did not occur. With the failure of the altered prediction Camping has decided to pull back from the public spotlight, at least for the time being.

Yet the Family Radio website still names Camping as president and general manager. However, at this time Camping's program is not scheduled to air. Instead, Camping continues to post messages to the website, and in one he comes close to admitting he erred in setting the date for the Lord's return:

As we continue to struggle for truth—and my, are we doing that right now because we somehow did not have the truth in view of the fact that we're still here, and the dates we had uncovered, or thought we had figured out very accurately, nothing did happen. And therefore we have to continue to search. As we do this, it all has to come from the Bible eventually. It can't come from our heads; it has to come from your Bible.

We're going to be contradicting some of the conclusions that we had made previously. Why is that? Because we are finding that even though we worked so hard to be faithful to the Bible, we weren't as faithful as we should have been. And how could that be? It's a difficult stance to have, but we have to be honest with ourselves; we did not come up with conclusions that are agreeable with the Bible. So whether we like it or not, we have to keep studying—keep examining everything and anything in the Bible that might relate. But His people can arrive at conclusions too hastily, not knowing that they are doing it too hastily, and end up wrong. (11/6/11)



Yet Camping also suggests somewhat obliquely that it was Family Radio that made the mistakes and consistently uses the pronoun “we” rather than “I” when admitting to anything being

amiss. He also lays blame upon God, at least to some degree. A few excerpts will demonstrate.

When it comes to trying to recognize the truth of prophecy, we're finding that it is very, very difficult. Why didn't Christ return on October 21? It seems embarrassing for Family Radio. But God was in charge of everything. We came to that conclusion after quite careful study of the Bible. He allowed everything to happen the way it did without correction. He could have stopped everything if He had wanted to. (10/28/2011)

Notice that it is Family Radio that “seems” embarrassed, not Camping who *is* Family Radio. The question arises, why did he have to carefully study the Bible to find out that God was in charge of everything? Is that not elementary? And, yes, God could have stopped everything—by striking Camping dead. Camping stated emphatically that there was no chance he was wrong. He wasn't going to let go of his prediction.

By the same token, God could have stopped Hitler, Stalin, Islam, and any other evil in the world. But He didn't—at least not immediately. Just because God doesn't stop something doesn't mean God is in it. This is the first attempt by Camping to blame God for the failed “prophecy.”

His second attempt to blame God: “There's one thing that we must remember: God is in charge of this whole business, and we are not.” (Ibid.)

Really? What is God in charge of—false teachings? Human reasoning? Foolish prognostications?

He goes on: “In any case, we do not have to have a feeling of calamity or a feeling that God has abandoned us.” (Ibid.)

Camping should make sure that those who gave him everything and ruined themselves financially for his misguided predictions are made aware of this. By all means he should comfort them with such reassuring words.

Or better, how about if he sold any Family Radio holdings necessary to return the ill-gotten funds to those he bilked?

His third attempt to blame God:

We are simply learning, and sometimes it's painful to learn. We are learning how God brings His messages to mankind. And, my, my, we have time to be a child of God, and therefore as we search the Bible we're bound to feel the darts of the Lord as sometimes He gives us the truth, and sometimes He gives us something that causes us to wait further upon Him. (Ibid.)

What is the something other than truth that God gives us? Half-truths? Lies? Or is it possible that some people try to make God's Word fit their conjuring?

Camping goes to great pains to put the onus on God for not coming through at the appointed hour:

When God did not bring about the end of the world as we had been thinking it would happen, we know that it's God's plan and we don't argue with God. We're not angry with God; we're not unhappy with God. We simply say, "Oh, Lord, we misunderstood somehow, or You changed Your plan," or whatever, but we're willing to listen, "What next; what next, Oh, Lord?" (11/8/2011)

Notice how Camping puts on equal footing "we misunderstood somehow" with "or You changed Your plan." Which was it? Did God give Camping a message with a definite date, or did He not? Did God change His mind about the day of the Lord's return? I think not.

Am I being too hard on Camping? Might I be misunderstanding him? He likens his plight to that of Isaac about to be sacrificed by Abraham when God stays Abraham's hand, as if God changed His mind:

He knows that he's an offering; he knows. But Isaac also is showing that somehow, when God asks you to do it, it's going to be alright, even though at the moment it doesn't make any sense at all.

Now, this is the way God has been treating us; this is one illustration. He has brought us right to the ground till we had the sword in our hand. We were ready to say, "Goodbye" to all those who claim they believe in the Lord, and we knew that there were probably two-thirds of the world that had never even heard about the Lord. We were ready to say, "Goodbye" to them. "It's all over; it's all over! It's time for the end." And now, at the last moment, God has come and said, "No. No, it's not the end. I still have some other plans." (Ibid.)

God did not change His mind. He did not instruct Camping to tell the whole world the Lord was coming back and then decide, "No, I have some other plans I'd like to put into place first."

What is God's plan? Camping strongly implies that God had him make his prediction in order to make the world more aware of Him and His Word:

So, the first question I have to ask all of us; I have to ask myself this very, very carefully. Are we ready to see that we did not understand God's plan altogether? Are we ready to stand back and wait, and do some more studying and recognize that maybe God is not finished with bringing salvation to the world? As a matter of fact, we know that only about a third of the world had heard about the Bible before five months ago. Now by God's mercy through the actions of Family Radio, as stupid as some may think they may have been, as incorrect as some may think they may have been, yet they all fit into a part of a plan where now the whole world has heard about the

Bible. They've heard about the God of the Bible. God now is ready for the next action based on that kind of information. What will that be? And that is where we have to start our thinking; we have to begin to think it out. How does all of that impact our future teaching of the Bible? (Ibid.)

As stupid as "some" may think "they" may have been? As incorrect as "they" may have been? If anyone other than Camping was "stupid" or "incorrect" it was because they believed him. What a way to place the blame elsewhere for his error! And what a way to take credit for spreading the Word of God! Opening his November 8 message on the Family Radio website he states:

But God has arrested us. God has done to us similarly to what He did to a couple of other great men of faith, one being Abraham.

Camping puts himself in the same category as these "other" great men of faith, Abraham and Jonah, by suggesting that God told them one thing, then changed things on them. What he's telling us is that God plays games with us. He misleads us in order to use us. God did not mislead Abraham; He tested him. And there were no consequences to the faith of others. He didn't test Jonah; He told Jonah to bring His message of repentance to Nineveh. Just because Jonah didn't like the results isn't God's fault.

It pains me to have to address this issue. It came into my mind to ignore it because I actually feel sorry for Harold Camping. But he seems to be setting up his followers with more foolishness that could lead them further into spiritual error. For their sakes and for the sakes of others who might be convinced to place their trust in him, it just seemed necessary to confront these self-justifying excuses.

Add to this that he still maintains that Christians should not be attending any church of any kind:

In obedience to these Biblical teachings, Family Radio, which is completely outside of any church institution, and which is supported and administered by individual believers, does teach that today, as we are heading for the end of this world's existence, we should not be a part of a local church.

Yet Camping has his own congregation, his own church building, and all the other accoutrements that go with "church." So his message that Christians must rely only on Camping and Family Radio for truth hasn't changed. Camping evidently believes that he is the only source of God's truth. Although when it comes to his embarrassing errors he is careful to apply them to "we" and "us" whoever "we" and "us" are.

The scenario for more disastrous and embarrassing predictions remains. He hasn't learned from his error. We've seen too often and tragically where such exclusivity leads people.

Pray for Harold Camping to see the truth and repent. Love him for the sake of the Lord and His Kingdom. But don't listen to him, please. ❖

EDITORIAL

OCCUPY WALL STREET LESSONS IN GREED

By Albert James Dager

As the Occupy Wall Street protests in New York and in other cities throughout the United States (and in other Western countries) continue through their third month, nerves on both sides of the dispute between protestors and police agencies are becoming more strained. Protestors attribute the current economic crisis created largely by the meltdown of numerous financial institutions to corporation greed. The disparity between the wealthy and the poor in the United States has been widening for the past several years. And while the number of millionaires has increased, the ranks of the unemployed and those living near or under the poverty line have also increased. At the same time, the middle class is shrinking at an alarming rate. Might the protestors, who claim to represent 99% of the nation's population in opposition to the 1% comprised of the most wealthy, have a valid case? Are they justified in pointing the finger at banks and other financial institutions for the nation's financial woes?

There is no doubt that mismanagement of such huge and important financial institutions as Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac have exacerbated an already serious recession. But what seems to bother the protestors most is what they perceive as unconscionable profiteering on the part of financial institutions that have handed out multi-million dollar bonuses to their top management even after receiving taxpayer money in stimulus and bailouts from the federal government. Those are legitimate concerns. But those concerns have protestors calling not only for the destruction of certain financial institutions, but of the entire free enterprise system.

Not all protestors are anti-capitalism, and there are some perceptive enough to recognize that corporate welfare is a problem, although not so much for domestic corporations as for multi-national corporations that do hold sway over government policies. But even those who say they aren't anti-capitalism have been willing to lock arms with professed communists, socialists, and anarchists to make their voices heard. And although most of the protestors have conducted themselves in a peaceful manner, the emotionally-charged atmosphere of large crowds of protestors has steadily been escalating toward physical confrontation with police saddled with the responsibility of keeping order in the streets and public spaces. Joined by unions and encouraged by leftist politicians, including Barack Obama, the protestors' resolve has been greatly bolstered. Some are even being paid by unions to engage in the protests. And the oncoming



inclement weather doesn't seem to be of concern to them. They will just pitch their tents and hope for handouts to be increased so they can maintain their vigilance.

Are the protestors right? Is the free enterprise system really to blame for the current financial crisis? Or might there be other factors at play? And what about the charges of "greed" leveled against corporation officers? Is that where the problem lies? Would things be better if, in deference to a large segment of the protestors, there were a redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor?

As much as the socialistically-inclined politicians and activists continue to insist that the leftist agenda is the answer to the disparate financial conditions that exist between the wealthiest and the poorest, history has demonstrated unequivocally that wherever socialism has been attempted, the lot of the citizenry at large has suffered greatly. Some may point to a few small countries as examples of socialism's success, but those small countries are not the benchmark for socialism. Rather, one must look at the late Soviet Union, Nazi Germany, Cuba, China, and virtually all the poverty-stricken nations of the world to see the real impact of socialism.

Western nations that are called "socialistic" are not fully so; they still rely on the free market to give them any semblance of a good scale of living. Even China had to throw in the towel and embrace capitalism, not only to thrive, but merely to survive. After receiving Hong Kong from the British in 1997, the communist leaders of China realized soon enough that Hong Kong's free enterprise establishment would be a financial boon to the nation as a whole. The prosperity of Hong Kong would not be tampered with. On the contrary, it would serve as a template for expansion of China's wealth through the free market. The problem is that the communist leaders would be the ones to engage in "exploitation of the masses," rather than granting to the citizenry at large the opportunities that would arise. The wealthy Communist Party members have enhanced their already elite positions by being the ones to run the new economy while continuing to rule the rest of the citizenry with an iron hand and cheap wages. So much for the Marxist idealism that still, inexplicably, stunts the intellectual capacity of the left in non-socialist countries like the United States of America.

No, the experimental laboratory called “history” has proven what generates the best scale of living, and what engenders the greatest amount of poverty. Capitalism wins over socialism hands-down.

I’ve always been reticent to address political issues that do not at least indirectly impact the spiritual aspects of people’s lives. In this case, the various elements of the leftist agenda pushed by the current administration, though perhaps well-intentioned (or not), are almost all inherently spiritual in their nature. One need only look at the many organizations that have thrown their support into the Occupy movement: Marxist organizations; communists; socialists; homosexual rights groups; feminist organizations; free thought groups; leftist-controlled unions. There are no moderate, let alone conservative or right-wing, organizations. The reason is that the basis for the leftist agenda is atheistic Marxism which views man as nothing more than a highly evolved animal; and animals care about nothing but their own appetites.

Marxism is designed to render all mankind (or as many as possible) dependent upon government for their physical, emotional, psychological (and thus, spiritual) well-being. And government, by its nature as an instrument of the world system, is Satanic; with few exceptions throughout history, government has existed for its own benefit—that is, for the benefit of the powers in control—above that of the people.

Now, we understand that government is sanctioned by God, and that according to His Word its purpose is to be a terror to the lawless and a protection for the law abiding. But with the exception of a few righteous kings of Judah and perhaps the founders of the United States, the welfare of the people has almost always taken a back seat to the welfare of those who govern. This is true at every level of government.

One may point to the civil rights movement as an example of how the left has benefited the downtrodden, and we can agree that were it not for civil-rights activism blacks might still be kept at the back of the bus. But don’t think for a moment that the power elite that has pushed for minority rights has been altruistic in its designs. The good that came out of the movement merely masks the class warfare underlying the powers behind it. This is true for every aspect of welfare statism.

The welfare state does not really help the masses develop into spiritually mature, selfless individuals. On the contrary, it generates class-warfare predicated upon envy on the part of the have-nots toward the haves. This is because there is really no such thing as a classless society, contrary to the impractical musings of Karl Marx and those who worship him. Every attempt at establishing a classless society has resulted in unimaginable human suffering and the sacrificing of the individual to the welfare of the state. The state, in turn, is always controlled by a minority of elite members of a ruling class who have gained ascendancy to their posts through intrigue, assassination, lies, deceit, and every ungodly practice conjured by the human imagination. The poor dupes among the masses who believe the government can provide a good scale of living for everyone don’t know the first thing about human nature, let alone about

economics and politics. Every revolution that has promised to give “power to the people” has been well-financed by a power elite that control the means to propagandize large segments of the population to fight for the elite’s agenda of absolute control.

No revolution is without leaders. Does anyone of right mind really believe the Occupy Wall Street movement was generated by grassroots individuals who just happened to show up at the right place and the right time to get it started? Do they really believe the movement spread worldwide within a few days through people texting one another on the spur of the moment? Anyone who believes that, please call me; I’ve got some great bargains in world landmarks I’d like to sell you.

Many of the Occupy protestors continue to goad police into acting against them so they can cry “Police brutality!” They’ve thrown objects at the police and push against them. They are the ones inciting violence, even to the dismay of their peaceful cohorts. It takes only a small contingency of dedicated radicals to touch off violence that could escalate into full-blown revolution. How long before the Molotov cocktails start flying? Don’t think that can’t happen. These are lawless people.

The Occupy movement is a power play designed to create an atmosphere of revolution that could drive the United States further into global governance on its way to possibly melding into the last-days anti-Christ’s economy. And contrary to its claim to represent the 99% of the population, the movement is mainly comprised of socially disenfranchised, bitter, envious dupes of the globalist elite. They don’t even understand the basics of what it takes for a society to function. If they somehow manage to tear down the banks, they will end up destroying the welfare of millions of pensioners who depend upon the corporations’ survival. Major corporations are publicly traded companies invested in by retirement pension programs. The wealth of the nation is, for better or for worse, in the hands of the financial institutions these people wish to destroy.

Considering the history of banking throughout the world, apart from the international banking monstrosities that have taken over the national currencies of nations (e.g., the privately-owned Federal Reserve Bank in the U.S.), most banks and lending institutions have engaged in upstanding and honest business practices. There have been some bad apples, but the egregious acts of a few are outweighed by the overall performance of the many.

The reality is that the banks and other financial institutions, though guilty of many things, are not guilty of hindering the economy; that is the sole responsibility of the governments that have sought for decades to control their nation’s economy through the leftist agenda of meddling in the financial affairs of the nations.

To be sure, banking and finance are part of the world system, just as is government. But if I’m to suffer abuse by one or the other, I’d choose to be abused by even a dishonest private sector business than by a despotic government. I could recover from loss to the former; I’d be hard-pressed to survive the latter. The Occupy movement appears to be a push by the power elite to nationalize the banks. Then where would we be?

Before seeking more control by government (really, the globalist power elite) those protesting what they think is widespread corruption in the financial industry should learn from history.

That doesn't mean there haven't been abuses and that greed hasn't played a part in capitalism's successes. There was a time when unions were necessary to bring about a fair standard of living for workers. Child labor laws helped free small children from terrible working conditions that threatened their health and lives. And in spite of labor laws that threatened in some minds to hinder free enterprise, the prosperity that a somewhat curtailed capitalism bestowed upon the citizens at large in the 20th century was without parallel in world history.

So what happened? Well, one major cause, if not THE major cause of the current financial crisis has been the meltdown of the mortgage market. And it is there that we find the government to be the major culprit.

At the beginning of the recession a huge portion of the financial structure of the United States rested on the mortgage market. If that failed, it would impact virtually all the major banks and lending institutions. They would have to curtail lending, not only for homes, but for businesses and personal spending. Every business in America would be affected by the failure. And sure enough, that failure came. But the vast majority of citizens have been propagandized to think that greediness on the part of the banks and lending institutions themselves were primarily to blame, when, in truth, it was a socialist-minded government upon which the blame must be placed.

Prior to the presidency of Jimmy Carter, lending institutions were called "greedy" because they were perceived as stingy in their lending policies, particularly when it came to financing home purchases. Only people who had good-to-excellent credit ratings and sufficient down payments were granted mortgages on the purchases and refinancing of their homes. Decrying the idea that people with poor credit and/or low wages could not buy homes, the federal government, under Jimmy Carter, devised the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA), Title VIII of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1977. The CRA was implemented to encourage commercial banks and savings-and-loan institutions to provide low- and moderate-income wage earners, as well as poor credit risks, the opportunity to purchase homes. The Act was designed to reduce what the government considered "discriminatory credit practices" against low-income neighborhoods and persons.

What followed were federally-approved, "creative" financing terms that allowed people to qualify for mortgages destined to fail. It became so easy for people to buy houses that a joke circulated in the mortgage industry, to wit, as long as someone could breathe, he could qualify for a mortgage.

In order to encourage lenders to approve these nonsensical loans, the federally-backed Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac purchased a majority of loan types that were modified for high-risk borrowers. Every president since Jimmy Carter has enhanced the terms of the CRA, ever trying to patch holes and make it all the easier for low-income and poor-credit borrowers to get into the housing market. The most unfavorable were allowed to purchase

homes with nothing down, some even allowing financing up to 110% of the home's value.

Option-arm loans were created to allow otherwise untrustworthy borrowers to decide for themselves what their payments would be for the first several years. They could pay a minimal amount that would allow for what appeared to be a good debt-to-income ratio, which was really a negative amortization plan that increased their principle over time; or they could make interest-only payments, leaving their principle to remain the same; or they could make a fully-amortized payment similar to a normal mortgage; or they could make payments in excess of their fully-amortized amount. At the end of the qualification period their payment would increase to the fully-amortized amount. They were told that this increase would happen; they were advised to make as large a payment as they could afford; they were told they would have to improve their financial standing by the time the payments would increase by as much as thousands of dollars a month. But which payment do you suppose those borrowers made during the initial term? That's right: the minimum amount allowed for the qualifying term. Then, when they were notified that their payment would increase by anywhere from \$500 to \$1,500 or more per month, they screamed that the lenders had bilked them. They called them "greedy" for insisting that the borrowers honor the terms of their mortgages. The default of sub-prime borrowers caused the value of homes owned by prime borrowers to tank, leaving many under water, thus contributing further to the collapse of the market.

The sanctimonious government agencies that oversaw those loans pointed their fingers at the lenders and blamed them for the ensuing financial meltdown of the mortgage market which, subsequently, affected the entire economy. In some states they began to implement strict rules and regulations against mortgage brokers and lenders, imposing fees and exorbitant fines for things as innocent as clerical errors on non-binding Good Faith Estimates. Ongoing-education has been mandated in some states, requiring brokers and lenders to relearn their trades every year at their own expense. These overbearing tactics have driven honest mortgage personnel out of the industry.

But the government bureaucrats and politicians responsible for the mess continue to draw their exorbitant salaries and high pensions with impunity. And guess what? The same nonsensical loans that contributed so greatly to the destruction of the mortgage market are still available under the federal government's guidelines. What has been made more difficult is for previously qualified home buyers to get prime-rate mortgages. More people are now dumped into the sub-prime market.

The Occupy Wall Street protestors are targeting the wrong people. And they are calling for the same level of government oversight of the economy that created the mess in the first place. And just as the protestors are ignorant of these truths, they are inarticulate and contradictory in their approach. On one hand they complain that there aren't enough jobs. On the other hand they stage protests against "consumerism." Well, what are jobs about but to provide goods and services to be consumed? The more consumption is curtailed, the fewer jobs there will be.

There isn't much intelligence among the intelligentsia backing these protests. And were their railing against capitalism to bear fruit, the worse things will get for everyone. It is the socialist ideal of Jimmy Carter, followed by George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama that has kept the lid on the truth and created the anti-free market mentality that is growing. No one in government today is willing to point the finger at their own institution for its part in the financial crisis. Instead they want us to believe they have solutions that, surprise, surprise, involve even more government oversight and interference in the free market. They've destroyed the housing market and the financial market; now they want to destroy the medical and insurance markets.

We've heard often the definition of insanity: doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results. The inmates are running the asylum.

This isn't a polemic against government, nor am I advocating disrespect of government. The truth is the truth, and it must not be ignored, particularly when it affects the spiritual and mental state of people who don't understand the forces at play.

Ever since the United States of America became an independent nation, there have been European elements at work to destroy its legacy of freedom and prosperity granted by the grace of God to a people largely Christian and biblical in their ethical standards.

The enemy has been working within and without to bring this nation down to the level of other nations whose gods have kept them from the blessings that come only through YHWH, the God of the Bible. The ultimate goal is the establishment of a socialist global society.

Today, the populace has succumbed in large part to the ungodly elements within its midst. We have lauded the most profane people who work to destroy us, both in government and in the private sector. Like ancient Israel, we have thrown off the restraints of God's Word and have gone whoring after false gods, both living and inanimate. Even the churches have largely abandoned the truth of God's Word and have embraced the false wisdom of man's philosophies, psychology, religion, and every demonic lie of Satan that comes in the name of Jesus.

And for this reason God shall send them strong delusion so that they would believe a lie in order that they all might be damned who did not believe the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. (2 Thess. 2:11-12)

Marxism and capitalism are amoral by nature. Both are elements of the world system and thus are part of Satan's domain. If there is any virtue in either, it must be granted to capitalism on this basis: Scripture allows for a person to own property and conduct business for profit, yet within the parameters of godliness; Marxism and every form of socialism is unsanctioned in Scripture, and is godless in its origins. While greed can and does enter into the equation of capitalism, greed is the foundation of socialism (the desire to take from those who work and give it to those who don't or won't work).

So-called "Christian socialists" point to the first-century believers in Jerusalem having all things in common as an example

of socialism melding with faith in Christ. But no one was coerced into holding everything in common. Nor was it a government policy. Under persecution many believers were deprived of their everyday necessities. There was an unusual circumstance that called for sharing with one another on the basis of a common love. That can work only within the context of godliness in the character of the people; it cannot work among the unregenerate. Again, history has proven this over and over again.

The Occupy Wall Street protestors have believed a lie on the emotional and intellectual level by thinking that the free enterprise system should be abolished in favor of some form of godless Marxism. But worse, they have believed the spiritual lie that greed is the exclusive vice of the wealthy.

Yes, it is a vice of many wealthy. But many wealthy also have shared their wealth through philanthropic endeavors. Many poor have been blessed by the largesse of the wealthy who contribute untold billions of dollars in charitable giving, the building of hospitals and other social institutions, and the like. However, that truth is not to be considered by the blindly enraged who think the world owes them a living.

No sin is exclusive to any group of people, certainly not based on their economic status. Most of the wealthy have gotten there through diligence in their work ethic. Can that be said about the majority of the Occupy protestors?

Those who cry for redistribution of wealth are among the greediest of all. They want the benefits of another person's labor without working for it; they want the government to take from the average wage earner and give it to them in the form of welfare, food stamps, social programs, transportation, and any other means they can conjure.

Politicians stuff their pockets with excessive wages and lifetime pensions, health benefits, and other perks, while meddling in the affairs of the truly productive citizens and encouraging anarchy of the insanelly jealous.

Greed is a trait of all; it must be tempered with instruction in godliness. One need not be a believer in Christ to eschew greediness, but one must believe in the virtues that God has instilled within every man's conscience and, most particularly, has conveyed to man through His written Word.

The current recession has affected almost everyone; and there are those who are truly homeless for good reasons beyond their control. Some have lost jobs and homes that they wished to keep. But sociological studies have demonstrated that a large segment of the homeless are so, not because of circumstances beyond their control, but because of poor life choices—laziness, the abuse of drugs and/or alcohol, poor work ethics that cost them their jobs, hatred of "conformity" to the rules of society, etc.

These types make up a large portion of the Occupy protests. It is obvious that many don't have jobs or homes to go to; otherwise they wouldn't be camping out in parks for months on end. It appears as if they've found the perfect ruse to pitch their tents without too much interference. As merely homeless, they were subject to more stringent rules on where they could camp. As protestors entitled to "free speech," they can claim violation of their civil rights if they are forced to move on. Under the guise

of “free speech,” no public place can be denied them unless, like community parks, there are already in-place statutes to prohibit overnight camping.

In Seattle, Washington, for example, the protestors have been allowed to squat on the campus of Seattle Central Community College (SCCC) on the basis that it is a public college and, therefore, must be made available for demonstrations of free speech. Now, however, even SCCC has found just how repulsive these people are. Students have increasingly reported instances of sexual and other types of harassment from squatters; unsanitary conditions and the presence of human waste has proliferated; trash has piled up; rats have infested the camp which sits on the edge of a child day-care site. Because of all these problems the day care site has had to be closed while the protestors continue to squat.

Many of the protestors are unemployed, not because they can't get a job, but because they don't want to work. There are still low-wage jobs available that would at least allow them to take care of the basic necessities of life and retain some human dignity.

And it's not just the homeless who seek handouts. How many of those who say they can't afford to live without the support of others—who don't feed their children but rely on school breakfast, lunch, and even dinner programs—own flat-screen television sets (often more than one), smart phones, gaming consoles, and other luxuries, often bought with welfare checks? And how many waste their income, whether from welfare or earned wages, on alcohol, drugs, and junk food?

Yes, there are people who need assistance, and they should be given that assistance. But, generally, such assistance should be made available first and foremost to those mentally incapable of taking care of themselves. Even many physically handicapped people are resourceful enough to provide for themselves.

Those who seek public assistance should be required to prove they need it and are not prone to self-destruction. Drug tests for those who want to live off of society are not unreasonable. Those who are physically or mentally incapable of helping themselves should be provided for by the government. But truthfully, the number of such is far, far fewer than the parasites that engorge themselves at the expense of others.

So who, really, are the greedy ones? The answer is everybody, regardless of one's financial or social standing, who wants what others have. The greed of the haves is revealed in their wanting, to the point of self-destruction or the destruction of others, more than they could ever possibly use; the greed of the have-nots is revealed in their wanting what the haves have. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. It harbors the same sins of which it accuses those it envies.

The Occupy Wall Street protestors are no less greedy than those they accuse. They rail against the haves because of envy.

It is incumbent upon believers in Jesus to heed His words:

“Therefore, do not think about saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or, ‘What will we drink?’ or, ‘How will we be clothed?’ (for the Gentiles seek after all these things) for your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things. But you seek first the Kingdom of God and

His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore, do not think about tomorrow, for tomorrow will think about its own things. Each day's trouble is sufficient.” (Matthew 6:31-34)

For those caught up in these scuffles for egalitarianism, I advise: look into your own hearts and see if you are not guilty of the same greed of which you accuse others.

For the wealthy who do take advantage of others unfairly, examine yourselves to see if you are not guilty as charged.

For the politicians who take either side in the dispute, look inward and see if you are not guilty of greed and other sins while you deceive the masses into thinking you or your political party offer any genuine solutions to the human condition. Are you as greedy as the private sector businessmen you accuse?

Greed is not limited to money. The desire for power through spiritual and/or temporal means has at its roots a different, but even stronger form of greed. It is said that money is power, and that's true. But there are those who seek to exercise power even while identifying themselves with the poor. Or does that strike too close to home for the Occupy Wall Street leaders and the politicians who promote the welfare state?

We must all guard our hearts to see if we are living for ourselves or for the Lord who bought us at the price of His life. ❖

SEEN ON A CHURCH LEADER BOARD IN KENT, WASHINGTON

FORGET WALL STREET OCCUPY CHURCH

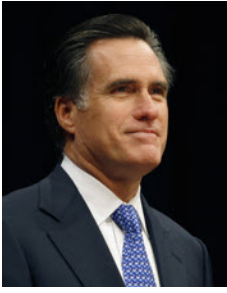
DID YOU KNOW?

- The three companies that insure the majority of Protestant churches in America say they typically receive upward of 260 reports each year of children being sexually abused;
- This is only the tip of the iceberg, because children usually remain silent about their abuse (often due to fear, or to feeling “ashamed” or “guilty”). When children DO report what has happened, churches frequently cover it up;
- U.S. authorities don't know the whereabouts of over 40,000 convicted child molesters, and even the best background checks available to churches miss the majority of predators.

We tend to assume that God would never let the children in our particular fellowship suffer. But (a) churches *right across* the denominational spectrum have been hit; (b) the consequences of a child being abused are simply too awful to risk; and (c) if one's church has knowingly compromised on any of the teachings God has given us in His Word for our safety, how can it presume on His protection?

Even if the reader is certain that their own fellowship is immune, what about those fellowships attended by family members and friends? The superb new book *Preying on Our Children* reveals the chilling growth in child sex attacks throughout the denominations. Four years in the making, it also explains why this growth is taking place, and describes the simple, God-ordained ways in which churches can avoid this hazard and keep our children safe from even the most cunning, determined and experienced molesters and their devastating actions. For more information, readers can visit preying.org, but we recommend the book so highly that we are making it available through Sword Publishers.

See the Sword Publishers catalog in this issue, or visit
www.swordpublishers.com



MORMONISM'S FREE RIDE

(Continued from page 3)

Man Can Become a God Like the Father

“As God is, man can become; the saints of the ages have devoutly sought godhood itself” (D. & C. 132:17-20, 37).

According to the Mormon doctrine of “Eternal Progression,” men begin their progression and advancement in pre-existence as spirit offspring of exalted Parents (our heavenly Father is believed to have many “wives” through whom he procreates in sexual unions without end). This means that all humans were procreated by God, not created. The angels are procreated sons of God, and some become men or women when born through women on earth. Man gains a mortal body during his earth life and should work toward the goal of attaining a state of glory, honor and exaltation to be like the Father, eventually ruling over and populating his own universe. It is believed that Adam was in his pre-existence the archangel Michael, who is the prince of God’s people.

Satan Is The Spirit Brother of Jesus

Satan, the Devil, is a spirit son of God who was born in the morning of pre-existence (D. & C. 93:25).

Mormonism teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are three gods who work in unity as one God. At some time in eternity past, the Father presented His plan of salvation—the plan whereby the “spirit children” of the Father would be enabled to gain tangible bodies and, if faithful in all things, progress to godhood, equal to the Father. Before he became Satan (“adversary”) one of the Father’s spirit sons offered to be the Redeemer. But because he was not in full agreement with the Father’s plan he was cast down to become Satan, “the father of all lies, to deceive and to blind men, and to lead them captive at his will” (Mormonism’s Book of Moses 4:1-4).

This means, according to Mormon doctrine, that Satan was at one time a son of God no differently than was Jesus. Had he been found faithful, Satan rather than the Word of God who created all things would have become the Redeemer.

The Jesus of Mormonism is a different Jesus than the Jesus of the Bible who is the I AM from eternity (John 8:58).

There are myriad other aberrant doctrines of Mormonism that, as I’ve said, have been well-addressed for the past century and a half. The purpose of this writing is to bring into question how true believers in Jesus and the God of the Bible should view the candidacy of Mormon politicians.

We do not disagree with Romney’s generally conservative political posture. Christians may agree or disagree on most of the issues without calling into question the genuineness of their faith. Nor is there any question of Romney’s ability to govern, or of his good intentions. He appears to be a moral man who genuinely cares about the direction this country is headed.

But what about the credibility he brings to Mormonism? Christian leaders have already given much credibility to it by lauding Glenn Beck. By unequivocally endorsing Romney, Christians run the risk of further blurring the lines between biblical faith and Mormon deceptions. Not only non-believers might be persuaded to join the LDS based on a shared moral/political agenda, but undiscerning, ignorant, and baby Christians might find themselves being swayed into joining. And as long as Christian leaders refuse to proclaim and explain the difference between Romney’s beliefs and the true Gospel, whether or not they support his candidacy, they are aiding and abetting Satan’s work of deception.

Which is more important to the believer in Jesus—achieving political dominance in the nation, or maintaining and defending the purity of the faith? Are the cares of this world of greater interest to the average Christian than loyalty to the Kingdom of Heaven? It appears as if the answer is increasingly yes.

If there is one person who might be led into the Mormon deception because of Christian leaders pandering to the political agenda of conservatives at the expense of spiritual truth, there will be much to answer for before the Lord.

I would have more respect for Rick Perry and Herman Cain were they to at least state their agreement with Romney on political issues while making it clear that his religion is a Satanic deception. Admittedly that would virtually destroy their campaigns, but frankly, the way they’ve conducted themselves of late seems to have done that for them anyway.

At this time the frontrunner for the Republican nomination is Newt Gingrich, followed in second place by Mitt Romney. Gingrich has his own baggage, and is out of favor with many Christians for his two divorces, particularly his first, which has been reported in a manner that gave the false impression that he decided to divorce his wife after she was stricken with cancer. Gingrich’s first wife, Jackie Battleley, has consistently maintained that the circumstances surrounding their divorce have been greatly overstated by the media. She had inaugurated discussion of divorce months before she was hospitalized. She had been Gingrich’s high-school math teacher in Columbus, Ga. They began dating after he graduated, and were married in 1962 when Gingrich was only 19 and she was 26. The couple had already decided to divorce in 1980. They had been separated for months when Battleley was hospitalized. During her ordeal Gingrich did what he could to help her and to bring their two girls to visit her.

I state these things not to paint a rosy picture of Newt Gingrich (who converted to Roman Catholicism), or to promote him as the desired choice between the two frontrunners, but to set the record straight for Christians. In no way do I condone his divorces. But there is a lesson for us. Some Christians who would shun Gingrich for his past sins have no problem endorsing Romney whose entire life is lived in spiritual deception. Gingrich has admitted his sin, at least in relation to his two divorces. Romney continues to deceive others (including many Christians) by his public defense of Mormonism.

God can forgive them both, and both should be in our prayers.❖



Q & A

Dear Al,

About a week ago New York State voted in favor of gay marriage. Soon other states will be following New York's example. The media will have you believe that gay marriage is basically about civil rights, and my question is, is gay marriage really about civil rights?

There is an argument raised by Oprah Winfrey and her cohorts (who by the way are big advocates of gay marriage) and that it's good for gay couples to adopt children. Otherwise these children wouldn't have a proper home. According to Oprah Winfrey, gay married couples make excellent parents, and in many cases they make better parents compared to those who aren't gay.

The whole situation with gay marriage disgusts me to say the least, but the New York senator, Mark Grisanti, who helped win the vote for gay marriage in New York called himself a good Catholic. He is a Republican. How could he betray his party by voting in favor of gay marriage?

T.M., LeRoy, NY

Dear T.M.,

First, only God, not man, defines marriage. Man may call anything he wishes "marriage" but that doesn't make it so in God's eyes, and that's all that really counts. He instituted marriage; only He can define it.

So, yes, in man's eyes "gay marriage" is a civil rights issue simply because man invented civil rights. As far as man is concerned, then, whatever it calls "marriage" becomes a civil rights issue.

The Declaration of Independence says that God endowed men with "unalienable rights" of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. There is no mention of "civil rights" as defined by today's governments. Civil rights are what the former Soviet Union's constitution granted to feign "equal rights" among its citizens. The leftists in America gained sufficient power to impose the same type of "rights" system we have today, patterned after the Soviet Union's "rights."

I'm not saying that all "civil rights" are wrong. Government should treat all citizens equally. But civil rights as defined by the government are used to force individuals and non-governmental institutions to eschew even proper discrimination in relation to others. Civil rights de facto infringe on the rights of some individuals in deference to a favored class of people. So "civil rights" inevitably result in a favored class, and what we end up with is reverse discrimination. The government tells private citizens who they may hire and fire, who they may serve in their business, and, worse, what they may think and say in order to not be in violation of another's "civil rights."

There is a difference between "civil rights" and the unalienable rights promoted in the Declaration of Independence. The former are granted by government; the latter are believed to have been granted by God, although biblically that is questionable. We have no rights before God; we have life, liberty and may pursue

happiness only because of His grace. But in human terms, and in relation to human government, the sentiment of unalienable rights is the noblest ever conceived by the framers of human government at any time in history. And, it must be admitted that it was God who guided the founders of our government in the first place. But whatever the government grants, the government can take away.

Now, because "gay marriage" has become a "civil rights" issue due to the inordinate influence of homosexuals in the media, government and business, there is no escaping the "civil right" for homosexuals to engage in "marriage" as defined by government.

By the same token, then, according to the "civil rights" granted by government at this time, homosexuals have the "civil right" to adopt children.

Does this make it right in God's eyes? Of course not. Homosexuality is an abomination to God (as are all other sins), so in His economy there are no "rights" for homosexuals. (Actually, there are no rights for anyone, but we're dealing with that issue for the present.)

As far as Oprah Winfrey's claim that homosexuals in many cases make better parents compared to heterosexuals, that's just propaganda. In the first place, there haven't been enough homosexual adoptions of children to make such a determination. In the second place, all are sinners and fall short of the glory of God. We know from statistics that some 60% of child sexual abuse is committed by heterosexuals. But considering that homosexuals make up less than 10% of the population, that means the less than 10% are responsible for 40% of child sexual abuse. This disparity is huge. The National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), a U.S. Government organization, stated in a 1992 report: "the ratio of heterosexual to homosexual pedophiles was calculated to be approximately 11:1. This suggests that the resulting proportion of true pedophiles among persons with a homosexual erotic development is greater than that in persons who develop heterosexually" (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/1556756>). The NCBI is a division of the National Library of Medicine at the National Institutes of Health. This is just one of several credible studies that demonstrate the tendencies of homosexuals and lesbians to engage in child sexual abuse on a far greater scale than do heterosexuals. That truth alone should be a red flag for those who promote adoption by homosexuals. But don't confuse Oprah and her sycophants with the facts. It's all about "feelings."

As far as how a "good Catholic Republican" can betray his party by voting in favor of homosexual marriage, there are a lot of Republicans who support homosexual "rights." They know the political and economic power the homosexual community wields. And considering the scandals involving Catholic priests committing sexual abuse primarily with young boys, it should come as no shock that some Catholics (although most likely a very small minority) would favor the homosexual agenda.

We must love all homosexuals. But that doesn't mean we must love their sin or their political agenda. On the contrary, any true believer in Jesus Christ would abhor those things while ministering God's love and grace to individual homosexuals.

That's how we must approach all men regardless of how distasteful and even abhorrent their sins. We must not forget that we are all saved by God's grace.

In Jesus' love,

Al

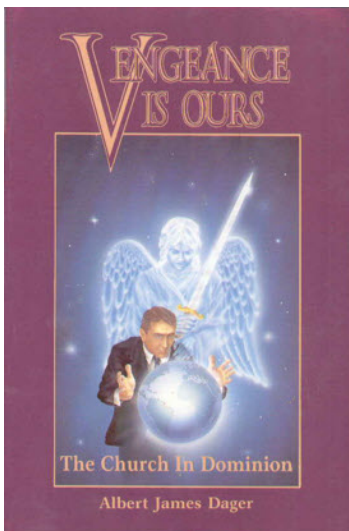


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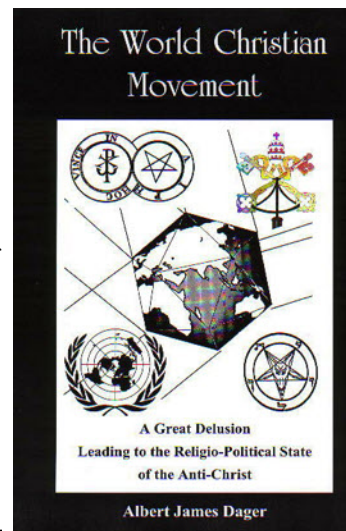
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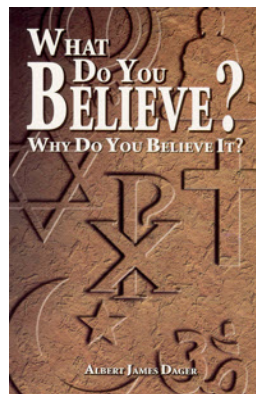
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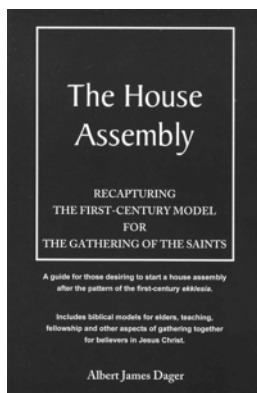
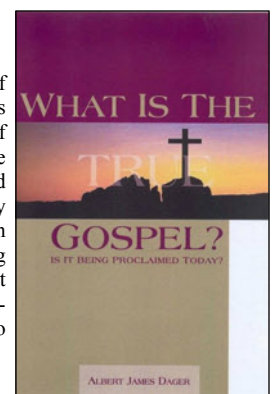


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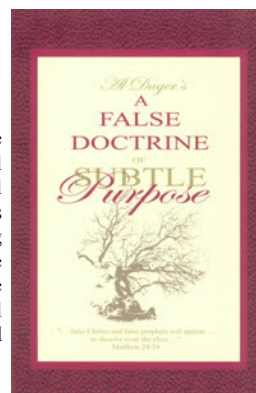
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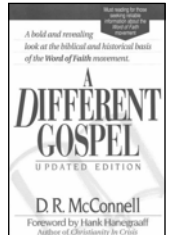
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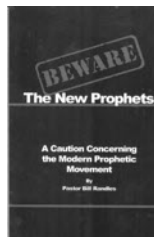
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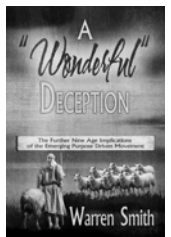
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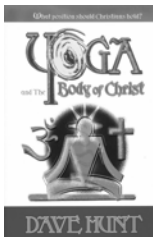
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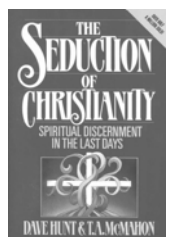
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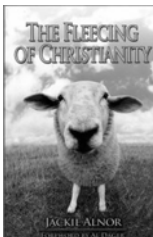
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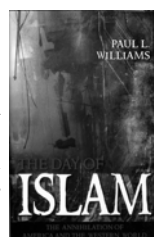
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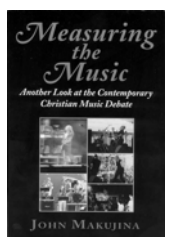
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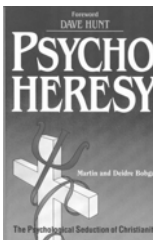
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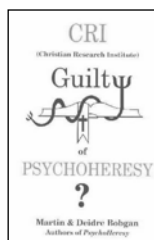
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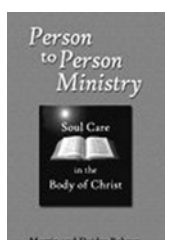
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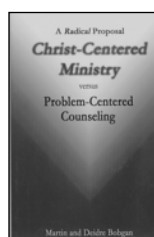
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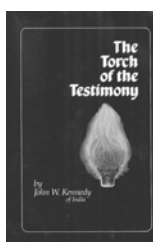
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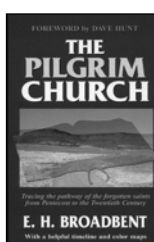
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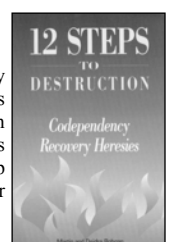
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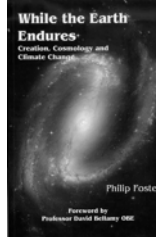
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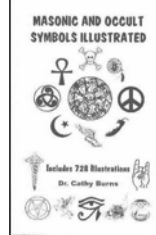
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Historians have segmented the history of mankind into nine “Big Eras”—periods that have seen significant changes in mankind’s relation to the cosmos and to each other. The year 300 marked the beginning of what historians call Big Era Five, which lasted until the start of the 16th century. This was a time when empire building nearly ended and, for a time, even reversed itself. Independent city-states, kingdoms, and empires began to appear in West Africa and the Americas. Early in the era the Roman Empire began to fade, and throughout the era it would eventually be fragmented into independent nations that resided primarily throughout Western Europe and Asia Minor.

As we saw in previous chapters, the anti-Christ philosophy of ecclesiastical hierarchy had begun to take root as early as the latter part of the first century. So-called “bishops” were installed as authoritarian personalities among the previously autonomous assemblies of believers in Jesus, and new assemblies, which would come to be called “churches,” would be established upon that foundational structure.

Until the fourth century, Christianity was an outcast religion among every society in which it found converts. At the start of the fourth century, however, it began to enjoy official recognition by the kingdom of Armenia, becoming the state religion in AD 301.

Older even than Roman Catholicism, today the Armenian Apostolic Church holds the distinction of being the world’s oldest national church as part of Oriental Orthodoxy. Oriental Orthodoxy is not to be confused with Eastern Orthodoxy which holds some distinct doctrines and affiliations primarily within Eastern European nations.

The departure from autonomy for independent assemblies does not diminish the legitimacy of those church’s claims to historical succession to the apostles of Jesus. All Christianity can lay that claim. But the penchant for hierarchical authority caused them to confuse historical succession with apostolic succession. That is, they claim that because their community was initially founded under the headship of “bishops” who had been trained

by other “bishops” in a continuous line back to the apostles, their legitimacy as the one true church should be recognized by all of Christianity. Nearly every church that can trace its roots to antiquity makes this claim.

But historical succession does not equate to apostolic succession. The departure from apostolic succession was realized during the second century with the general acceptance of “bishops” who enjoyed autocratic rule over the faithful; that autocratic rule grew into widespread acceptance during the third century. As we have seen, the various bishops gave primacy to the bishop at Rome, largely because of proximity to the central power of the empire.

As early as the second century the bishops began to actively move their adherents away from the idea that Gentile believers in Jesus were grafted into the faith of Abraham through the New Covenant that Jesus made with the houses of Judah and Israel (Jeremiah 33:33; Hebrews 8:8; Romans 1:1-25). They began to adopt pagan festivals in place of the Hebrew feasts, and convoluted Scripture to fit their desire to separate from their Hebrew roots. The Babylonian feast to Ishtar took the place of the Passover feast under the name “Easter.” The worship of the Sun god melded with worship of the Son of God with the false claim that Jesus rose on a Sunday morning. It became an excuse to replace the Sabbath with the so-called “Lord’s day” (See our special report, *Facts and Fallacies of the Resurrection*). By the time the fourth century came around, the churches had become so far removed from their biblical roots that they were easy prey for anti-Christ to lead into full-blown apostasy those who had escaped persecution.

Although Christians in Armenia found favor with their king, Christians throughout the Roman Empire were still suffering persecution. We can discern how assimilation into the world system such as happened in Armenia would work to anti-Christ’s advantage by eventually rendering Christians apathetic and even dismissive of biblical truth. Yet in the early fourth century anti-Christ’s primary method of attacking the true faith in Jesus remained persecution.

In AD 302, Emperor Diocletian began to purge his army and his court of Christians. One year later his co-emperor Galerius Valerius Maximus persuaded Diocletian to forbid Christians to worship in groups. His edict would result in thousands of Christians being put to death over the following ten years.

Diocletian's appetite for killing Christians was whetted further by four more edicts specifically aimed at destroying Christianity. Church buildings were destroyed, clergymen were arrested, and Christians were forced to make sacrifices to the Roman gods upon sentence of death.

One martyr was Agnes, a 12-year-old girl who had refused marriage in order to consecrate her virginity to God. She would become honored as the "patron saint" of virgins by a church that, even as it suffered for its faith, was gradually being undermined by anti-Christ to incorporate pagan beliefs and practices, but in the name of Christ. "Patron saints" were devised by the Roman church as an answer to the Roman pantheon of specific gods worshipped and petitioned for specific causes. This may be attributed somewhat to the penchant of converts to want to hang on to some of the comfortable traditions of the religions they ostensibly renounced in receiving Jesus as their Savior.

In 304, the bishop of Rome, Marcellinus, died after an eight-year reign as "pope." He would have no successor until 308.

Another well-known martyr was Catherine, a young woman of royal lineage. Upon making a public confession of the Gospel at a sacrificial feast ordered by Galerius, she was tortured on a spiked wheel, then beheaded.

Because the expansion of the Roman Empire demanded more oversight than one emperor could handle effectively, Diocletian had elevated Maximianus Herculus as co-emperor in AD 285. Diocletian administered affairs in the eastern regions of the empire while Herculus took charge of the western regions. In 293 the two mutually consented to expansion of the imperial college by appointing two Caesars, Constantius Chlorus and Galerius, thus forming the first Roman Tetrarchy (rule by four). Constantius as Caesar was responsible to Herculus as Augustus in the west, while Galerius was the Caesar responsible to Diocletian as Augustus in the east.

In 305 Diocletian and Herculus abdicated to retire, which allowed Constantius and Galerius to be elevated to the positions of Augusti. They in turn appointed two new Caesars—Severus in the east under Constantius, and Maximinus in the west under Galerius.

In October, 306, Herculus' son Maxentius was proclaimed emperor at Rome to the disapproval of Galerius. We will dispense with the political intrigue that ensued involving the Tetrarchy and Maxentius. The important thing is that Maxentius brought some comparative peace to Roman Christians. Yet it took two years for the alleged papal line of succession to be revived with the election of a cleric named only as Marcellus I.

Finding Christians in great confusion due to persecution, the destruction of their meeting places, and dissension as a result of many falling away because of the severe persecution, Marcellus divided the territorial administration of Rome's Christians into twenty-five districts and appointed over each a pastor or presbyter who would oversee the ritual aspects of the developing Roman

Catholic Church, including baptism, marriage, burial of the dead, and various celebrations, particularly those commemorating the deaths of martyrs.

Marcellus insisted that those who had lapsed from the faith (the *lapsi*) because of persecution must perform the prescribed penance in order to be reinstated to fellowship. This caused great dissension and even violence among the *lapsi*, many of whom were led by an apostate (unnamed by historians) who had evidently denied the faith even before the persecutions broke out.

Although Maxentius had scaled back the persecution of Christians to a great degree, he was, nevertheless, despotic. Perhaps to quell the dissension among Christians, he had Marcellus exiled sometime around the new year's beginning. Marcellus died shortly after, in January, 309, to be succeeded by Eusebius, whose reign as "pope" would also be brief—a mere four months.

The next few years saw a significant change in the political landscape of the Roman Empire. Of particular importance was the rise of Constantius' son Constantine, who initially was rejected as the successor to Diocletian in favor of Galerius. Serving in peril under Galerius in the east, Constantine appealed to his father to rescue him. Using subterfuge, Constantius convinced Galerius to give leave to Constantine, ostensibly to help in Constantius' campaign in Britain.

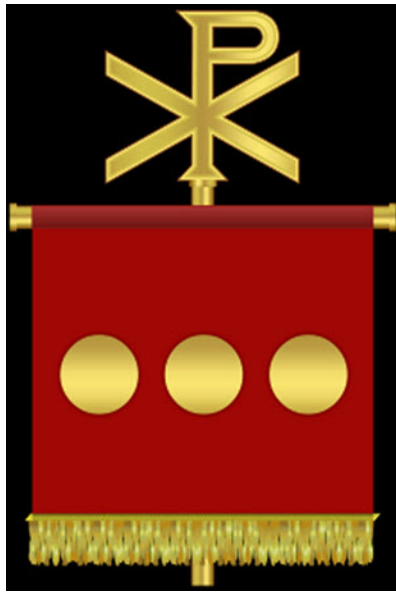
Succumbing to illness in 306, and aware of his impending death, Constantius declared his support for raising Constantine to the position of Augustus. The army, loyal to Constantius, put their support behind Constantine. Upon receiving Constantine's request for recognition as Augustus, Galerius became furious. His advisors cautioned him that refusal of Constantine's claim to the title would mean war. Galerius compromised, granting Constantine the title of "Caesar" instead, and giving the position of Augustus to Severus. Constantine accepted the lesser position knowing that it would cement his legitimacy, and he ruled Britain, Gaul and Spain at the head of one of the largest Roman armies.

In 310 Maximium rebelled against Constantine while the latter was engaged in combat against the Franks. Constantine drove Maximium to Massilia (Marseille) where he hoped to find asylum. He was captured by Constantine when the townspeople opened the gates to allow Constantine's army entrance. Constantine granted Maximium clemency but strongly urged him to commit suicide, which he did in July, 310, by hanging himself.

In 311, Galerius, in a final act before death, issued an edict ending the persecution of Christians and granting them tolerance in the Roman Empire. They were allowed to rebuild their places of worship and resume normal activities. That same year, the brief vacancy in the papal line of succession ended with the election of Miltiadea (aka Melchisedech), a native of Africa. He was given by the emperors the right to receive back all buildings and possessions that had been confiscated during the persecutions. This gave greater power to the "pope" to reorganize the ecclesiastical administration and religious life of Christians in the Roman Empire.

Meanwhile, the Tetrarchy was falling apart as the various members continued to conflict with each other. Ultimately it came to a showdown between Constantine and Maxentius—a battle that would have the most far-reaching effect on Christianity, lasting until the present day. And it will last until the Lord returns.

On October 28, 312, Constantine met Maxentius in battle at the Milvian Bridge. Maxentius, whose forces were twice those of Constantine, took his stand in front of the bridge that crossed the Tiber River en route to Rome. He mustered his army in long lines with their backs to the river. When Constantine's army arrived to battle they bore a strange symbol on their standards and shields—the letter *Chi* (X) traversed by *Rho* (P), the first two letters of the Greek spelling for *Cristos* (Christ).



CONSTANTINE'S LABARUM WITH THE "CHI-RHO" ABOVE

Constantine's victory was decisive, ending with Maxentius drowning in the Tiber from the press of his retreating troops.

Alternate histories have Constantine putting Maxentius to death the day after the battle, but the former account is held to be more authentic.

Eventually the Tetrarchy crumbled, leaving Constantine and Licinius as co-emperors of Rome. In 313 the two secured an alliance, with Licinius taking Constantine's half-sister Constantia as his wife. The two emperors enacted the Edict of Milan, granting full tolerance to all religions in the empire, including Christianity. The edict legalized Christianity as one of the official religions of the Roman Empire.

Ultimately, Constantine and Licinius would meet at the Battle of Cibalae, and Constantine would emerge victorious. At another conflict, the Battle of Mardia, in 317, the two agreed to a settlement in which Constantine's two sons, Crispus and Constantine II, would be made Caesars along with Licinius' son Licinianus.

The next several years saw Constantine and Licinius at constant odds, culminating in Constantine ultimately defeating Licinius at the Battle of Chrysopolis. Although Constantine promised to spare the lives of Licinius and his Caesar Marinianus if they surrendered, eventually he had them both put to death on the suspicion that Licinius had plotted against him. He also had Licinius' son, his nephew by his half-sister, put to death, thus solidifying his position as sole emperor.

Constantine's triumph over Licinius represented in the minds of many the defeat of the pagan and Greek-speaking East by the Christian and Latin-speaking Rome. To impress his authority

over both the east and west portions of the empire Constantine rebuilt the city of Byzantium and renamed it Constantinopolis ("Constantine's City"), or in English, Constantinople.

To understand anti-Christ's role in the rise of Constantine we must go back to Constantine's victory at the Milvian Bridge.

According to the Christian author Lactantius, Constantine experienced a dream on the eve of the battle. In the dream he was told to "mark the heavenly sign of God on the shields of his soldiers....By means of a slanted letter X with the top of its head bent round, he marked Christ on their shields."

This account is told differently by Eusebius who stated, "He saw with his own eyes in the heavens a trophy of the cross arising from the light of the sun, carrying the message, *In Hoc Signo Vinces* ("In this sign, you will conquer")."

Eusebius further states that Constantine had a dream the night after the battle, in which Christ appeared with the same sign, telling him to make a standard, the *labarum*, for his army, placing the "Chi-Rho" (or "K*hi*-Rho") symbol above.

Today the *Chi-Rho* is a universal sign in Christianity passed on by Roman Catholicism to represent Jesus Christ. But there is more to this ancient symbol than is understood by Christians. Long before Constantine, the *Chi-Rho* represented the Egyptian Pharaoh. An example are coins depicting the likeness of Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-222BC) which also bear the *Chi-Rho* (seen between the eagle's legs, below). This is attributed to the use of



COIN DEPICTING EGYPTIAN KING PTOLEMY III EUERGENTES

the *Chi-Rho* to symbolize Horus, the Egyptian god of the Sky, god of War and god of Protection. The Pharaoh was believed to be the embodiment of Horus. Egyptologist and archaeologist W.M. Flinders Petrie (1853-1942) states:

The well-known Christian monogram (*khi-rho*) may be seen in course of gradual formation in Egypt—or possibly in course of alteration; but the *rho* is usually figured as an upright staff with the lock of Horus at the top, and not the letter *rho*. Essentially it is the sign of Horus, and only became Christian by adoption.¹

The *Rho* (X) portion of the symbol is often portrayed in later versions as two transoms at right angles. However, the more ancient versions have them at angles that represent the Celestial *Chi* formed by the solar ecliptic path and the celestial equator.

¹ W.M. Flinders Petrie, *Religion and Conscience in Ancient Egypt* (Norwich, GB; Jarrold and Sons, 1898) p. 24.

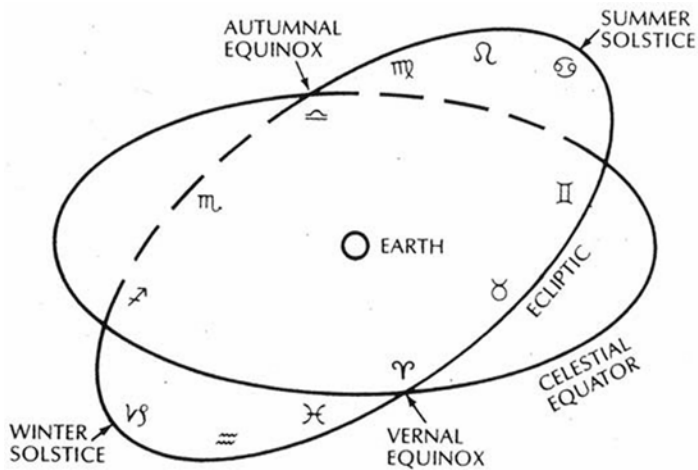


DIAGRAM OF ECLIPTIC AND CELESTIAL EQUATOR

The ancient mystery religions have been adopted from Babel by every empire, and all have centered on a god of primacy associated with the Sun. Constantine maintained his pagan loyalty to the Mithraic sun god Sol. His victory at Milvian Bridge under the sign of the “*Chi-Rho*” caused Christians to associate his victory with Jesus Christ by adopting the *Chi-Rho* symbol to represent the Lord. This tendency to convert pagan symbols and practices to Christianity grew through the centuries under the auspices of the Roman Catholic Church. This is not to disparage Catholics. Many Catholics love the Lord with limited understanding because of their church’s false teachings. They are victims of their religious institution no less than members of other religious cults. I would say this about many Catholic priests and nuns as well. Their church provides a sense of community and wellbeing that hides the spiritual deception.

The Roman Catholic Church cites the claims by Lactantius and Eusebius to lend legitimacy to Constantine’s role in establishing Christianity as the only true religion, and particularly to the papacy. Apart from these two conflicting accounts no one can state unequivocally that Constantine was given a vision or a dream by God. The truth is that Constantine’s mother Helena may have played a part in his alleged conversion rather than any “miraculous” sign from Heaven. Helena is variously described by historians as Constantius’ “wife,” “consort” or “concubine.” There is no definitive record of a legal marriage, but Jerome, the third-century Roman Catholic priest, theologian and historian, uses both “wife” and “concubine” in describing their relationship.

In any case, Helena is recognized as a Christian empress whose journeys to Palestine netted her some alleged relics of Jesus’ life, including the nails from His cross. It is believed that she had one of the nails placed in Constantine’s helmet and another in the bridle of his horse to provide miraculous advantage in his battles.

The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches’ usage of relics as miraculous talismans is no doubt traceable to Helena, if not as the originator of the practice, certainly as a major proponent. We see in the veneration of relics a Christianizing of the pagan practice of attributing magical (or, in this case,

alleged miraculous) power to inanimate objects (talismans). This has been one way in which anti-Christ has deluded Christians into thinking they can manipulate God or their church’s “saints” into granting their petitions. It is nothing more than magic dressed in Christian clothing—no different than today’s Christian television hucksters promising miraculous power in the trinkets they peddle for donations.

There is no doubt that Helena’s influence on her son caused him to look upon Christianity with some semblance of tolerance. But it was not until 337 when he was on his deathbed that Constantine consented to be baptized.

Although anti-Christ has never left off entirely the persecution of believers in Jesus, he has been wise in adopting other means to render the faith ineffective in its mission to witness for the Kingdom of God and salvation in Jesus Christ alone. The most effective means has been to introduce damnable heresies that nullify the Gospel while demeaning the stature of Jesus Christ as the incarnation of the Word of God. In part, it was in response to heretical teachings rising within the assemblies that the consolidation of authority among bishops was established. It was believed that a more central authority could issue statements of faith to which all Christians should adhere in order to remain in the communion of the faith. It should be stated that this was done with all good intentions on the part of the developing ecclesiastical authority. There is no doubt they wished to keep the faith pure from such false teachings. Unfortunately, the very system they developed was in itself a false system of religion that would eventually produce its own set of false teachings.

By AD 325 the religious controversies had come to a head. The primary issue in question rested upon the relationship of Jesus Christ to God the Father. There had arisen disputes among Christians as to whether or not Jesus as the Son of God had existed from eternity with the Father. Prominent in the dispute was Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt, who emphasized the divinity of the Father as superior to that of the Son. Hearing a sermon by Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, in which Alexander expounded on the similarity of the Son to the Father as God, Arius interpreted the teaching to be similar to Sabellianism (the belief that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are different modes or aspects of one God rather than three distinct persons in the Godhead). Condemning Alexander’s oration, Arius declared, “If the Father begat the Son, he that was begotten had a beginning of existence: and from this it is evident, that there was a time when the Son was not. It therefore necessarily follows, that he had his substance from nothing.” In essence, Arianism teaches that Jesus was more than human but not fully divine.

The conflict pitted Arius against the teachings of the well-respected second-century theologian Origen whose teaching on the *Logos* theorized that the relation of the Son to the Father had no beginning. This question had been left unsettled from earlier times. The general consensus among the bishops was in favor of those who opposed the theological position of *homoousios* (of one substance)—the foundation for the doctrine of the Trinity. On that basis, Arius found strength to argue his position.

From the time of the twelve apostles much Christian doctrine had been unsettled. Due to the influence of Jewish, pagan, Gnostic and Greek philosophy, converts to Christ brought with them different views of God, nature, Christ, the Holy Spirit, even the Body of Christ itself. The writings of the Hebrew prophets and the Lord's apostles were not available to the people at large, and were jealously guarded by a few of the bishops. Copies that circulated among the assemblies were held dear, but their influence in the everyday lives of believers was not as pronounced as the influence of the bishops over the assemblies who believed they were entrusted with the truth. However they interpreted the Scriptures was how their particular congregations understood the nature of these things. Often, bishops were novices to the faith themselves, having just escaped paganism. The influences of their past lives would certainly affect how they delineated truth from error, sometimes discerning error as truth.

Because the Arian controversy threatened the stability of the newly recognized church at Rome, Constantine called upon the bishops to once-and-for-all settle the issue. In 325 he took the unprecedented step of calling together in one council prelates from all parts of the Roman Empire. With the exception of Roman Britain, all sent one or more representatives. Arius himself attended with his bishop, Alexander. This would be the First Council of Nicaea, one of several councils that would come together over the succeeding centuries. Constantine presided over the Council and even led some of its discussions.

Twenty-two bishops, led by Eusebius of Nicomedia, supported Arius, at least at first. The opposition was led by a young archdeacon named Athanasius. The debate raged for some two months, each side appealing to Scripture to support their positions. Arius insisted that the Son was a creature of God through whom God created everything else that exists in the cosmos. The opposition countered that the Father and the Son are of one essence, "consubstantial" and, thus, equal in nature.

Constantine ultimately influenced the majority of the bishops to agree upon a creed or statement of doctrine that should be adhered to by all the churches throughout the empire. The result was the Nicene Creed, which included the word *homoousios* to describe the nature of the Godhead. The purpose was to reconcile the Hebrew Scriptures' statement that YHWH is one YHWH with the apostles' writings that reveal Jesus as the Word of God who is God, and who created all things (John 1:1-14).

The Council as well established the doctrine of the Trinity, declaring that in addition to the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit, as the third person of the Godhead is also of the same essence and nature, yet distinct in personage. Prior to the writings of the apostles, the Jews knew of the Holy Spirit only from two references in the Tanakh: Psalms 51:11 and Isaiah 63:10-11.

Arius had taught that the Holy Spirit was a created being, while Athanasius claimed that the Holy Spirit is divine in the same manner as the Father and the Son. Yet while the Nicene Council supported Athanasius on the nature of Jesus, it did not delineate any doctrine on the nature of the Holy Spirit. The original Nicene Creed merely stated, "We believe in the Holy Spirit."

The Nicene Creed became the first definitive document that would separate Christians on the basis of a statement of faith created by an elite body of clergy.

Constantine then issued an edict pronouncing death to anyone in the empire who supported the teachings of Arius, part of which follows:

The great and victorious Constantine Augustus to the bishops and laity:

Since Arius is an imitator of the wicked and the ungodly, it is only right that he should suffer the same dishonor as they. Porphyry, who was hostile to anyone who feared God, composed a book which transgressed against our religion, and has found a suitable reward: namely that he has been disgraced from that time onward, his reputation is completely terrible, and his ungodly writings have been destroyed. In the same way it seems appropriate that Arius and those of like mind with Arius should from now on be called Porphyrians, so that their name is taken from those whose ways they have imitated.

In addition, if any writing composed by Arius should be found, it should be handed over to the flames, so that not only will the wickedness of his teaching be obliterated, but nothing will be left even to remind anyone of him. And I hereby make a public order, that if someone should be discovered to have hidden a writing composed by Arius, and not to have immediately brought it forward and destroyed it by fire, his penalty shall be death. As soon as he is discovered in this offense, he shall be submitted for capital punishment.²

As a result, there is a dearth of history remaining sympathetic to Arius. Constantine's condemnation was accepted by the bishops without controversy or objection, and anti-Christ's design to conjure bloodshed among Christians was inaugurated. As well, church historians have generally deemed Arius a heretic.

What the Council of Nicaea came down to was doctrine by majority vote. That doesn't necessarily mean the Council was in error in its conclusions. In truth, they got this one right. But the truth does not rest on the consensus of bishops. It rests on the Word of God. And God's Word does affirm Jesus as divine in His nature as the Word of God:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things came into existence through Him, and without Him not even one thing came into existence that has come into existence.

In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light appeared in the darkness and the darkness did not understand it.

There was a man whose name was John, sent from God. He came as a witness so that he might testify concern-

² "Part of an edict against Arius and his followers," Fourth-Century Christianity, Wisconsin Lutheran College, <http://www.fourthcentury.com/index.php/urkunde-33>.

ing the light so that all men might believe through him. He was not the light, but that he might testify concerning the light. The true light was that who enlightens every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world came into existence through Him, and the world did not know Him.

He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But to as many as received Him, He gave power to be the children of God—to those who believe in His name, who were born not by blood, nor by the will of the flesh, nor by the will of man, but by God.

And the Word became flesh and lived among us (and we saw His glory—the glory of the only-begotten by the Father), full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-14)

Arius' appeal to John 14:28—"the Father is greater than I"—missed the point that Jesus was merely iterating what He had said elsewhere, that He had come to earth to do the will of the Father. His affirmation as the Word of God incarnate clarifies His nature as divine. Arius' other proof text, Colossians 1:15, that Jesus is the firstborn of all creation, also missed the mark. Had Arius (and others who deny the divinity of Jesus) read just a little further he would understand that this means Jesus was the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18)—the first among all creation to be resurrected.

Do any of the writings of the Hebrew prophets affirm that Jesus, as the Word of God, is of the same nature and essence as the Father? Isaiah 66:5-24 tells us that YHWH will come to rescue Jerusalem and to make an end of her enemies. Who will come but Jesus? Often the Word of God is described in the same terms as the resurrected Jesus, and He is called "YHWH."

YHWH is the name of God and His only-begotten Son. Just as my name is Dager, inherited from my father, so the Word of God's name is YHWH, inherited from His Father. He came out of the Father and therefore is of the same essence and nature as the Father—divine, God.

Just as we existed in Adam from the time he was created, so the Word existed in the Father from eternity. There is no beginning or end to either of them.

Yes, this is a great mystery, but who can understand fully the nature of God? The problem with doctrine by consensus is that it seeks to bring all men into subjection to a teaching without being able to say anything more than that it must be taken by "faith." Faith in what? Faith in the consensus, or faith in God Himself and in His Word rightly divided?

The problem with the bishops at Nicaea is that either they did not disagree with Constantine's edict of persecution to death of anyone holding or disseminating Arius' writings, or they did not have the moral fiber to resist it as an ungodly affront to the name of Jesus. In either case, they proved themselves unworthy to claim leading by the Holy Spirit. The great schisms, bloodshed and wrangling among the bishops fairly begged for the emperor's intervention. And the problems did not end with the First Council of Nicaea. They begged for more and more councils to bring about some semblance of unity. But unity procured by the flesh cannot stand unless it imposes itself unfavorably upon those

who do not see eye-to-eye with the power of the state religion, in this case, the church in Rome influenced heavily by a pagan/quasi-Christian Constantine.

There were many church councils held during the fourth century. Besides the First Council of Nicaea, the next most important was the Council of Constantinople called by Constantine's successor Theodosius I in 381. The topics under discussion were: Apollinarism (Jesus had a human body and lower soul, but a divine mind); Sabellianism, the nature of the Holy Spirit, and, again, Arianism. Out of this council came a revision of the Nicene Creed, called "The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed."

Although the personhood and divinity of the Holy Spirit as a member of the Trinitarian Godhead was held by many of the bishops prior to the Council of Constantinople, it was here that this doctrine was first formalized in the Creed. The words were changed from [We believe in...] "the Holy Ghost" to [We believe in...] "the Holy Ghost, the Lord and Giver of life, who proceedeth from the Father, who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, who spake by the prophets."

This doctrine of the Holy Spirit as the third person of the Trinity is central to orthodox Christianity, but has been disputed throughout the centuries, particularly by certain sects that believe in the Oneness doctrine, which leans somewhat toward modalism. Just as the two principles in the debate over the nature of Christ were Arius and Athanasius, the same two led the debate over the nature of the Holy Spirit. Arius argued that the Holy Spirit is a "creature," and "angel." Athanasius countered that the Holy Spirit possesses divine attributes such as the ability to sanctify, is immutable and transcendent above creation, actually being involved in the creation. And just as Athanasius' position won the day at the First Council of Nicaea, it was adopted by the bishops at Constantinople.

Today there are many who dispute the idea of the Holy Spirit being a person; he is spoken of as the "active force" of God, something like energy that emanates from the Father. This is most common among Jehovah's Witnesses, but is also held by some who believe Jesus is the Word of God incarnate (which the Jehovah's Witnesses deny) and trust in Him for their salvation.

This is a topic of study that requires and deserves its own attention, and with which we do not have the space to address adequately here. The issue is not the need to separate on the basis of false teachings; the issue is whether or not love forms the basis for that separation. There must always be a desire to receive back those who are found in serious error that threatens the purity of the faith. Certainly there is no excuse for violence against those with whom we find disagreement. The violence of Roman Catholicism toward those it has considered heretics testifies to the ungodly nature of its hierarchy.

Our concern is the anti-Christ's means of causing dissension among believers in Jesus, even to the point of bloodshed, which he has been able to accomplish to great degrees over the centuries since the bishops gave their allegiance to Constantine, largely because of his claim of conversion and the mythic proportions of his conquests under the sign of the "Chi-Rho."

The mists of antiquity leave a lot of unanswered questions which pious Catholics and Orthodox Christians claim require faith to answer. So it is left to believers in Jesus to ascertain by Scripture, and whatever history does confirm, whether or not Constantine's vision and/or dream was from God (if in fact such a vision/dream did occur).

Would the true God or His Son give such a vision or dream to Constantine, ordering him to go out and slay his enemies in the name of Christ? First, let us consider what Scripture has to say:

Then Pilate entered into the judgment hall again and called Jesus, and said to Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?"

Jesus answered him, "Do you say this by yourself, or did others say it about Me to you?"

Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? Your nation and the chief priests delivered You to me. What did You do?"

Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world; if My kingdom were of this world My servants would fight so that I would not be delivered to the Jews. But now My kingdom is not from here." (John 18:33-36)

It may be argued that, yes, at that time Jesus denied that the world is His kingdom. But that was just so He might go to the cross. But, then, was Jesus lying?

Perhaps, then, the world became His kingdom when He rose from the grave and ascended into Heaven? Well, His teachings indicate that His disciples were to look forward to eating and drinking with Him in His Kingdom after the resurrection of the saints:

And He said to them, "The kings of the nations exercise lordship over them, and they who exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so, but he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who is chief, as he who serves. For which is greater, he who sits at the meal, or he who serves? Is not He who sits at the meal? But I am among you as He who serves. You are they who have continued with Me in My trials. And I appoint a kingdom to you, as My Father has appointed to Me, so that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:25-30)

No one is sitting on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel at this time, nor have they since Jesus uttered these words.

There is nothing in Scripture to allow for anyone to wage warfare in the name of Jesus. His Kingdom is a heavenly Kingdom that will not be established over the nations until He returns:

And the seventh angel sounded, and there were great voices in Heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever. (Revelation 11:15)

This is yet future, the context being the return of the Lord to the earth. In the meantime, Satan remains the god of this world to test the hearts of men (2 Corinthians 4:4). Satan has the world's kingdoms in his hands to do with as he wills until the end of this age:

And taking Him up into a high mountain, the devil showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "I will give all this jurisdiction and their glory to You because it is given to me, and I give it to whomever I will. Therefore, if You will worship me, all shall be Yours." (Luke 4:5-7)

The Lord did not reply, "The kingdoms of the world have not been given to you; they are Mine." He merely replied, "Get behind Me, Satan, for it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve.'"

The apostle Paul further reminds us that our warfare is not in the flesh but in the spirit (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). The context is spiritual warfare, the only discipline being within the Body of Christ to maintain the truth. And even that discipline can go no further than expulsion from the assembly at the worst.

With these truths in mind, we determine that if Constantine was given a vision commanding him to conquer armies, then that vision was from Satan, not from God. It follows, then, that his influence in building a religious institution that would seek dominion over the earth must be of Satan as well.

But would Satan give a vision in the name of Christ?

The answer is unequivocally yes. How many false belief systems operate today in the name of Christ Jesus? We are warned by God's Word:

For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also are transformed as the ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:12-15)

Ministers of righteousness. Satan's emissaries pose as righteous men, preaching holiness and conformity to the Law (contrary to the teachings of the apostles). What they say sounds good, pious and reasonable. But Jesus said:

"Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works?'

"And then I will say to them, 'I never knew you. Depart from Me, you who work iniquity.'" (Matt 7:22-23)

Man looks on the outward appearance; God looks upon the heart. And God's Word is the only litmus on which we may make judgments regarding spiritual matters.

Anti-Christ used Constantine's victory to establish the basis for the Roman church to declare itself the Kingdom of God on earth, justifying dominion over the nations and trying to rule

them with a rod of iron. It is the first attempt at dominion theology, and was carried into Reformed Theology with many of the Reformers.

Constantine's victory was of God, yes. All authority on this earth is given by God (Romans 13:1-2). But not all authority is godly; in truth, the vast majority of authority is ungodly. And that applies to religious authority as much as it does to secular authority; perhaps even more so. When religious authority and secular authority are held in the same hands, that authority is all the more ungodly as evidenced throughout history. The fruit of Constantine's religious conversion has been fertilized with the blood of martyrs as well as the blood of Jews and other unbelievers who have throughout the centuries refused to bow to papal authority.

Although Constantine did elevate Christianity to preferred status within the Roman Empire, he not only tolerated all other pagan religions (which, as emperor, he saw as his duty), but he continued to honor those religions in various ways. Acquiescing to the bishops' desire to establish Christianity's own traditions above its Hebrew roots, Constantine consented to establish Sunday as the day of worship for the empire. But he did this not in the name of Jesus who was erroneously believed to have risen on Sunday, but in deference to the Roman Sun god. His decree stated:

On the venerable day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits because it often happens that another day is not suitable for grain-sowing or vine planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost.

Sol Invictus ("Unconquered Sun" or "Invincible Sun") was the name of the Roman Sun god, an official cult established in AD 274 by Aurelian. The term *Invictus* (unconquered) was an appellation bestowed upon certain deities within the Roman Empire (e.g., *Mars Invictus*; *Jupiter Invictus*; *Mithras Invictus*, etc.). It was especially associated with solar deities. The earliest known use of *Sol Invictus* was in AD 158. So Constantine's decree was an attempt to associate *Sol Invictus* with Jesus' resurrection by declaring Sunday the official day of worship for the Roman Empire regardless which religion one ascribed to.

His veneration of Sol played a role when Constantine erected his triumphal arch in Rome. He made sure that it aligned with the colossal statue of Sol which stood by the Colosseum, allowing Sol to form the dominant backdrop when traveling along the direction of the main approach to the arch.

In truth, he clearly had one foot in the Roman church and the other in the pagan world. While commissioning the building of the first Basilica of St. Peter, begun ca. 326-333, Constantine had the architects orient the apse containing the altar to face west so that the rising sun would shine in through the doors at the east. Thus *Sol Invictus* would play a part in the Roman mass. Pagan sun-worship symbolism in the mass has since evolved even more with the disc-shaped Communion wafer and the mon-

strance used to hold it after being consecrated by a Roman Catholic priest. The corruption of the faith by anti-Christ was effected greatly by the creation of Constantine's pagan-Christian hybrid religion.

Constantine's decree establishing Sun-Day as the day for Romans to worship their gods pandered to the pagan-influenced Christian bishops at Rome who melded Roman mythology with Christianity. The influence of Sol in Roman Catholicism is easily discerned in the use of the monstrance to house the "sacred host" or wafer shaped like the sun, which has since become known as the Eucharist (Latin: *eucharistia*, "thankful") and believed to be the actual body of Jesus, transubstantiated from bread by a priest's incantations (although the official doctrine of transubstantiation was not proclaimed *ex cathedra* until 1215).

Upon the death of Constantine in 337 the Roman Empire began a slow but steady decline. All the emperors after Constantine professed Christianity except for Julian who reigned from December, 361 until June, 363. Known as Julian the Apostate because of his rejection of Christianity, in his short tenure he attempted to combat much corruption within the government that had grown under the alleged "Christian" emperors who preceded him. Those who followed him, though professing Christianity, were generally corrupt.

Upon the death of Emperor Jovian a triarchy was established beginning with joint rule by Valentinian I and his brother Valens in 364, who were joined by Valentinian's son Gratian in 367. After Valentinian's death, his son Valentinian II was proclaimed emperor by the Pannonian army, and accepted as co-Augustus for the west by Gratian. Upon the death of Valens, Theodosius I was elevated to co-Augustus and reigned with Gratian and Valentinian II.

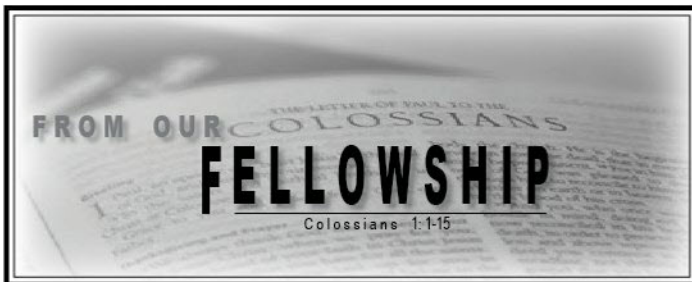
Eventually the influence of the Christian bishops became such that on February 27, 380, the Edict of Thessalonica was delivered by the three emperors, making Christianity the official state religion:

EMPERORS GRATIAN, VALENTINIAN AND THEODOSIUS AUGUSTI

EDICT TO THE PEOPLE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

It is our desire that all the various nations which are subject to our Clemency and Moderation, should continue to profess that religion which was delivered to the Romans by the divine Apostle Peter, as it has been preserved by faithful tradition, and which is now professed by the Pontiff Damasus and by Peter, Bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness. According to the apostolic teaching and the doctrine of the Gospel, let us believe in the one deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in equal majesty and in a holy Trinity. We of Catholic Christians; but as for the others, since, in our judgment they are foolish madmen, we decree that they shall be branded with the ignominious name of heretics, and shall not presume to give to their conventicles the

(Continued on page 29)



In this column we share a lesson we enjoyed within one of our house assembly meetings. It has been written as a narrative, but contains the thoughts of those who shared together. There is no single teacher in our assembly. Therefore, there will be portions that seem out of context, but they are the result of thoughts that came to someone during the discourse. This writing is a compilation of the thoughts expressed at one particular meeting, as well as some additional thoughts I have added in producing it. **AD**

SLAVES TO CHRIST

In our previous issue we did a study on the believer's freedom in Christ—how we are not bound to the dictates of men or religious institutions, not even to our own sense of religious duty or superstitions. In this issue we follow that up with the other side of the coin in our relationship to our Lord who instructs us not to consider any man but He Himself our master:

Then Jesus spoke to the crowd and to His disciples, saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore, whatever they ask you to observe, that observe and do. But do not follow their works, for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But they do all their works in order to be seen by men. They make their phylacteries broad and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called by men, 'Master; Master.' But do not you be called 'Master,' for one is your Master—Christ—and all of you are brothers.

"And call no man upon this earth your father, for one is your Father, who is in Heaven.

"Neither you be called masters, for one is your Master, even Christ.

"But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever will exalt himself shall be abased, and he who will humble himself shall be exalted. (Matthew 23:8-12)

As long as the scribes and Pharisees instructed the people in the Law of Moses they were to follow those instructions. But Jesus made a distinction between the Law of Moses and the additional dictates of the religious leaders. So, too, we are bound to the Word of God within the context of the New Covenant in the blood of Jesus, but we are not bound by the dictates of

religious leaders. In this way, we acknowledge that no one but Jesus is our Master.

What does it mean to say Jesus is our Master? Mark 9:41 says we belong to Christ. In other words, He owns us. This is more than just a master-servant relationship; it is more than an employer-employee relationship. It is a master-slave relationship.

On four occasions in Scripture the apostle Paul calls himself a "servant" of Christ and God (Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:10; Colossians 4:12; Titus 1:1 KJV). James and Jude also call themselves servants of God and of Jesus (James 1:1; Jude 1 KJV). In all these cases the writers use the Greek word *doulos*.

On four other occasions Paul calls himself a "prisoner" of Christ (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; Philemon 1; 9 KJV). In these instances he uses the word *desmios*.

What is the difference? None, really. The Greek *doulos* means more than servant; it means bondservant, or slave, whereas *desmios* means captive. In either case, one held captive or enslaved is entirely subject to the will of his master. Regardless what he thinks, or how he wishes to conduct himself, he is not free to act in any way contrary to the will of his master without bearing unpleasant and even grievous consequences.

This is very sobering in light of man's philosophy of self-determination and personal freedom. Human nature, fallen through the sin of Adam, is intrinsically selfish. Man's proclivity is toward self-will; no one enjoys being subject to another. Children do not want to be subject to their parents; employees do not want to be subject to their employers; athletes do not want to be subject to their coaches. In a free society all willingly make themselves subject to those over them because of some perceived benefit, not because they enjoy being told what to do. Children recognize the benefit of obeying their parents (no discipline); employees enjoy a paycheck; athletes hope for victory.

These are just a few examples of why people willingly submit to others. But apart from the perceived benefits, they would never submit, except for one thing: love. People (some) will submit to those whom they perceive love them. This is why believers in Jesus submit to His will (if they do). Those who do so with understanding are not focused on the rewards promised, as much as they are focused on what Christ has already done for them. Christians who maintain obedience on the basis of future rewards, whether temporal or eternal, are in essence living under law, not grace. They tithe not because they want to be generous, but because they want to get something back for their deposit; they attend church not because they enjoy the fellowship of the saints, but because they want the Lord to reward them for doing their "duty"; they act correctly in any circumstance not because they want to be obedient, but because they don't want to be chastised. Fear and expectation of reward do have their place in our walk with the Lord, but our walk should be based on love above fear or expectation of reward.

We recognize that God has rescued us from sin and death and seated us in heavenly places in the spirit. All that we have to look forward to in relation to rewards for our service is icing on the cake. And if we are chastised for disobedience, although we do not want chastisement we do not complain, but accept it

as a means to bring us closer to Him. We want to be close to Him because we love Him; we love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). And because we love Him we make ourselves His slaves.

But how can a believer call himself “free” if, in truth, he is a slave to the Lord?

In his salutation to the Romans (1:1-6) Paul called himself a slave of Jesus Christ, and said he received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith. We may not have received apostleship, but we’ve all received grace to the end that we should be obedient to the One who has granted us His grace.

Life in Christ offers a plethora of what seem to be dichotomous experiences. For example, we are told that if we would be great in the Kingdom of God we must be the servant of all; if we give up all we have we will receive manifold in return; in order to live we must first die.

In Galatians 2:20 Paul gives himself as an example of being crucified, put to death with Christ, yet alive so that Christ can live in him. We now live by faith in the Son of God who gave Himself for us. He also says that if we try to achieve righteousness through keeping the Law then Christ died for nothing.

God’s grace has been given so that we might be made slaves to Christ and freed from the curse of sin and death. We were made dead to the Law so we could be married to Jesus Christ.

Do you not know, brethren (for I speak to those who know the Law) how the Law has dominion over a man as long as he lives?

For the woman who has a husband is bound by the Law to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband is dead, she is loosed from the Law to her husband.

So then if, while her husband lives she is married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress. But if her husband is dead she is free from that law so that she is no adulteress, though she is married to another man.

Therefore my brethren, you also have become dead to the Law by the body of Christ so that you should be married to another—to Him who is raised from the dead—so that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the Law, worked in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the Law (that in which we were held being dead), so that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. (Romans 7:1-6)

Ephesians 4:15-16 says that Christ is the Head “from whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.”

Jesus Christ is our head just as a husband is the head of his wife. Just as the wife is to be in submission to her husband, we are to be in submission to Christ:

Therefore, do not be unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be filled with the Spirit, speaking

to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks for all things to God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting yourselves to one another in the fear of God.

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Called Out, and He is the Savior of the Body. Therefore, as the Called Out are subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Called Out and gave Himself for it so that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Assembly, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.

So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the Called Out.

For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Called Out.

Nevertheless, let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself, and the wife see that she revere her husband. (Ephesians 5:17-33)

Obedience to Christ requires that we submit to one another within the Body of Christ. The whole body submits to the head, and the head (Christ) coordinates His Body according to His will. When we fail to submit to one another the Body becomes spasmodic and ineffectual in the service of the Lord. But He has joined us together to serve Him.

...But God has assimilated the body together, having given more abundant honor to the inferior part so that there should be no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another.

And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it. Or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Now you are the Body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has placed some in the assembly: first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that, miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, leadership, different languages.

Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with languages? Do all interpret?

But earnestly desire the best gifts. (1 Corinthians 12:24-31)

The gifts of the Spirit are meant to help us perform the work of the Kingdom upon the foundation of Jesus Christ:

According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let every man take heed how he builds on it. For no man can lay another foundation than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Now if any man produces gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble on this foundation, every man's work shall be revealed, for the day shall declare it because it shall be revealed by fire, and the fire shall test every man's work of what sort it is.

If any man's work abides which he has built there-upon, he shall receive a reward.

If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss, but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire.

Do you not know that you are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him, for the temple of God—which temple you are—is holy.

Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seems to be wise in this world, let him become a fool so that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "He takes the wise in their own craftiness."

And again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain."

Therefore let no man glory in men. For all things are yours. Whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and you are Christ's; and Christ is God's. (1 Corinthians 3:10-23)

We cannot produce gold, silver and precious stones on the foundation of Christ Jesus apart from the Body of Christ. We need each other to properly serve Him according to His will, particularly within the assembly. Thus Paul concludes this admonition with the following in 4:1-2:

Let a man take account of us as the ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required of stewards that a man be found faithful.

Paul is saying that he and the other apostles are ministers of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. But to some degree I believe he is including all believers. As members of Christ's body we all have a role in building on the foundation of Jesus Christ, and as stewards we must be found faithful.

Throughout Scripture the faithful are called the saints of God. The Greek word is *hagios*, meaning someone or something sacred, consecrated to God. If a person is consecrated to God he is set aside for use by God according to God's will. He has no will of his own.

Our Father intends for us to be slaves to Christ so that we may be free from all else in this world, and free from all else in this world so we may be slaves to Christ.

He who is a slave to the world is not free to serve Christ. But he who is a slave to Christ is free to serve the world.



HISTORY OF ANTI-CHRIST - PART XIX

(Continued from page 26)

name of churches. They will suffer in the first place the chastisement of the divine condemnation and in the second the punishment of our authority which in accordance with the will of Heaven we shall decide to inflict.

GIVEN IN THESSALONICA ON THE THIRD DAY FROM THE CALENDERS OF MARCH, DURING THE FIFTH CONSULATE OF GRATIAN AUGUSTUS AND FIRST OF THEODOSIUS AUGUSTUS

This is the origin of the English word "church" to signify the institutions into which Christians in the Roman Empire would be channeled. It is not a correct translation of the Greek *ecclesia* found in Scripture.

The objective of the Edict was not so much to compel pagans to become Christians as it was to force all Christians under penalty of death to adhere to Nicene Christianity. In a short time, however, the power of the bishops was such that pagans were also persecuted. Their homes and places of worship were destroyed, and many were coerced into accepting Christianity and the rule of the bishops over their lives. The emperors, wishing to placate the growing strength of Roman Christianity did little to quell the persecutions.

During the fourth century we see a four-pronged attack by anti-Christ against true believers in Jesus. The first prong of attack was through persecution by the enemies of the Gospel. The second prong came through the fomenting of division through the introduction of false teachings, necessitating the defense of truth through a hierarchical system of bishops. The third prong was the melding of the faith with secular government through Constantine and his successors. The fourth prong was the elevating of the "church" to the status of state religion, allowing for the implantation of creeds to which all believers must adhere or suffer consequences, even unto death.

In all cases anti-Christ impresses his standing as god of this world upon the humble pilgrims who trod the earth as aliens.

Anti-Christ's four-pronged attack against the faith seemed to be working well. The more believers were persecuted, the more they sought organizational strength to resist and maintain their faith. Yet persecution did cause much of the Roman populace to sympathize with Christians, causing them to accept Christians as equals, and contributing to many conversions, even within the royal palace. But this also caused power struggles that often resulted in bloodshed. The organizational strength granted by the emperors would prove to be a greater undoing to the purity of the faith than persecution could ever be.

Yet even in the midst of this great apostasy there remained a remnant of believers scattered throughout the world, living humbly and often in secret to avoid the wrath of the wealthy papacy that was developing, and would develop as the central power throughout the Roman Empire. That remnant has always been fodder for anti-Christ's desire to purge the earth of God's glory.

That, of course, will never happen. ❖



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Dear Albert James Dager,

Greetings in Jesus Christ our Beloved One. Praise the Lord! Praise Him always and evermore!

God bless you, and thank you for the books. As always, they are a great blessing to me and to those I pass them to.

I have been witnessing to the Native Americans, of which I am half, as well as teaching brothers how to witness to the cults.

It's sad that so few Christians ever try to reach out to them in any way. Generally they just speak ill of them without ever trying to love them and reach them for Christ.

I'm also dealing with a large group of Calvinists, some of whom are trying to tell people they don't have a free will to come to Christ. The other day I went out to them and told them the folly of their ways. They may not like me, but they can't answer the Scriptures when kept in context. They went in when the yard was over without being able to answer the questions I put to them.

Many of them don't even know what they believe or even why. I feel sorry for them because all they do is accept what they are told without ever looking or studying to see if it's true or not. Whatever happened to studying to show yourself approved by God?

Well, I'll close this for now. I love you both and I thank you for everything, including your prayers. You and your precious ministry are in my prayers always.

In His Grace, *R.V.*, Corcoran, CA

* * *

Mrs. Jean,

I love your little corner. I always glean a nugget from it.

What does Mr. Al think about pastors changing their title to "apostles" instead of pastors?

Thank you so much for the *Media Spotlight*. I learn so much from it.

In Christ,

M.K., Panama City, FL

Dear M.K.,

For the most part the ones doing that are in the charismatic and/or Pentecostal camps and believe that they are part of the latter-day group of apostles and prophets who will bring revival to the world. They seem to love the self-importance that such titles generate.

It's one thing to acknowledge that one is an apostle in the sense of one "sent" to plant assemblies among knew believers or where no pure assembly exists, but these people exalt themselves as bearers of the authority that was vested in the original apostles to the Body of Christ at large.

There is no biblical support for titles within the Body of Christ. The practice of applying titles is rooted in the clergy-laity concept that has permeated the churches since the second century when certain men decided that there should be one authority over each assembly, and it grew into authority over several assemblies and ultimately over the entire Body of Christ. They were called "bishops," and the supreme "bishop" was the bishop of Rome who eventually attained the title of "pope" or "father" of "the Church."

In the Body of Christ there should be no central authority. Those who hold the positions of apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers should be recognized by the assembly as such without the pompous and self-serving attitude that characterizes so many who promote themselves, particularly over the entire Body of Christ.

In Jesus' love,

Al

Dear Al and Jean,

Greetings in the wonderful name of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. It is always for rejoicing to receive your most alert and up-to-date newsletters. Hoping you are both, with your committed staff members, doing very well in the Lord.

People (Christians?) out here (I'm from prison) are very much amazed by the way I have grown in the Lord. Every time when I preach or teach them the Word of God they always say, "I was at the school of God."

Other pastors do not even know your Media Spotlight, and others. It is painful to see "men of God" not aware of wolves in sheepskins going up and down in the Body of Christ.

There is only one pastor out of many I have met, who was self informed about these televangelist ministers who work for their belly and not for the Lord, and I would humbly request you to include him on your mail list of Media Spotlight, please.

It is so hard to speak the truth now-a-days, but I had made a promise to God that I will always preach and teach His Word in the prisons and the free world.

Many ministers of churches are taking the trips to Nigeria and Ghana to receive "power" (of Satan? YES!) to deceive those who do not delight in the truth so to be saved.

I thank your newsletters to play always a very profound role in my spiritual life. Do not faint to do your work, even so many Christians will misunderstand and misrepresent you to their people. Keep up the good work!

The Lord keep you well for us! Be blessed.

Yours in Christ's works,
A.M., Jouberton, Klerksloep, South Africa

* * *

Al,

As I was packing I found *Facts and Fallacies of The Resurrection*. It should be a textbook for all Bible colleges, and really all Christians should read it.

I remember when I first received it how I got a bad reaction when I tried explaining all this to other Christians. It seems the only ones who believed what I was saying were the unbelievers! They had no problem understanding. The rest thought I was some kind of trouble-making radical.

D.B., Long Beach, CA

Dear Media Spotlight,

I am grateful for your paper, *Dungeons & Dragons*. Lots of young Christians play the game and don't realize what they are getting into.

I showed a young man that paper. He said it has some good things but he likes the game and it passes the time. That's the deception that is in the prisons.

Love in Jesus,

J.D., Vacaville, CA

* * *

Dear Al and Jean,

Thanks for all the truth you have shared with us over the years. I always thanked our Lord you have been there!

We live in Kansas City where the Kansas City false prophets have had such a bad influence on the body and, as you know, most churchgoers don't want to hear about the errors of their ways. So thank God for brothers and sisters of like-minded faith!

S.D., Kansas City, MO

* * *

Dear Al and Jean,

I wanted to ask Al some questions I had about the house assembly from his book, on page 43, first paragraph, about regulated times of attendance. I realize I am naive or just ignorant of it because I've never witnessed it in my church or heard about it happening at family's for friends' places of worship.

My question is what church has the attitude of giving permission before one can leave—that they have to stay till the minister says, "Go in peace"? My observation is that it's just customary or perhaps polite; nothing more. I guess I just figured it to be "tradition," and was not frowned upon if someone left before this time.

My other question has to do with churches existing for their own benefit (pg.7, para.2). Again I ask, please, what have you seen and where, because either I refuse to see it, or can't and don't see it.

Peace to you and your family.

B.T., Sterling Heights, MI

Dear B.T.,

You are correct about regulated times of attendance and departure being about tradition. It is not a written rule except perhaps in extreme cases, but people do tend to look askance at those who do not stay through the end of the service. It's

more of an implied burden to conform, but I did not mean to indict all churches.

As to churches existing for their own benefit, again I don't indict all churches. I said "many" churches, etc. Yet when it comes to church leaders decisions on many issues, the welfare of the institution often takes precedent over the welfare of the congregants, particularly those considered less desirable. The history of cover ups of child sexual predators in the churches, as exposed in the book, *Preying on our Children* is a good example.

I also stated in my book that there are many good pastors and churches, even though the model they adhere to is not found in Scripture.

In Jesus' love,

Al

* * *

Dear Brother Al,

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ.

As to the message given to me by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, it still burns; it has not died. I do feel led to ask if you'd be willing to print it in an upcoming issue of *Media Spotlight*.

God gave me this word while dealing with these media ministries. More so, you agree with the message. When God asks us to give warning, all we can do is obey. As a prisoner I'm limited to what I can do.

Why God would entrust me with this, I have wondered. I ask for your help to get this word out to those who need to hear it. The rest we'll leave up to God..

I'm enclosing a recent picture of me so you may put a face to me. Know I'm His servant and want only to please Him.

His servant in Jesus Christ,

C.P., Buckeye, AZ

Dear C.P.,

Because I don't know you personally as I would someone with whom I am in close fellowship with I cannot publish this with my endorsement that it is a "word of the Lord." However, I believe it is pertinent to the condition of the world and, more importantly, the churches. So I am happy to publish it under the Feedback column with a note that if anyone wishes to contact you they may do so.

It follows here:

Judgment must begin at the house of God.

Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. (Isaiah 58:1)

Texas governor Rick Perry hosted a day of prayer and fasting on Saturday, August 6, 2011. It is sad to hear that one of the main focuses was the economy.

Let's go back to the city of Nineveh. At the preaching of Jonah they fasted, they turned, every one, from his evil way and from the violence that was in their hands.

On what basis did the city of Nineveh fast? They repented because their wickedness had come up before God. The Ninevites put this country and said believers to shame. It's sad to see how far we have fallen as the people of God and as a nation. Apostasy is growing like an epidemic around us. God's mercy will come in one way, and one way only: us repenting.

This country is in dire straits. We see God's judgments on every side. Yet neither this nation nor the people of God repent as did the Ninevites in the days of Jonah's preaching.

Yet He sent prophets to them, to bring them again unto the Lord; and they testified against them: but they would not give ear. (2 Chron. 24:19.)

His Servant in Jesus Christ,
Carlos Sr.

Dear Readers:

I suggest that anyone who wishes to correspond with Carlos, at least initially, should write to us and we'll forward the letters to him. If he decides they are someone he wishes to communicate with directly, then he can respond to them himself and give them his address.

Please understand that we seek the Lord's will in all we put forth in this ministry, and we receive numerous requests to publish other people's writings. But we have limited funds for, and space in, *Media Spotlight*, and it is primarily for the messages the Lord puts on my heart. Please do not be offended if we do not publish something you have sent to us.

Thank you for your understanding.

In Jesus' love,

Al

We wish we could include all the letters we receive. Please know that we read each one personally. We regret that we are often late in replying to those that require answers.

We'll do our best to get to them. If you haven't heard from us after three months, please write again. Some questions require lengthy research. Not having a staff keeps us from always being able to give a timely response. Thanks for your understanding.



Jean's Turn

The Bitter Made Sweet

By Jean Dager

“And he (Moses) cried unto the Lord; and the Lord showed him a tree, which when he had cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet” (Ex. 15:25)

Each week we receive letters from inmates in prisons requesting our journals and books. I'm always impressed by the humility and kindness of the thoughts of inmates expressed in many of their letters. Today we received one with a handmade, painted Thanksgiving card from William. He said he makes all of his own greeting cards but this is the first one he had painted, and we are honored to receive it. Part of his cover letter said: “I enjoy receiving Media Spotlight and I always read it cover-to-cover. Even though we don't agree on Kenneth Copeland (Al and William have corresponded on this subject several times) your reporting is very thought-provoking. Notice I didn't say the Word Faith movement. It's because I do think/believe there are some real flakes...just don't think Kenneth is one of them.” The rest of the letter was one of encouragement and he asks God to bless us in the ministry.

Another inmate, Roland, wrote requesting books. Part of his letter said: “I'm trying to use the 27 years I've been sentenced to do. In the 10 ½ years, I've come to realize that all of the drugs and alcohol in the world will never complete me. I need a closer relationship with God. I want to be able to wake up one morning and not hate myself.”

Sometimes I've imagined what it would be like to be confined within cold prison walls. I know it's not something I would ever want to experience. But with the grace of God, as the inmates who write to us show, it is possible to endure and mature in the Lord.

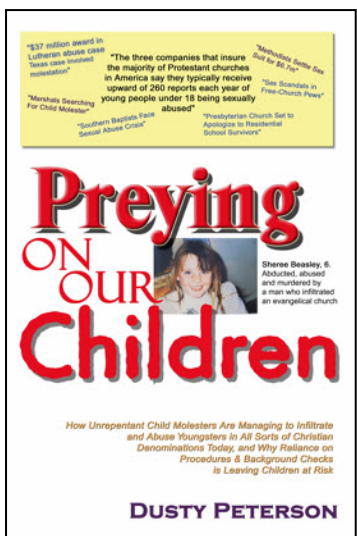
A.B. Simpson once wrote an article entitled “The Bitter Made Sweet,” with the above scripture in mind. In it he said,

“Moses did not find a new spring, but drank afterwards of the same waters which at first they had found so bitter. So God does not need to alter the circumstances of our life, but to add to them His presence and all-sufficiency, and they become transformed blessings. Joseph's prison becomes a place of victory and service; Paul's dungeon becomes a sanctuary of holy song; and Bunyan's jail, a palace of vision whence he not only sees, but shows to all future pilgrims the celestial city and the land of Beulah....Beside every spring of sorrow, there already stands the branch of healing, the tree of promise, the Word of Life, which will open fountains in the desert and make songs break forth in the night.”

When we receive letters from inmates, I can so clearly see the grace of God shed upon their lives as they seek to know Him and trust in Him. May we always remember to be thankful to our Lord in all circumstances of our lives. To pray for others and to sing praises to our loving Father. His abundant love, mercy and grace is shown to all His children—especially those whose heart is to draw near to Him. ❖

The three companies that insure the majority of Protestant churches in America say they typically receive upward of 260 reports each year of children being sexually abused.

This is only the tip of the iceberg, Sexual abuse of children is more prevalent in all denominations than is realized by most. This book exposes the degree of abuse and how it is growing, while offering scriptural advice on how to avoid it for your children. A must read.



Order at www.swordpublishers.com