



THE WYCLIFFE ARABIC BIBLE PRODUCT OF THE WORLD-CHRISTIAN MOVEMENT?

In February, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Frontiers, and Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) announced plans to release new Arabic and Turkish translations of the Bible in which the words “Father” and “Son” are replaced with “Allah” and “Messiah” respectively, and the term “Son of God” is translated as “Messiah of God.” The reasoning according to the three organizations working cooperatively is that in certain cultures a wrong impression of Jesus’ relationship to the Father would be misunderstood as the two having a biological connection. The news has sparked responses from agreement to outrage among Christians.

Biblical Missiology, a ministry of Horizons International, has petitioned Wycliffe and SIL to retain the proper words. Horizons International has an outreach to Muslims to bring them to Christ. According to Biblical Missiology, the following issues are critical and must be corrected:

Western missions agencies Wycliffe, Frontiers and SIL are producing Bibles that remove *Father*, *Son* and *Son of God* because these terms are offensive to Muslims....

- Wycliffe/SIL produced *Stories of the Prophets*, an Arabic Bible that uses “Lord” instead of “Father” and “Messiah” instead of “Son.”
- Frontiers worked with an SIL consultant to produce *True Meaning of the Gospel of Christ*, an Arabic translation which removes “Father” in reference to God, and removes or redefines “Son,” e.g. the Great Commission in Mt 28:19 reads, “Cleanse them by water in the name of God, his Messiah and his Holy Spirit.”
- Frontiers produced a Turkish translation of Matthew, distributed by SIL, that uses “guardian” for “Father” and “representative” or “proxy” for “Son.”

- SIL consulted on the Bengali *Injil Sharif*, which translated “Son” as “Messiah” and “Son of God” as “God’s Uniquely Intimate Beloved Chosen One.”

By replacing or removing “Father” or “Son” from the text of Scripture, these translations fail to portray God as who he is: the familial, eternal, loving God the Father, Son and Spirit. The deity of Jesus is obscured, and thus the self-sacrifice of God on our behalf.¹

The controversy arose in large part as a response to an article entitled “Translating Familial Biblical Terms: An Overview of the Issue” written by Andrea and Rick Brown for *Mission Frontiers*, a publication of the U.S. Center for World Mission. According to this article, a strict translation of the terms “Father” and “Son” would not express the distinction between a social father and a biological father. Therefore, they reason, Muslim readers would assume that Jesus was born of Mary through a sexual encounter (much as Mormons believe). According to



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the authors:

The problem is that these translations end up attributing a biological meaning to the fatherhood of God, implying he reproduced the Son, the angels, or even the spirits of people through sexual activity. This meaning was not communicated by the original-language expressions, and it conflicts with the intended meaning of the text.

This mistake results in readers understanding the Lord’s Prayer to say “Our Begetter, who is in heaven,” and understanding Jesus to be “God’s (procreated) offspring.”

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¹ Biblical Missiology’s petition at <http://www.change.org/petitions/lost-in-translation-keep-father-son-in-the-bible>

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,

We had a minor catastrophe in May. Al's hard drive failed—the second one within a year. By the Lord's grace we had most of our work backed up to an external hard drive, but we lost a number of e-mails that didn't get backed up. A few of them required answers, so if you are one who sent an e-mail and failed

to get a response, please resend your inquiries and we'll get back to you. Sorry for the inconvenience.

We did also lose a few graphics files and some work, but the bulk of our files are still intact. The worst part was having the computer down for a few days while we waited for Dell to send out a technician with a replacement hard drive. Then, of course, all the programs had to be reloaded, the printers and scanner had to be reinstalled, etc., etc., etc. (as the King of Siam was fond of saying).

Consequently, this issue was about two weeks late getting to press. But here we are, praise the Lord!

Our readership among prisoners continues to grow, and we are blessed to receive letters of appreciation from them. Many came to Christ after having been convicted of various crimes. They rejoice in their circumstances that brought them to their knees in repentance. Please keep our incarcerated brothers and sisters in prayer. They have little in this world apart from faith in the Lord and the fellowship of those who keep in touch with them from the outside. Some are fortunate enough to have fellowship with a few other inmates who know Christ.

Besides the liberal chaplains, there are many false teachers that target prisoners because they know there is a hunger there. The true believers in prison are constantly trying to inform others about the deceptions that come in the name of Christ. We're blessed to be able to supply them with books and other materials to help them understand the deceptions and aid them in ministering to others.

Sometimes we wonder who are worse off as prisoners—those incarcerated behind concrete walls and barbed wire, or those on the outside who are constantly bombarded with deceptions that keep them bound in their minds and spirits. The most subtle deceptions come in the name of Jesus and appear to be so righteous. They work to "win the world for Christ," "take dominion over the spheres of society" and "reach out in dialogue to those of other religions"—all with the understanding that the Gospel of salvation must take a back seat to political and social action. This mind-set is what is behind our lead story on the Wycliffe Arabic Bible, and our report on Rick Warren and Saddleback Church's outreach to Muslims.

As we've said before, sometimes it seems as if all we have to report is bad news. But, then, when one ministers with a heart for truth, all the deceptions are front-and-center. We can't escape them. This is why we try to include a message from our fellowship on occasion. It is a blessing to be able to just share the Word of God without having to think about all the falsehoods that come in the name of our Lord. We hope that those articles are a blessing to you.

As always, we thank those of you who continue to bless us with your prayers and gifts that keep us going. We do pray for you all, and particularly for those who ask for prayer, which we share with our assembly.

In Jesus' love,

Al and Jean
Al and Jean



THE WYCLIFFE ARABIC BIBLE

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The “longing of creation” (Rom 8:19) is understood to be “for the revealing of God’s biological children.” Such wordings are inaccurate because they add a procreative meaning that was absent from the original, and they sideline the important interpersonal relationships that were expressed in the original text. Readers from polytheistic religions readily accept that gods procreate with goddesses and with women, and they assume the phrase Offspring of God signifies a procreated origin. Readers in many Muslim language groups understand Offspring of God in a similar way, namely that it means God had sexual relations with a woman; unlike polytheists, however, they reject this possibility and consider the phrase to be a blasphemous corruption of the Bible that insults God by attributing carnality to him. They fear that even saying such a phrase will incur the wrath of God. These misunderstandings disappear, however, when translators express the divine familial relationships in ways that do not imply sexual activity on the part of God. Muslim readers and listeners can then focus on the message without being preoccupied with the fear of attributing carnality to God, and when they do, they recognize that the deity and mission of Christ is evident throughout the Gospels.²

Rick Brown is a translation consultant with SIL who, according to Biblical Missiology, has for years been publishing articles promoting alternative terms for “Father” and “Son.”

In response to these concerns Biblical Missiology states:

Wycliffe/SIL justify using alternative terms to Father and Son because they say Muslims cannot hear these terms in relationship to God without inferring that God had sex with Mary, a blasphemous notion in Islam—and Christianity as well. There are at least two problems with this justification: it is not true and it is not biblical. The justification is not true in that native speakers of Arabic, Turkish, Bangla, and other languages say their words for “Father” and “Son” do not have these sexual implications—and certainly not any more than other languages. For example, the Qur’an itself uses the phrases “son of the road” in reference to a traveler, and “son of Mary” in reference to Jesus, born of a virgin. No Muslim thinks “son” in these cases is a result of sexual intercourse. Other Arabic speakers reject the notion that their commonly used terms are inadequate. As Jihan Husary says,

“Arabic is my native language so I can affirm that there is no valid reason to change those terms in Arabic.” Second, the justification is not biblical in that we do not have the authority to change the eternal terms for God, for any reason. Muslims’ common obstacle to these terms is theological, not sexual. It is indeed blasphemous in Islamic thought that God could have a Son. But a Muslim’s theological objection of blasphemy is a misunderstanding, which would not justify changing the terms. If translators have never replaced familial language because of actual theological objections, why suddenly should perceived sexual objections justify doing so? Objections or misunderstanding should be addressed in the footnotes.³

As a result of the outrage expressed by numerous Christians and Christian organizations, Wycliffe/SIL has asked the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA) to independently review Wycliffe and SIL International’s translation of “God the Father” and the “Son of God.”

Dr. Robert E. Cooley, president emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, will chair the WEA panel which will consist of theologians, Biblical scholars, translators, linguists and missiologists “representing a broad cross-section of the global Church.”

WEA has stated that it will send Wycliffe and SIL reports of the panel’s deliberations throughout the process, and expects to have the final report delivered by the end of this year.

COMMENTARY

The Browns’ statement that “These misunderstandings disappear, however, when translators express the divine familial relationships in ways that do not imply sexual activity on the part of God,” is misleading. The Arabic translations in question do not express “the divine familial relationships” in any way. They completely illiterate the Father-Son relationship.

Biblical Missiology is to be commended for its diligence in responding to Wycliffe, Frontiers and SIL International’s convoluting of God’s Word. Both SIL and Wycliffe have strong histories of promoting God’s Word throughout the world ever since they were founded by William Cameron Townsend in 1934 and 1942 respectively. So this departure from biblical accuracy is all the more disconcerting.

SIL was founded as a summer training program for developing alphabets among indigenous village people in third-world countries, the purpose being to translate portions of Scripture for them. Wycliffe and SIL have partnered for as long as Wycliffe has been in existence. Until this issue arose, there was little in the way of negativity that could be laid at either organization’s feet.

With Rick Brown’s influence on SIL has come a departure from SIL’s previous performance. Brown’s connection to the U.S. Center for World Mission (USCWM) reveals a mind-set

² Mission Frontiers: <http://www.missionfrontiers.org/blog/post/translating-familial-biblical-terms>

³ Biblical Missiology FAQs: “Wycliffe/SIL defends using alternative terms because of sexual implications connoted in Father-Son language. What’s your response?” <http://biblicalmissiology.org/translation-petition-faqs/#five>

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Iran: 'Gospel of Barnabas' will bring down Christianity

According to news published by the Turkish media, an ancient version of a manuscript called "The Gospel of Barnabas" was discovered in 2000, which manuscript allegedly predicts the arrival of Muhammad. The Turkish government seized the book in a police operation against an antiquities smuggling ring. The government of Iran has stated that this discovery will bring the downfall of Christianity. Iran's Basij Press states:

The original version of the Gospel of Barnabas has written: "god was hidden from view and the angel Michael drove them out of heaven. When I got back, he found written above the gates of Paradise: Laalh except Allah, Muhammad Rasul Allah". (Forty-first chapter of the Gospel of Barnabas)

Loosely translated it means "There is no god except Allah, and Muhammad is Allah's prophet."

The Basij Press article suggests that the copy held by the Turkish government is 1,500 years old, written "probably the fifth or sixth century A.D., and in Cyprus." Muhammad is said to have been born April 26, 570—the middle to late sixth century.

There are a number of "gospels" of Barnabas which differ in many respects. The earliest mention of a "Gospel of Barnabas" is said to have been written around 1634 in Tunisia by the Moor, Ibrahim al-Taybili, of whom little is known. The oldest copy extant was discovered by a Prussian courtier named J.F. Cramer in 1709. It is written in Italian and has resided in the National Library of Vienna since 1738.

COMMENTARY

The Barnabas "gospel" presents an outline of Jesus' life closely resembling that found in the canonical Gospels, but there are alterations that seem to be made to fit what the Qur'an says about Jesus not being the Son of God, as well as other Muslim myths. Literary historians agree that it was written during the later Middle Ages, probably by a former Christian who had converted to Islam.

So this "astounding discovery" by the Turkish government is nothing new. The other pseudo-gospels of Barnabas say essentially the same thing. The discovery of a new copy has merely given Islam a fresh opportunity to impugn the deity of Christ and assert Muhammad as the true prophet of their "true" god Allah.

The Istanbul Protestant Church Foundation has found a number of cracks in the foundation of Islam's reliance on this false gospel. The Foundation states:

...the text itself has many historical and geographical inconsistencies that give us clear clues on where and when it was written. For example:

Chapter 119 speaks of sugar. But sugar did not reach the Mediterranean culture but by the Arabs, and after the seventh century.

In chapter 54 speaks of the "minute" as a fraction of a denarius of gold. In the roman Empire the denarius was of silver, while the gold minute was a currency used in Spain, centuries later.

In the description of the day of the last judgment of chapter 121, a notary is seen when taking minutes, a habit that did not appear until the Middle Age.¹



The alleged "Gospel of Barnabas found in Turkey

There are many other serious discrepancies. This alleged "gospel" from Barnabas takes its place alongside many other false gospels, particularly prevalent from the Gnostics who also denied the deity of Christ. It's no wonder Satan attacks this essential truth of the faith. Without the deity of Christ there is no one qualified to be a substitute for sinful mankind.

One telling aspect of this fake gospel is that it often quotes verbatim from the writings of Durante degli Alighiere, better known as Dante, the Italian poet, philosopher and political thinker who wrote *La Divina Commedia*, "The Divine Comedy," sometime between 1308 and his death in 1321. This would date the "gospel" no earlier than the beginning of the fourteenth century.

Unless, I suppose, Barnabas must have also prophesied not only Dante's future coming, but what he would be writing as well. ❖

¹ Istanbul Protestant Church Foundation, <http://www.istpcf.org/understanding-the-faith/the-gospel-of-barnabas/>

Muslims shut down speech in Michigan

Acting on a protest by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), police in Allegan, Michigan raided a private event being held in an Allegan High School auditorium for the promotion of the American Constitution and the “American Laws for American Courts” legislation initiative. The auditorium had been rented by Willis Sage, an Allegan County commissioner. Police initially gave as their reason for shutting down the meeting the appearance of Kamal Saleem, a former Muslim terrorist who converted to Christianity. Later, the chief of police admitted to a reporter that he was acting on no specific threat or danger being posed by the event, but was responding to school officials who were in turn acting in response to a letter of complaint from Dawud Walid, executive director of CAIR – Michigan.

The meeting was moved to a local bowling alley where Saleem finished his speech.

CAIR and the leftist advocacy group, People for the American Way (PFAW), founded by TV producer Normal Lear, sent a letter to Allegan Public Schools two days prior to the event urging them to not allow their facility to be used because of Saleem, who they claimed “spreads hatred and intolerance.”

In response to the shutdown, Sage is heading a list of plaintiffs in a suit against the city of Allegan, Allegan Public Schools, CAIR and PFAW, as well as individuals associated with those entities. CAIR and PFAW say they were only concerned about people’s safety because of Saleem’s claim to be a former terrorist, which they say they don’t believe anyway.

COMMENTARY

CAIR describes its mission thusly:

CAIR is America’s largest Muslim civil liberties and advocacy organization. Its mission is to enhance the understanding of Islam, encourage dialogue, protect civil liberties, empower American Muslims, and build coalitions that promote justice and mutual understanding.

At the top of its statement of purpose, People for the American Way states:

People For the American Way is dedicated to making the promise of America real for every American: Equality. Freedom of speech. Freedom of religion. The right to seek justice in a court of law. The right to cast a vote that counts. The American Way.

We hardly ever—if ever—hear of Christian or Jewish (or Hindu or Buddhist) organizations in America demanding that Muslims be silenced. But is it not amazing how those who say they wish to promote mutual understanding call the police to stamp out the voices they don’t want heard, and those who call themselves “liberals” work so hard to shut out anyone or anything that even benignly speaks contrary to what the “liberals” believe?

How understanding and liberal is that?❖

Best Buy supports CAIR

In April the Minnesota branch of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) announced that retail giant Best Buy would be a “Platinum Sponsor” for CAIR’s fifth-anniversary fund-raising banquet. As a result, Best Buy Corporation has been accused by some of funding terrorists because of its support of militant Islamic groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood. Although most major news outlets have not reported on this, Fox News aired former Marine James Canning’s home-made video in which he is shown cutting up his Best Buy “Reward Zone” card, and saying “Because of this support Best Buy has been giving the Muslim Brotherhood and CAIR, I can no longer conduct business with Best Buy.”

Fox also interviewed Dr. Zuhdi Jasser, founder of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy. Asked if what Canning said is true—is CAIR radical—Jasser replied, “I believe so. Actually, if you look at their background I can’t believe Best Buy didn’t do their homework. I mean, basically, the FBI in 2008 put a memo—open public memo—to Senator Kyle saying that this is a group that is not an adequate or appropriate partner to liaison with the Muslim community because they couldn’t even verbally condemn Hamas....So here you have an American company that now is supporting the Council on American Islamic Relations, a group that actually is part of the narrative to say that America is against Islam, against Muslims. They bully businesses and Americans like Best Buy in order to say that they need help as part of diversity.”

Best Buy’s spokesman Damon Gammon’s succinct response to the criticism:

Best Buy’s customers and employees around the world represent a variety of faiths and denominations, and we respect our employee’s efforts to constructively promote diversity and education in their communities.

COMMENTARY

Every major retailer’s customers and employees represent a variety of faiths and denominations. What the employees do in promoting “diversity and education in their communities” is up to them. But when the business itself singles out particular religious organizations to support, it should expect some backlash. Especially if the organization the business is supporting has documented ties to terrorist groups and stands firm in refusing to condemn terrorist organizations around the world.

Would calling for a boycott of Best Buy be the same as CAIR calling the police on the meeting at which Kamal Saleem was to speak? Hardly. Exercising one’s personal preference to spend one’s money where one chooses for any reason is not censorship or denial of First Amendment rights. Having the police (a government agency) raid a venue where there is no law being broken in order to silence speech is a violation of the First Amendment.

From a biblical perspective, we may apply the principle in 1 Corinthians 10:28 as being free to exercise one’s conscience in

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UPDATE

Warren denies allegations by OC Register reporter



Rick Warren has posted on Saddleback Valley Community Church's website a response to the article entitled "Rick Warren builds bridge to Muslims" which appeared in the Feb. 26 *Orange County Register*. His response, entitled, "On Responding to False Accusations," lists the following complaints against the article:

It erroneously stated that we have a partnership with a local Muslim mosque.

That is false.

It erroneously reported that we had agreed to not evangelize with Muslims.

That is false.

It erroneously reported that we believe Saddleback and Muslims worship the same God.

That is false

It erroneously used a picture of our new PEACE Center as the example of a program of cooperation with Muslims.

That is false.

It erroneously reported that our church had agreed to a theological document with Muslims.

That is false.

Warren states that the first he or the church's elders had heard of any document co-authored between Jihad Turk, director of religious affairs at a Los Angeles Mosque and Abraham Meulenberg, a Saddleback pastor in charge of interfaith outreach, was when they read of it in the *Register*. He adds that Saddleback has never agreed to any theological document with Muslims or else he and the elders would have seen it first, nor could it without his and the elders' consent.

Says Warren:

A member of Saddleback started a Bible study, called The King's Way, with some of our Muslim friends. During the study they started writing down things that they noticed Muslims, Jews, and Christians might have in common: They noticed that all three claim to believe the Great Commandment ("Love God with all you heart and love your Neighbor as yourself"), all three accept the Old Testament as Scripture (and Muslims claim to accept the New Testament also) and all three are monotheistic (one God, not many). They presented these thoughts at the Bible study's Christmas dinner in December. That's it! End of story! It went no further. No document was signed. No agreement was made. No covenant was approved. It was just two men sharing their observations

at the Bible study dinner regarding what Muslims, Jews, and Christians have in common.

That's a huge difference from the way it was reported. It was not a new partnership. It was not a theological covenant. It was not a new religion called "Chrislam." The fact is, the Bible study discussion paper was never even seen by anyone on Saddleback's Leadership Team (40 pastors), Saddleback's Pastor's Management Team (14 pastors), Saddleback's Trustees (6 business leaders), or Saddleback's Elders (7 pastors).

Predictably, to defend himself after my interview corrected his errors, the *Orange County Register* reporter released a segment of the so-called "document" to the I-hate-Saddleback bloggers giving them a supposed *smoking gun*. Unfortunately, he forgot to ask if any Saddleback pastors had actually signed *or even seen* this paper. We had not! But now we've heard that there will be a second article this Sunday in the *Register* giving a platform and legitimacy to attackers who didn't know the facts either. So don't be surprised if it's wrong again.

Warren has also said that he does not believe Christians and Muslims worship the same god. "We worship Jesus as God. Muslims don't," Warren wrote. "Our God is Jesus, not Allah."

Warren insists the fault does not lie with members of Saddleback or their Muslim friends, but with poor reporting. He posted a comment on the *Register's* website saying the article contained "multiple errors." He did not specify what those errors are.

The reporter for the *Register*, Jim Hinch, wrote a follow-up in which he alleged that, "Warren, through a spokesman, declined repeated requests by phone and e-mail to be interviewed both for this article and for the *Register's* Feb. 26 story."

Hinch states:

Following publication of that article, Warren posted a comment on the *Register's* website saying the story contained "multiple errors." Warren's comment did not specify the errors.

In a series of phone conversations Feb. 27, David Chrzan, Warren's chief of staff, told this reporter and a *Register* editor that the story was factually correct except in its statement that Warren believes Christians and Muslims worship the same God. It would be more accurate to state that Christians and Muslims both believe in one God, Chrzan said.

Hinch also wrote:

On Friday, the *Register* emailed Chrzan a summary of this story's contents and invited him to respond or correct any factual inaccuracies. In a phone conversation with Chrzan on Friday, *Register* Editor Ken Brusic offered to print a response from Saddleback alongside this story. Chrzan did not reply to the reporter's email and declined Brusic's offer.

Hinch states that a copy of the King's Way document was given to the *Register* "on condition that it not be published in its entirety." Accordingly, the *Register* published only the following excerpts:

1. WHO: we believe in ONE GOD:

1. GOD IS ONE (Mark 12:29; Muhammed, 47:19)
2. GOD IS THE CREATOR (Genesis 1:1 Al Shura, 42:11)
3. GOD IS DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD (1 Timothy 6:16; Al An'am 6:103)
4. GOD IS GOOD
 - a. God loves (1 John 4:16; Al Buruj 85:14)
 - b. God is just (1 John 1:9 Romans 3:26; Hud 11:45)
 - c. God's love encompasses God's judgment (1 Peter 4:8; Al A'raf 7:156; Al Ghafir 40:7)

WHAT: This is what we acknowledge:

TWO COMMANDMENTS:

1. LOVE OF GOD (Matthew 22:37 citing Deut. 6:5; Al Zimar. 39:45)
2. LOVE OF NEIGHBOR (Matthew 7:12; Sahih Muslim, Kitab al-Iman, Hadith no. 45)
 - In addition to this we both have the 10 commandments in common

HOW: This is what we commit to:

THREE COMMITMENTS:

1. Become friends - common ground (Matthew 5:47; Al Ma-edah 5:82)
2. Build peace - common word (Matthew 5:17, 7:24 & 11:28-30; Al Ma-edah 5:46 & Al-Hadeed 57:27)
3. Share the Blessings of God with others/Serve the world together - common good (1 John 3:17; Al Ma-edah 5:48)

1. ONE GOD

1. GOD IS ONE

There is only one God, the one and only divine being

Bible: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Mark 12:29)

Quran: "Know, therefore, that there is no god but God." (Muhammed 47:19)

2. GOD IS THE CREATOR

God is the creator of all creation

Bible: "In the beginning ... God created the heavens and the earth." (Genesis 1:1)

Quran: "(He is) the Creator of the heavens and the earth." (Al Shura 42:11)

3. GOD IS DIFFERENT FROM THE WORLD

God is radically different from everything

Bible: God "dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see." (1 Timothy 6:16)

Quran: "There is nothing like Him and He is All Hearing and All Seeing (Al-Shura 42:11)

GOD IS GOOD

1. God loves

Bible: "God is love." (1 John 4:16)

Quran: "And He is Oft-Forgiving, full of loving-kindness." (Al Buruj 85:14)

2. God is just

Bible: "He is faithful and just" (1 John 1:9 & Romans 3:26)

Quran: "Thou are the Most Just of Judges" (Hud 11:45)

3. God's love encompasses God's judgment

Bible: "Love covers a multitude of sins." (1 Peter 4:8)

Quran: "My mercy encompasses all things." (Al A'raf 7:156 & Al Ghafir 40:7)

No one else, it seems, has been able to attain a copy of the King's Way document, and the *Register* is abiding by its agreement to publish only these parts.

COMMENTARY

Something's not right here. According to the Islamic Center of Southern California, (ICSC) the King's Way document was one year in the making. Yet Rick Warren says he never even heard of it prior to reading about it in the *Register*, nor had any of the elders or pastors at Saddleback Church.

But what about Abraham Meulenberg? According to the *Register* article and ICSC he is named as pastor of interfaith outreach at Saddleback Church. Our phone calls and e-mails to Rick Warren and other representatives of Saddleback Church have been met with no response, but I guess I'm in good company with the *Register* reporters whose attempts to get Warren to give input prior to the writing of the articles were also rebuffed.

Or is Jim Hinch lying about that?

Hinch is a veteran news reporter who has written for *Guideposts*; I doubt he is anti-Saddleback. The Islamic Center of Southern California published the Feb. 26 *Register* article by Jim Hinch and offered no rebuttal to anything said. In fact, they are very much pleased with their relationship with Saddleback, and are confirming everything stated in Hinch's article.

A. Larry Ross, Media Representative for Saddleback Church, has also issued an apologetic for Warren and Saddleback entitled "Saddleback Church: Setting the record straight on outreach to Muslims," in which he rightly affirms that it is the Christian's duty to love everyone, including Muslims. Said Ross:

Jesus is not a "zero-sum game" between two religions.

Rather, He is a value-add to the zero of all of our lives, Who is gathering the nations - including individuals with different beliefs. The different views of God among the Saddleback members and Muslim neighbors at the Christmas dinner centered around their respective views of Jesus (prophet, teacher, Son of God), but His life and teaching represent a starting point of information exchange of mutual interest that can lead to transformation.

Nothing in the Bible addresses the Christian or Muslim religion; rather, the religion of Jesus involves lifting up His name among people with good or open hearts, whom He would call unto Himself, and to whom He would reveal Himself through the Holy Spirit.

I phoned Ross for clarification of what he means by "transformation." The very nice lady to whom I spoke said he wasn't available, but I could e-mail him for a response, which I did. I have not heard back from him, but I suppose he's very busy.

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N oriel Kaplan was crazy. Or so, at first, thought Ana Goren—the woman to whom Kaplan relates his encounters with an unnamed, mysterious man whom he calls “the prophet.” Ana Goren (that’s *Gorén*, with the accent on the last syllable), has a reputation among those in the media as a no-nonsense woman who was not known to suffer fools gladly. But as Kaplan begs her indulgence, her interest is piqued as he begins to reveal how for the past several years he had been directed by God through the prophet to uncover certain harbingers of impending judgment upon America.

So begins author Jonathan Cahn’s intriguing and at times startling exposition of events in America’s history from its founding to the present day, which parallel those of ancient Israel. Although presented in the form of a novel, Cahn states that what the book contains is real. Whether or not Kaplan’s encounters with the “prophet” are as real as the events in America’s history, particularly its founding and those leading up to and following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, we are not told. We will assume that those encounters comprise the fictional aspect of *The Harbinger*, as does Kaplan’s relating of his story to Ana Goren.

Kaplan’s story centers on nine ancient artifacts made of reddish, golden-brown clay, circular and about two inches in diameter. These artifacts he calls seals, similar to those used in ancient times to mark documents as authoritative. It seems he received in the mail the first of these seals, which he shows to Goren. There was no indication on the package from where the seal came, but thus began Kaplan’s years-long encounters with the prophet as Kaplan “just happens” to be in the right places at the right times to interact with him.

The intriguing elements of *The Harbinger* are those that relate to what Kaplan calls “the Isaiah 9:10 Effect,” which are warnings from God to both nations because of their departure from His righteous decrees. These warnings come in the form of nine “harbingers” or omens that are given by God in His mercy to warn the nation to repent or suffer His judgment. According to the New King James Version utilized by Cahn, Isaiah 9:10 states:

The bricks have fallen,
But we will rebuild with hewn stone;
The sycamores have been cut down,
But we will plant cedars in their place.



convey certain facts that seem far too coincidental to be coincidence will cause readers to think seriously about the precariousness of America’s future as a free and independent nation.

Cahn’s warning of God’s judgment is nothing new. I and many others have been saying for years that this nation’s sins—particularly abortion, sexual perversion, the glorifying of immorality and its turning to false religions—are begging for God’s judgment. But while many are warning of God’s judgment for America’s sins, Cahn goes further by offering some serious evidence that the events leading up to and after 9/11 are harbingers of God’s judgment.

God’s Word warns that the shedding of innocent blood will bring God’s judgment upon any nation, just as it came upon ancient Israel:

Shall the throne of iniquity which legally sanctions mischief have fellowship with You [YHWH]?

They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous, and condemn the innocent blood.

But YHWH is my defense, and my God is the rock of my refuge.

And He will bring upon them their own iniquity, and will cut them off in their own wickedness! Yes, YHWH our God will cut them off. (Ps 94:20-25:1)

The psalmist, Israel’s King David, was addressing his persecution by his enemies who had maintained the power of government and were using that power to shed innocent blood while seeking to kill him.

The shedding of innocent blood refers to unjustly killing those who are innocent of crimes deserving of death. It does not specifically or exclusively address abortion. But whose blood is more innocent than that of the unborn child? If God’s judgment is against those who kill innocent men and women, how much more will His judgment be against those who legalize by government decree the killing of innocent children in the womb?

The blood of the tens of millions of innocent babies slaughtered in and out of the womb cries out for judgment. But America says judgment is far from it. The nation's arrogance in the face of today's omens of judgment is increased.

And that is the theme of *The Harbinger*.

With each meeting, the "prophet" gives Kaplan a different seal, all having cryptic etchings on them. It is up to Kaplan to decipher the meaning of each seal in order to understand the unfolding of God's warnings.

The first seal, which the prophet hands to Kaplan in exchange for the one he received in the mail, is inscribed with what looks like a wall with a v-shaped notch in it. This, the prophet explains, represents a wall that has been breached—specifically the wall of Samaria that was breached by the Assyrians several years prior to taking Israel captive. But more than that, it represents for today the destruction of the Twin Towers on 9/11 by those Cahn calls modern Assyrians.

Here the parallel suffers somewhat. Osama bin Laden, as well as 15 of the 19 hijackers involved in the 9/11 attacks were not Assyrians; they were Arabs, specifically from Saudi Arabia. Although ancient Assyria did gain control of portions of Arabia for a time, they were never considered Arabians. The Assyrians were from the Sumero-Akkadian civilization that emerged in Mesopotamia long before the birth of Ishmael to Abraham. Ishmael was the progenitor of the Arabs.

Although Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldees and is called a Syrian (Dt 26:5), the Arabs are far removed from the Assyrians ethnically and culturally; until the conquests by Islam they were also linguistically diverse. To say the Arabs are Assyrian would be the same as saying the Jews are Syrians. Loosely defined, that may be so, but no one today would link the two.

As the story of *The Harbinger* unfolds we learn that subsequent seals reveal the other harbingers, all of which parallel the captivity of Israel and the impending judgment of America.

What is more significant than the harbingers, however, is the response of America's leaders to the initial destruction. That response is "the Isaiah 9:10 Effect." We learn that three of the most powerful men in America appealed to Isaiah 9:10 at different times in their response to the attacks by America's enemies: Barack Obama (representing the office of president); Sen. Tom Daschle, Senate Majority Leader; Sen. John Edwards as Democrat candidate for vice president.

Each of these men quoted Isaiah 9:10, ignorant of its prelude to curses upon the land as testified by the verses that follow:

Therefore the LORD shall set up
The adversaries of Rezin against him,
And spur his enemies on,
The Syrians before and the Philistines behind;
And they shall devour Israel with an open mouth. (Isa 9:11-12 [NKJV])

More curses follow upon these in the succeeding verses and chapters.

It is natural for men to want to rebuild what has been destroyed. But it is folly to think of doing so without first

acknowledging the hand of God upon the destruction and then turning to Him in repentance and humility, asking His blessing upon the rebuilding. Such has been woefully lacking, particularly among the leaders of this nation.

Does Cahn overstep his bounds in paralleling the U.S. with Israel, particularly when he states that America was founded upon a covenant with God to begin with? Or that the founders of the Republic looked to the God of the Bible for His providence and guidance?

It is a certainty that the United States of America has been without equal throughout history in terms of prosperity for its average citizens—at least until recently. It is a certainty that the Word of God played a large part in forming the jurisprudence and in crafting the laws of the land. It is a certainty that Christianity has been America's primary religion from its inception even to the present day.

All of this is true even if many (or most) of the founders of the nation and its citizens have been nominal Christians at best. As long as the nation adhered to the biblical ethic upon which it was founded God has been pleased to bless it. Ever since the nation began to decree laws that shed innocent blood and that legislated acceptance of immorality in every form including sexual perversion—ever since it began to legislate against the Word of God and has pushed the God of the Bible out of government institutions and public life—it has been suffering severe economic, social, military, and political setbacks.

This is the basis for *The Harbinger*, and with that I find no fault.

Yet I did find a few aspects of the book which concern me. The mysterious "prophet" is truly an enigma. From where does he come—Heaven or earth? Is he a man, an angel of God, or God Himself?

Toward the end of the story the prophet declares to Kaplan the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ. But Kaplan never really comes to believe in Jesus as his Savior. Yet we are told that God has chosen him to be His messenger to the nation.

The question arises: why would God choose an unbeliever such as Nouriel Kaplan to deliver God's message to the nation? Although God has used unbelievers to convey minor prophecies for a given moment, they were never used to voice correction or warning of God's judgment. That has always been reserved for God's faithful believers. And before He warns a nation He warns His own people. There is no warning to the Body of Christ in *The Harbinger*; the warning is to come to an unbelieving nation by the mouth of an unbelieving Jew.

In another contrived "coincidence" the prophet informs Kaplan that the prophet Jeremiah's scribe was named Baruch ben Neriah, from which the name Nouriel derives. It turns out that Kaplan's real (self-rejected) first name is actually Baruch. Thus, Kaplan has the same name as Jeremiah's scribe, and just as Baruch's father's name Neriah means "the light of God," Kaplan's middle name Nouriel means "the flame of God." He, says the prophet, is the *sofer*—"the one called to record, to declare, to make know, to make a record of what you've seen and heard, to write down the prophetic word, to reveal the mysteries that

they might hear it, that a nation might hear it, and that those who will listen could be saved.”

And here comes the kicker: Kaplan tells Ana Goren about being appointed by the prophet as the *sofer* of God’s Word to America, to which she suggests that he communicate his message as a narrative—a story—in order to get as many people as possible to read it and accept it. Kaplan would be the narrator of the story, changing the names of the characters.

Is Cahn telling us that Nouriel Kaplan is Cahn himself? Did Cahn encounter a mysterious prophet of God who instructed him to tell this story to us? Is *The Harbinger*, then, a prophetic Word of God in narrative form?

We aren’t told so, but many readers might draw that conclusion.

The bio on the back cover tells us that Jonathan Cahn’s teachings “are seen on television and radio throughout the nation and are known for their prophetic significance and their revealing of deep mysteries of God’s Word.”

Sounds intriguing.

Yet every true expositor of Scripture is a revealer of the deep mysteries of God’s Word. Every truth of God’s Word is a deep mystery to the unbeliever. But to the believer in Christ, God opens His Word through the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Some teachers may have a deeper understanding of God’s Word in some areas, but that doesn’t mean that they are especially endowed by God with supernatural understanding unavailable to any other believer in Christ. The truths of Scripture are revealed through diligent study of His Word; the Holy Spirit gives understanding through diligent study by those whose hearts are toward God. The more we study, the more we understand.

There might sometimes be an advantage to a Jew who may have knowledge of Hebrew and the traditions of the faith of Moses. But there may also be pitfalls for Jewish Christians whose traditions in rabbinical Judaism prior to coming to Christ may tend toward “mystery” and the melding of Kabbalah with the faith.

I’m not saying this is true of Cahn. But his teachings are largely promoted along the lines of revealing mysteries of God heretofore unknown. It’s almost as if we need him to initiate us into a higher understanding of Scripture in order to truly be able to serve the Lord. He certainly fits the role for the new apostolic and prophetic reformation. Perhaps this is why his book carries the endorsements of men like Pat Robertson, Sid Roth and John Paul Jackson (formerly of the Kansas City prophets infamy). John Paul Jackson states, “Jonathan Cahn’s book, *The Harbinger*, is far more than a prophetic warning to the United States; it is an unveiling of the ways of God.”

Really? So *The Harbinger* is actually a book of prophecy? It was inspired by the Lord as a prophetic warning to America? Or might it be more accurate to say that it is an interesting if flawed fiction written by someone who wants to use it to warn America that God’s judgment is about to be unleashed upon us?

I do not claim that *Media Spotlight* is a prophetic journal. Yet I do believe that our writings carry important warnings based upon what we know of God’s righteousness and His Word.

Endorsements such as that offered by Jackson, Robertson and Roth (who is fascinated by the bizarre and sensational) call into question the legitimacy of true prophetic standing for Cahn and his book. A true prophet of God would recognize the spiritual errors propagated by such men and would have nothing to do with their endorsements.

Yet Cahn’s investigation of the historic and scriptural parallels of ancient Israel and the United States is impressive. He reveals that just as the towers suffered the same destruction as ancient Israel, so, too, the sycamore tree that stood on the grounds of St. Paul’s Chapel at Ground Zero was replaced with an evergreen in the cedar family. (“The sycamores have been cut down, but we will plant cedars in their place.”) Granted, he admits they are not exactly the same trees as those found in ancient Israel, but he allows that they are related somewhat.

Cahn reveals that St. Paul’s Chapel in New York City is where George Washington led the first Congress in prayer to dedicate the nation to God. (New York, not Washington, D.C., was the capital of the United States at that time.) The Twin Towers stood on ground that at one time was part of St. Paul’s property. Thus, the nation that once declared its allegiance to the God of the Bible has been breached upon the same ground of dedication. This is a harbinger from God that He is not pleased with the nation, and is about to bring severe judgment.

No argument there, but Cahn’s startling revelations may be attributed more to diligent research into American history combined with a good knowledge of Isaiah’s account of Israel’s defiance, than upon supernatural prophetic impetus.

Cahn’s story-telling isn’t the best. Some of the too-wordy dialogue among the characters caused me to ask, “Who talks like that?” Still, the warnings are justified. And the information contained in the book may be worth the read for those discerning enough not to be taken in by the alleged “prophetic” movement afoot today. Just be careful not to believe everything you read. It is, after all, a book of fiction. ❖

IS THIS REALLY A GOOD IDEA?

The One World Trade Center being erected next to the site where the Twin Towers once stood is meant to be a message to America’s enemies that the nation will come back stronger than before.

It’s said that the central concrete core of the building will make it more resistant to the type of attack suffered by the Twin Towers.

We can only pray that it not end up a tempting target for indefatigable terrorists.



RICK WARREN UPDATE

(Continued from page 7)

She did tell me that she believes he means the goal of the outreach is to lead Muslims to Christ in order that they may be transformed or born again.

I would hope that is what Ross means; I have to guard against a suspicious mind, particularly when I recognize the buzzword “transformation” for what it means among neo-evangelicals, particularly in their understanding of “missions” today.

Then, too, we’re faced with that old canard that if someone takes issue with someone well-known (in this case Rick Warren), then that person is a hater. Why is it that today some people are so quick to label their detractors as filled with hate just because they take an impassioned stance against something someone has said or done? That’s a straw man that shouldn’t be allowed to stand. I would never accuse Warren of hating God’s Word in spite of the many words and actions he has taken contrary to it, and in such passionate ways.

In spite of Warren’s denials, the fact remains that the King’s Way document does exist, and Warren has full knowledge of it by now. If David Chrzan is to be believed (if Hinch isn’t lying about him), then the original article is factually accurate except for the single point that Warren and Saddleback do not believe Christians and Muslims worship the same God.

Which brings me to the excerpts from the King’s Way document.

The very first point, “GOD IS ONE (Mark 12:29; Muhammed, 47:19)” should be rejected by any discerning believer in Jesus. Muhammed, 47:19 states in full:

Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah, and ask forgiveness for thy fault, and for the men and women who believe: for Allah knows how ye move about and how ye dwell in your homes.

Here Allah is named as the god of Islam. We have nothing to do with Allah. The name of the true God is YHWH (Yahweh; Jehovah). The God of the Bible is not the god of the Qur’an.¹ In truth, we must say YHWH is one because those are the actual Hebrew words of Deuteronomy 6:4:

¹ We are told that “Allah” means “The God” in Arabic, and was used as such long before Islam existed, so it is proper for Christians to use the name Allah when addressing Muslims. This is only partly true. Allah was the name of the supreme deity among the polytheistic pagan Arabs. So the name meant “The god above the other gods.” This is why Islam adopted Allah as its only god. We are also told that the word used for God in the writings of the apostles is the Greek *theos* used by the pagan Greeks; so if it was good enough for the apostles, then Allah should not be balked at by Christians. But *theos* was not the name of any particular Greek god; it was a generic term for “god” which could be applied to any of the Greek gods. Muslims do have a name for other gods, but it refers only to false gods. Yet if the God of the Bible, YHWH, has an only-begotten Son upon whom rests man’s relationship to His Father, then Islam must consider YHWH a false God. Yet when we say Allah is a false god we are met with arguments that Allah just means “God,” so we should get over it. Even if “Allah” is the only word for “god,” the truth remains that it is also the name of the Muslim god. Therefore, even Arab translations (as well as English translations) should use the name YHWH where it exists in the original Hebrew language. One of the worst things translators of the English Bibles has done is substitute the words “the LORD” for the name YHWH, thus causing confusion.

Hear, O Israel: YHWH our God is one YHWH.

Now contrast that with Muhammed, 47:19 as translated from the Arabic:

Know, therefore, that there is no god but Allah.”

Where is the agreement there?

Take away that “agreement” and the rest of the document falls apart, simply because everything Islam says about its god refers to Allah, who has no son, and everything biblical faith says about the true God refers to YHWH who cannot be approached apart from His Son.

If Rick Warren is totally innocent of this document, as he says, then why has he not instructed those at Saddleback behind it to repeal it, and notify ICSC that they are doing so?

I’m not going to get into the “he said; he said” debate beyond what I’ve already stated. Rick Warren has offered a sound Christology upon which he says Saddleback rests its ministry. That’s fine. But at the same time, the actions taken in Saddleback’s attempts to find common ground with Islam, and Warren’s sanctioned outreach to Muslims which eschews converting them, makes his sound Christology ring somewhat hollow.

Let us agree to love Muslims in the biblical sense—help them understand the truth of God’s Word and the need to turn to God’s only-begotten Son for salvation.

Anything less may be classified as tolerance, but it isn’t love.❖



Jerusalem is commonly said to be the holy city to the three major Abrahamic religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam. This belief is predicated upon the fact that Abraham had two sons—Isaac and Ishmael—whose descendants comprise the Israelites (through Isaac and his son Jacob), and the Arabs (through Ishmael). Because Christianity is thought to be a sect of Judaism, the religion of the Jews (Israelites), and Islam is the religion of the Arabs since the seventh century, people assume that these three religions trace their heritage to Abraham.

In truth, however, none of these religions are the religion of Abraham. They are the religions of people who descended from Abraham, but their religions cannot legitimately be called “Abrahamic.” Rather, they are perversions of the faith of Abraham who God honored with the promise of an earthly kingdom.

Just because one is a member of any of these three religions doesn’t mean one will inherit or even enter into the kingdom promised to Abraham and his seed. Only those who are faithful to the seed of Abraham, who is Jesus Christ, will inherit the kingdom.❖

NEWS

(Continued from page 5)

spending one's money. But one is not free to enlist the power of government to stifle another for the sake of disagreement over beliefs. That may have been practiced in the ancient theocracy of Israel, but we do not live in a theocracy.

That said, it appears as if militant Muslims and their sympathizers like CAIR think they should force their theocratic beliefs upon others.

The sad thing is that government at all levels in America seem to agree with them. ❖

Target Stores targets PRIDE; JCP panders to 'two dads' households

Target Stores is carrying a special line of apparel to celebrate June as "National Gay Pride Month" and has stated that for each PRIDE item sold between May 20 and June 30 Target will donate 100% of the purchase price up to \$120,000 to Family Equality Council, an LGBT advocacy organization. Under the "LGBT" product line Target offers T-shirts for men and women featuring rainbow colored graphics, as well as books that affirm the LGBT lifestyle.

American Family Association is waging a campaign for people to send an e-mail to Target Chairman Gregg Steinhafel telling him that a majority of Americans oppose same-sex marriage and are able to use their pocketbooks to voice their opposition to companies that support it. One may also call Target's corporate office at 612-304-6073 and share one's opinion on the matter.



Target's promo for its LGBT line of clothing

In a related story, JCP (formerly J.C. Penny Co.) is drawing criticism from some Christian and conservative organizations for featuring a 'two dads' household in its 2012 Father's Day ad.

Last year, the company announced that Ellen DeGeneres, who is openly lesbian, would be its latest spokesperson. On Mother's Day, it featured a lesbian couple in one of its ads.

The copy reads: "What makes Dad so cool? He's the swim coach, tent maker, best friend, bike fixer and hug giver—all rolled into one. Or two."

The ads have been protested by the conservative One Million Moms (OMM), affiliated with AFA, which accuses JC Penney of promoting "sin" in its advertisements.

"It's obvious that JCP would rather take sides than remain neutral in the culture war," OMM writes. "JCP will hear from the



JCP's Father's Day ad

other side, so they need to hear from us as well. Our persistence will pay off! One day we will answer for our actions or lack of them. We must remain diligent and stand up for Biblical values and truth. Scripture says multiple times that homosexuality is wrong, and God will not tolerate this sinful nature."

In an email to ABC News, JC Penney spokesman Joseph Thomas said that "In celebration of Father's Day, we're proud that our June book honors men from diverse backgrounds who all share the joy of fatherhood."

Cooper Smith, one of the men in the ad, stated, "I just don't know how anyone could project so much hate toward something as loving as the relationship we have with our kids. That photo was just a moment in time that showed our affection toward our children and how we care toward them. Nothing is being shoved down anybody's throats."

COMMENTARY

That's a lie. The whole LGBT agenda is being shoved down our throats by the government, big business, the media and the government indoctrination camps called "public schools."

One cannot turn on one's television set without encountering some positive reference to one sexual perversion or another; the highest office in the land is being used to promote sexual perversion; schools are taking extraordinary measures to ensure that sexual perversion is embraced by students. Major businesses have sufficient confidence to favor sexual perversion in its ads, and they don't care a whit about those offended by them.

I don't plan on spending anything at Target or JCP (or Best Buy) anymore, but it is up to each individual to decide what course of action to take—or to take no course of action at all. No matter where we spend money we can be sure that it is supporting Mammon to some degree. Target and JCP are open about their support of sodomy and related sins. The company knows that the LGBT community is among the more affluent in America, so I doubt that it's worried about what true believers in Christ or other morally-thinking people do in response.

But why should that surprise us? The carnal mind is enmity with God (Romans 8:7). ❖

Obama honors 'Gay Pride Month'

Barack Obama is marking Gay Pride Month with a concerted push to mobilize LGBT voters, who he is counting on to give him an advantage in hotly contested swing states.

The Obama campaign has produced a new documentary-style campaign video in which he portrays himself as a champion of LGBT issues. Says Obama:

I don't think there was a single moment LGBT issues became important to me. It was an accumulation of a lifetime of friends, family and people I've met who have helped me understand how the fight for LGBT rights is consistent [with America].

The film is narrated by actress Jane Lynch, who stars in the Fox TV show *Glee*.

"That passion drove him to make more significant advances for LGBT Americans than any other president who came before him," Lynch says.

The Obama campaign has also begun a campaign specifically targeting LGBT voters. LGBT Americans for Obama is enlisting volunteers to turn out votes in Pennsylvania, Colorado, Nevada and Michigan.

COMMENTARY

National Gay Pride Month was first recognized by President Bill Clinton in 2000. President George W. Bush refused to recognize the event, but it was again recognized by Barack Obama in every year of his occupying the White House.

His claim that his position on same-sex "marriage" has been "evolving" over the years rings hollow in view of how exuberant he has been in declaring his now "fully evolved" support. One doesn't just jump from hemming and hawing to exuberance, the likes of which Obama has displayed. He has always been a champion of LGBT causes. The only reason he did not come out for those causes in his initial campaign for the presidency is because he knew it would greatly hinder his chances. And it's only because Joe Biden unintentionally forced the issue on same-sex "marriage" that he has been compelled to state his true position. So it's no surprise that he has jumped into the LGBT camp with both feet and with a pride to match those in that camp.

My question: How can anyone be proud of engaging in sexual perversion? Not even married couples are "proud" of their relations.

What's worse, is that someone occupying the White House is just as proud of those things.

He who walks in righteousness fears YHWH, but he who is perverse in his ways despises Him. (Pr 14:2)

If we lived under a dictatorship we might be excused. But what a testimony to the spiritual condition of this nation, not only that its leaders are so perverse, but that they have been democratically chosen by the people. ❖

Turkish PM calls abortion 'murder'

The Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has called for legislation that would restrict abortions in his country. Since 1983 abortion has been legal in Turkey for up to 10 weeks after conception, except when medical reasons allow for emergency abortions. Erdogan's proposal would make illegal all non-emergency abortions and restrict medically-necessary abortions to no longer than eight weeks after conception.

"There is no difference in killing the fetus in a mother's womb or killing a person at birth," said Erdogan during an address at the opening of a hospital in Istanbul on May 26. He also called for limits on cesarean births, saying they are "nothing more than a procedure to restrict and square a nation's population." His reasoning is that women who give birth through the cesarean method are less likely to be able to have more than one more child.

Reaction to Erdogan's statements came from various "human rights" organizations including Turkey's Female Party Initiative which organized a protest in Istanbul. The Party's head, Benal Yazgan, said, "It is strictly for the woman to decide how she would give birth, or whether she would give birth at all or not—not the prime minister."

Erdogan is said to want every married couple to have at least three children, and said that "abortion has no place in our values. He sees the need for a healthy birth rate in order to "elevate this country above the levels of developed civilizations, for which we need a young and dynamic population."

COMMENTARY

Although the Qur'an does not explicitly mention abortion, Islam bases its opposition to abortion on some its teachings. Thus, most Muslim scholars believe that an unborn child is protected as a human life by Islam. Yet Islam does allow for abortion as "the lesser of two evils" in order to save the life of the mother—this in accordance with Sharia which has a general principle of choosing the lesser of two evils.

Some Muslim countries do make exceptions in some cases for the sake of "compassion." This might include babies who are known to have certain genetic disorders. But generally, Islam is anti-abortion.

I could not help but see the similarity between Islam's approach to abortion and that of Roman Catholicism.



Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkish PM

In spite of the horrendous acts of individuals in both Islam and Roman Catholicism toward killing babies and illicit sex, among other things, both religions have openly stated policies condemning those practices. Both are more righteous than the non-Catholic “Christian” West which has succumbed to the anti-Christ baby-murdering death mills called “abortion clinics,” as well as to the ungodly legalization of sexual perversion and the rising tide of acceptance toward same-gender “marriages.”

Here’s something to ponder: might both Roman Catholicism and Islam join forces one day in an attempt to purge the world of these evils (among other reasons), thus forming a religio-political alliance which will usher in the last-days anti-Christ? According to Scripture there will be a last-days “man of sin” who will form an alliance with a powerful religious figure for a season, until the former turns on the latter.

Consider also that Roman Catholicism and Islam both have designs on Jerusalem—the geographic center of what Scripture reveals will be the final conflict before the Lord returns.

What does lie in store for us here in the West?❖

Boy sings “No Homos” in church service

A video of a young boy of about four-years-old at the Apostolic Truth Tabernacle in Greensburg, Indiana, was cheered by the congregation as he sang “The Bible is right, somebody’s wrong. Romans 1 and 27, ain’t no homos gonna make it to heaven.”

Before the boy finished the song, members of the congregation stood and cheered wildly. The church’s Facebook page has reportedly been hit with angry comments since the video went viral on May 30.

COMMENTARY

Some people may think this was cute, but it speaks volumes about how out of touch with the Lord so many Christians are. Since when do we rejoice even at the thought that any person or group of persons is lost? Jesus chastised James and John for asking if He would allow them to call down fire from Heaven to consume the Samaritans who did not receive Him. “You do not know what manner of spirit you are of,” He said, “because the Son of Man has not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”

Although it is incumbent upon believers in Jesus to hate all sin (including our own), we must not rejoice when sinners perish. Our hearts may be against the movements to entrench sexual perversions into the nation’s character, but we must never harbor ill toward individuals within those movements.

We can’t blame the child; he probably didn’t even know what he was saying. But his parents and the pastor(s) who allowed him to sing his little ditty should know better.

Is it any wonder the lost will not hear us when we try to bring the Gospel to them? They perceive the faith as hateful toward those outside.

Sadly, in many cases, that’s true.❖

Jesus’ crucifixion date April 3, 33?

A study by the *International Geology Review* suggests that the date of Jesus’ crucifixion may be possible to ascertain. The *Review* investigated an earthquake that is believed to have occurred on the same day as Jesus’ crucifixion, which they ascertain could be April 3, 33.

By studying three cores from the Ein Gedi Spa beach, geologist Jefferson Williams of Supersonic Geophysical, and colleagues Markus Schwab and Achim Brauer of the German Research Center for Geosciences, confirmed that two major earthquakes struck the area, one between 26 B.C. and A.D. 36. They believe this could be the one to which the Gospel of Matthew refers.

COMMENTARY

Here’s a bit of non-news. An earthquake struck an area some distance from Jerusalem within a 62-year time span, so this could possibly be the one mentioned in Matthew’s Gospel. Thus someone sets the year of the Lord’s crucifixion as possibly A.D. 33, and, of course, it must be Friday, April 3, because it is commonly believed that Jesus died on a Friday. This is circular reasoning at its best. And by scientists, of all people.

Well, this might have been the earthquake in question, but Jesus did not die on a Friday, nor did He rise on a Sunday—certainly not at sunrise on a Sunday. That is Roman Catholic myth.

Jesus died on the day of Passover, 14 Nisan. He prophesied that He would be in the tomb for three days and three nights. There are no Scriptures that say when He rose; they mention only when the women came to the tomb, and He had already risen.

The day after Passover was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread—a high Sabbath, one of two Sabbaths that week. The women bought the spices and prepared them the day after the high Sabbath, rested during the weekly Sabbath, and went to the tomb early the next day to find it empty.

Jesus was placed in the tomb prior to sundown on 14 Nisan, so He had to rise from the dead prior to sundown on 17 Nisan—three days and three nights later—not parts of three days, as is erroneously explained by die-hard mythologists called theologians of certain persuasions.

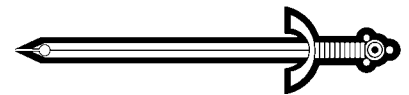
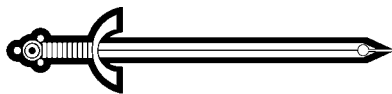
Jesus said “three days and three nights.” It is not ambiguous. A Friday death-Sunday resurrection would be impossible if He was speaking the truth.

In the Hebrew lunar calendar the days are reckoned from sundown-to-sundown, whereas Christians have based their theories on the Roman Catholic Gregorian Calendar in effect today.

Sundown of 17 Nisan was the closing of the weekly Sabbath, not the “Venerable Day of the Sun” adopted by Constantine and the Roman Church. “Sun-Day” would not begin for at least another six hours. If Jesus rose at sunrise on “Sun-Day” He would have been in the tomb for at least three days and four nights.

For an in-depth study of this truth, see our special report, *Facts and Fallacies of the Resurrection*.

You might be amazed.❖



Sword

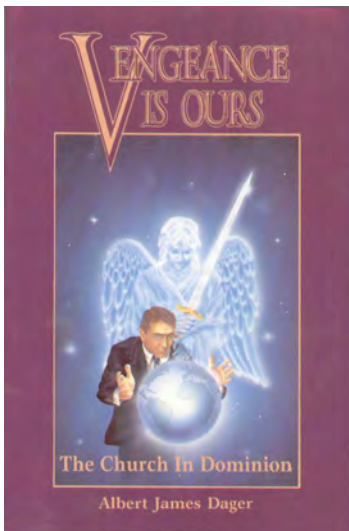
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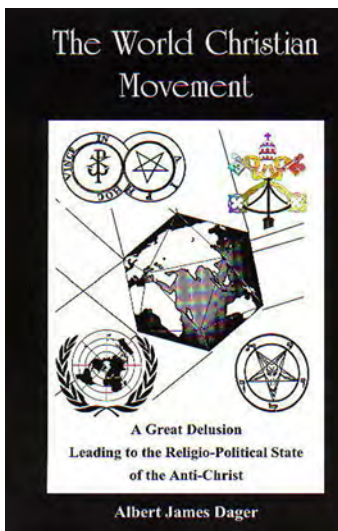
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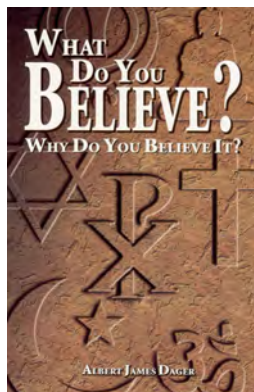
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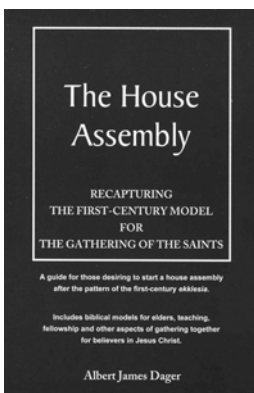
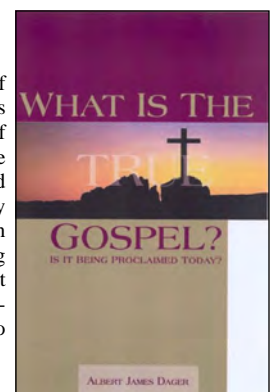


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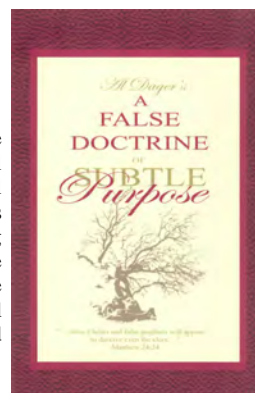


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ing of the Saints**

Albert James Dager - 221 pages

Many Christians are experiencing the inevitable results of religious institutionalism: denominational traditions; abusive pastors; false teachings; anecdotal sermons; favoritism and other unscriptural teachings and practices. This book is a guide for those desiring to start a house assembly after the pattern of the first-century *ekklesia*. Includes examples of the author's experiences in the house assembly, as well as biblical models for elders, teaching, fellowship and other aspects of gathering in love.

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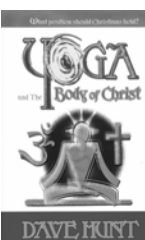


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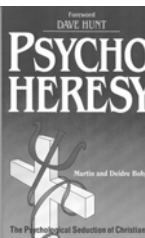


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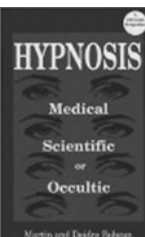


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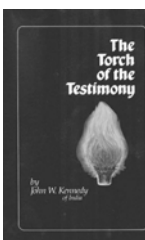


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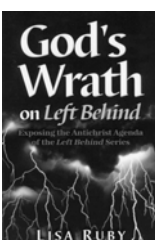


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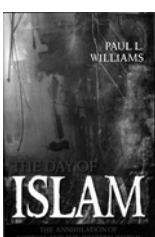


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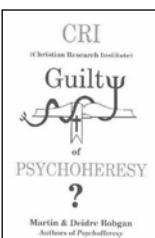


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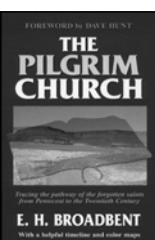


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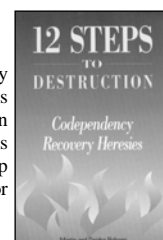
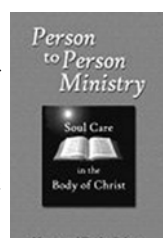
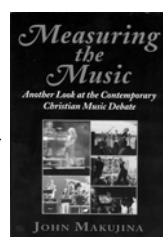
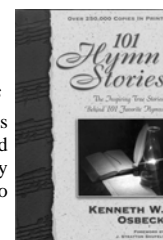
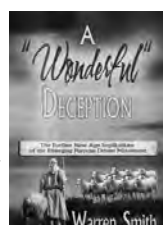
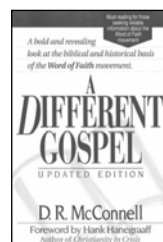


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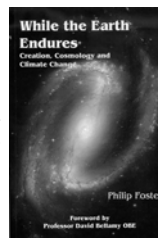


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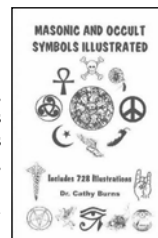


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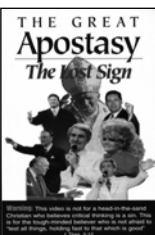
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In this column we share a lesson we enjoyed within one of our house assembly meetings. It has been written as a narrative, but contains the thoughts of those who shared together. There is no single teacher in our assembly. Therefore, there will be 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**

THE KINGDOM OF GOD ON EARTH

When Jesus came to Israel the central aspect of His teachings was the Kingdom of Heaven. Everything, including personal salvation, He linked to the Kingdom of Heaven. He never proclaimed the Gospel of salvation exclusively or apart from the Kingdom of Heaven. Before Jesus began His ministry, John the Baptist heralded His coming with these words:

“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near!” (Mt 3:2)

Later, Jesus made the same proclamation:

From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!” (Mt 4:17)

When He sent out the twelve apostles He charged them to proclaim the same message that He and John the Baptist had proclaimed:

Jesus sent these twelve forth and commanded them, saying, “do not go the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter into any city of the Samaritans. But rather, go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying, ‘The Kingdom of Heaven is near!’” (Mt 10:5-7)

Throughout His ministry Jesus focused entirely on the Kingdom of Heaven, relating how righteousness is the basis for entering into it. In the Beatitudes He said:

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of **righteousness**, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Mt 5:10)

In this same message He said, “I say to you, that unless your **righteousness** exceeds the **righteousness** of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Mt 5:20)

Righteousness is imputed through Christ. But living righteously is equated with doing the will of the Father:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in Heaven. 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 wickedness.’” (Mt 7:21-23)

Righteousness is also equated with humility:

At the same time the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?”

And Jesus called a little child to Himself, and set him in the midst of them, and said, “Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Therefore, whoever will humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Mt 18:1-4)

There is no mention of the Kingdom of Heaven in all the writings of the Hebrew prophets. The first the Israelites ever heard of the Kingdom of Heaven was when John the Baptist first spoke of it, and Jesus expounded on it. The only kingdom from God to which the prophets refer is the kingdom of Israel. But the kingdom of Israel is not the Kingdom of Heaven to which Jesus referred.

That’s not to say they never heard of the Kingdom of Heaven; we don’t know for sure. But it is not found anywhere in Scripture prior to the writing of the Gospels.

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN - THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Throughout the writings of the apostles there are two terms used interchangeably: “The Kingdom of Heaven” and “The Kingdom of God.” There is a popular teaching that the Kingdom of Heaven is not the same as the Kingdom of God. It states that the Kingdom of Heaven is an earthly kingdom and the Kingdom of God is a heavenly kingdom. The Kingdom of God encompasses the Kingdom of Heaven, but they are not one and the same.

Yet I believe the two terms are synonymous for a few reasons:

Matthew is the only Gospel writer who uses the term “Kingdom of Heaven.” All other Gospel writers use the term “Kingdom of God” exclusively, as does the apostle Paul. If there were a difference, why do all the other writers not mention the Kingdom of Heaven? Certainly it should be important enough to merit their attention. And Matthew also uses the term “Kingdom of God” on a few occasions, one of which equates the two:

Then Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly, I say to you that a rich man shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven with difficulty. And again, I say to you it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God.” (Mt 19:23-24)

There are a number of corresponding Scriptures in the synoptic Gospels where Matthew uses “the Kingdom of Heaven” and the others use “the Kingdom of God.” For one example read Mt 13:31-33; Mk 4:30-32; Lk 13:18-21. Matthew likens the

Kingdom of Heaven to a grain of mustard seed which grows to become a great tree, and to leaven which a woman hid in her flour until the whole lump was leavened. Luke relates the same two parables under the same circumstances, while Mark relates only the parable of the mustard seed under the same circumstances.

In response to their question why He spoke in parables, Mt 13:11 has Jesus telling His disciples that it is given to them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; Lk 8:10 has Jesus telling them it is given to them to know the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.

In Matthew 3:1-2 John the Baptist heralds the Kingdom of Heaven, while in Mark 1:14-15 he heralds the Kingdom of God.

The Kingdom of God/Heaven is both a spiritual and an earthly kingdom. All who are in Christ are in the Kingdom of God/Heaven even while we are on the earth. Yet the Kingdom is ruled from Heaven and includes the Heavenly realm:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. (Eph 1:3)

But God, who is rich in mercy for His great love wherein He loved us even when we were dead in sins, has made us alive together with Christ (by grace you are saved) and has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus so that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Eph 2:4-7)

This grace is given to me, who am less than the least of all saints, so that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God who created all things by Jesus Christ, with the intent that now to the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the called out, the manifold wisdom of God according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith in Him. (Eph 3:8-12)

So we are on the earth physically, but we are in the Kingdom of God spiritually.

The Kingdom of Christ

Scripture does reveal a purely earthly kingdom:

...giving thanks to the Father, who has made us able to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light, who has delivered us from the power of darkness, and has translated us into the **Kingdom of His dear Son** in whom we have redemption through His blood—the forgiveness of sins. (Col. 1:12-14)

For this you know: that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the **Kingdom of Christ** and of God. (Eph 5:5)

The Kingdom of Christ is the earthly Kingdom that will be fully manifested during the Millennium. When it says “the

Kingdom of Christ and of God” it is not speaking of the same Kingdom, but of two Kingdoms—the Kingdom of Christ, the present-to-millennial Kingdom, and the Kingdom of God, which is eternal. The Kingdom of Christ will one day give way to the Kingdom of God:

But now Christ has risen from the dead and become the first fruits of those who slept. For because death came by man, the resurrection of the dead also came by man. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.

Then will come the end when He will have delivered up the Kingdom to God, the Father, when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.

For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For He has put all things under His feet. But when He says all things are put under Him, it is clear that He who put all things under Him is excepted.

And when all things shall be subjected to Him, then the Son Himself shall also be subject to Him who put all things under Him so that God may be all-in-all. (1 Cor 15:20-28)

Presently the eternal Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Christ/His dear Son are operating concurrently and will do so until the end of the Millennium, after which the Lord Jesus will deliver the Kingdom to the Father.

It is in the Millennial Kingdom of Christ that the political kingdom of Israel will be realized, not only in the reign of Christ, but in the reign of David.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem to shouts of “Hosanna!” the people voiced their expectation of the return of David's kingdom:

And those who went ahead, and those who followed, cried out, saying, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!” (Mk 11:9-10)

The Lord did not command His disciples to silence the crowd or to correct them. He accepted their praises along with the blessing of the Davidic kingdom. Moreover, He must have known by the Holy Spirit that they would be doing and saying these things. This is why He had His disciples get the donkey for Him to ride. He knew He was going to be recognized as the Messiah who would bring again the kingdom to Israel.

Also, when His disciples asked Him if He would at that time restore the kingdom to Israel He did not correct them, but merely told them that it was not for them to know the time the Father has in His own power (Acts 1:6-7).

To summarize: The Kingdom of Christ is not the Kingdom of God, but the Kingdom of Christ is contained within the Kingdom of God and will continue to operate concurrently with the Kingdom of God until the close of the Millennial Age. The Kingdom of Christ is spiritual during this “Time for the Gentiles,” and it will be manifested physically during the Millennial Age.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

Because the Kingdom of God/Heaven is operative on the earth it is subject to earthly problems here.

“And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven is pressed upon, and the energetic grasp for it.” (Mt 11:12)

This does not mean that people are eagerly pressing to get into the Kingdom of Heaven, as some say. Show me anywhere that has ever taken place. People have to be persuaded to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; they have to be persuaded to live righteously in Christ in order to do so. I believe this means that aggressive people seek to take control within the Kingdom of Heaven. This is why Jesus warned of false teachers and wolves in sheep’s clothing. The evidence throughout the centuries points to ungodly men who have taken authority over God’s people.

This is also why, in His parables, Jesus spoke of good and evil existing together in the Kingdom of Heaven. As He explained the mysteries of the Kingdom He spoke in earthly terms, not heavenly terms. He did not relate the Kingdom to the eternal, spiritual realm as often as He did the present earthly realm. He said the Kingdom of God/Heaven is like:

- a man who sowed good seed but his enemy sowed weeds among the wheat (Mt 12:24-30);
- the unforgiving servant (Mt 18:23-35);
- the workers who complained about their wages (Mt 20:1-16);
- the invited guests to a prince’s wedding killing the king’s servants (Mt 22:2-14).

Jesus gave many other examples where good and evil operate side-by-side within the Kingdom of God/Heaven on earth. This explains what Jesus meant when He answered the Pharisees:

And when it was demanded of Him by the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, “The Kingdom of God does not come with observation. Neither will they say, ‘Look here!’ or, ‘Look there!’ For, look! The Kingdom of God is within you.” (Lk 17:20-21)

This has been used by preterists as a “proof text” to deny the reality of the Millennial Kingdom. But Jesus was speaking to them in present terms, not the future. Evil men reside within the Kingdom of God/Heaven, and in that sense the Kingdom of God is within all men for the present. While they are in the Kingdom, the Kingdom is in them, or in their midst. In truth, it will remain so until the end of the Millennial Age. But the time will come when evil is cast out of the Kingdom of God forever.

This does not mean that the Kingdom of God is limited to the earth; God’s Kingdom is spiritual as well as physical. But the Lord’s parables emphasize the earthly, material aspects of the Kingdom which, if heeded, will eventually result in the inheritance of the Kingdom of God on earth for those who are faithful servants of the Lord. Those who do not receive Christ or heed His words will not inherit the Kingdom of God on earth. They will remain in their graves until the White Throne Judgment spoken of in Revelation:

And I saw a great white throne, and Him who sat on it—from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God. And the books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life.

And the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead that were in them. And they were judged every man according to their works.

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rv 20:11-15)

The books other than the Book of Life are not named, but it may be surmised that these are the books of Death—the second death—that will be the lot of all who lived evil on the earth, whether or not they called themselves by the Lord’s name.

Accordingly, when we consider the Lord’s parables that speak of His servants who commit evil acts without repentance, we should understand that all men are God’s servants, whether or not they acknowledge that truth. He called the pagan kings Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus His servants, so all men ultimately serve His purposes even as they oppose Him.

However, there are those who consider themselves the Lord’s servants but who do not live accordingly. They live contrary to His Word; they do not overcome the evil in this life but love the world more than the Kingdom of God. They engage in evil acts and fight against the saints of God who try to bring correction to bear in the Body of Christ. These are nominal Christians who will not inherit the Millennial Kingdom on earth. They may or may not survive the White throne Judgment; only the Lord will decide, and we cannot be dogmatic about any person’s eternal fate.

We do know this: some people whose names are written in the Book of Life could have their names blotted out:

“He who overcomes, the same shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels.” (Rv 3:5)

If it were not possible to have one’s name blotted out of the Book of Life, the Lord would not have mentioned it.

This should be a sobering wake-up call to all of us. Will we be found faithful to the Lord? Will we enter into the Millennial Kingdom of Christ and be safe from the possibility of suffering the second death? If we don’t believe in that Kingdom, can we inherit it? We’ll leave those answers to the Lord.

We can see the wisdom of God in the first resurrection to rule and reign with Christ on earth during that time. It will be a reward for faithful service in this life; it will be (or should be) an incentive for His people to live faithfully; it will be a testimony to men and angels, both faithful and fallen, of His righteous and just dealing with all mankind. ❖



The decline of the Roman Empire created great upheaval throughout the known world. Historians offer various reasons for the eventual decline, but the consensus seems to be that there is no single cause. Rather, there occurred many contributing factors spanning centuries, from the initial invasions by barbarians in the third century to the deposing of the last Western Roman Emperor, Romulus Augustus, by the Germanic mercenary Odoacer in A.D. 476.

When historians speak of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire they are referring specifically to the Western Roman Empire. The Eastern Roman Empire continued for another thousand years until conquered by the Ottomans. The reason for the focus on the Western Roman Empire isn't so much because the Empire's influence remained strong as long as it lasted, but because it gave way to what would become in later centuries the Holy Roman Empire—a melding of a restored Western Roman Empire under German rule with the emerging power of the Roman Catholic Church.

The western region of the Roman Empire had already in the fourth century suffered the loss of its influence when Constantine moved the empire's seat of power from Rome to Byzantium in Greece, and renamed the latter Constantinople. The Eastern Roman Empire's seat of power was initially in Nicomedia, Turkey, but also moved to Constantinople.

With the decay of the Western Roman Empire which was fragmented into several smaller kingdoms, the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire flourished, becoming one of the most powerful forces in Europe despite numerous setbacks through military conflicts.

With the collapse of the Western Roman Empire came the end of what historians call Classical Antiquity—a long period of cultural progress achieved through a hybrid Greek-Roman civilization known as the Greco-Roman world which began in the latter part of the 8th century B.C. Thus began a cultural

decline into what is commonly called “The Middle Ages,” AKA “The Dark Ages.”

Early on during the Middle Ages, in the 6th century the Germanic barbarian invaders formed numerous kingdoms throughout the former Western Roman Empire, entrenching their pagan elements into the nominally Christian (albeit paganized “Christian”) environs. These Germanic kingdoms competed among themselves for the land, with the eventual dominance by the Franks who attained a sizeable portion of the disputed territories within what would become modern France and Germany.

The Eastern Roman Empire continued to expand under Justinian who overthrew the Vandals in North Africa. Justinian sought to regain Italy as well, with a plan to reestablish control over the territories of the defunct Western Roman Empire. With his death, most of what he had accomplished was lost.

The 6th Century

The 6th century saw monasticism grow in response to the secularization of the Roman church. In 529, Benedict of Nursia established the Benedictine Order of monks at Monte Cassino. His “Rule” for monks became the most influential among most monastics over the centuries.

Although anti-Christ was well-served by monasticism because of its ascetic traditions and removal from society, several monastic orders involved themselves in the copying and translating of the Scriptures. These were strictly for the hierarchical system which for centuries withheld them from the common people. But were it not for these copyists and translators the Scriptures might well have remained obscure and rare even today. As it turns out, the avariciousness of the Roman Catholic Church was used by God to preserve His Word in a way that could not have been accomplished by the rightful, autonomous assemblies scattered throughout the known world.

At the same time, the churches began to develop a pattern of intercession which interposed a hierarchy of saints to whom Christians began to pray in seeking favors from God. This hierarchy continues to the present day among Roman Catholics and many Orthodox churches.

At the top of the hierarchy is the Trinity with Christ as the most favorable because of His human as well as divine natures and His experiences in the flesh. Following Christ is Mary, believed to be a “perpetual virgin,” who, as a woman, is believed to be more sensitive and receptive to the needs of believers. Following upon Christ and Mary are various saints, many of whom are considered “patron saints” to whom prayers for specific petitions might be made. The root of this hierarchy of intercession is found in Roman pagan tradition that had numerous gods to whom the ancient Romans prayed for specific needs.

In this way, anti-Christ interposed dead men and women between the believer and the Father, contrary to Jesus’ words in John 16:23-26:

“And in that day you will ask nothing of Me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name, He will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name; ask, and you shall receive, so that your joy may be full.

“I have said these things to you in allegories, but the time comes when I will no longer speak to you in allegories, but I will speak to you plainly concerning the Father. In that day you shall ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will ask the Father for you, because the Father Himself loves you because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God.

In addition to looking to alleged “saints” for intercession, there developed among Christians the idea that touching or at least looking upon relics of the faith was somehow important. Close proximity to things holy would result in pilgrimages being made to sites where Christ or some perceived saint was believed to have walked.

This has effectively hindered greatly the relationship between believers and the Father, which relationship Jesus came to establish as essential to sanctification and obedience to His will.

In place of that personal relationship with the Father, the Roman Catholic Church turned to fleshly attempts to impose what it thought to be the will of God upon society. In 529, Emperor Justinian issued his Code of Civil Laws which reflected Christian moral values, and upon which our modern jurisprudence is based. This was the basis for the biblical ethic upon which Western Civilization flourished for the past fifteen hundred years.

While we in the West can appreciate the blessings that have come upon us as a result of that ethic’s influence, we must not make the mistake of thinking that a moral society in itself is glorifying to God, or that it can be imposed upon unregenerate (or even regenerate) people without resorting to ungodly means. This was proven throughout the Dark Ages as Roman

Catholicism sought to force conversion to Christianity through coercion and pressure, including torture. Such persecution is a major reason why the Middle Ages are also called the Dark Ages.

In 530, the first pope of Germanic ancestry, Boniface II, came to power as the church and state became more intermingled. As church buildings became larger and more lavish, Justinian built Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, which he dedicated to Christ as the “Holy Wisdom.”

The purity and simplicity of faith in Jesus Christ had long been discarded under the burgeoning papal-imperial coalition. Anti-Christ had succeeded in largely relegating Christianity to a system of legalisms and worldly-wise commerce. He also influenced the church hierarchy in its attempts to make converts from among the barbarians in Europe. The Roman Catholic Church began to accept much pagan tradition and spirituality as a means to placate its new converts. Sorcery, pagan religious holidays and traditions, and other pagan practices began to be melded into a hybrid Christian-pagan Christianity beyond that which was born in Rome.

Toward the end of the century, Pope Gregory the Great (c. 540-604) formulated the Roman Catholic Mass into much of what it is today.

On April 26, 570, there was born to a family of the Quraysh tribe in Mecca a man whose presence would greatly impact both the east and west. Born Abu al-Qasim Muhammad ibn ‘Abd Allah ibn ‘Abd al-Muttlib ibn Hashim, he would come to be known simply as Muhammad. Orphaned at an early age, Muhammad was brought up by his uncle Abu Talib, and became a merchant. He married at the age of 25 but became discontented with his life. According to Islamic tradition, at the age of 40 Muhammad retreated to a cave near Mecca during the month of Ramadan where he allegedly received his first revelation from God. Three years later he began preaching these revelations, proclaiming that “God is One,” and that the only way to God is complete surrender (*islam*) to him. He also proclaimed himself a prophet in the same manner of Moses and Jesus.

The 7th Century

The 7th century was largely dominated by the rise of Islam in the east, beginning with Muhammad’s migration from Mecca to Medina where he found acceptance as a “community activist,” for lack of a better term.

Because his proclamations were initially met with hostility by his fellow Meccans who maintained religious devotion to numerous pagan gods, Muhammad left Mecca with a small band of followers and moved to the city of Medina. There he rose to prominence and united the tribes under the Constitution of Medina which formulated an agreement to end the bitter fighting between two clans within Medina, the Aws and Khazraj. Drawing up certain rights and responsibilities for his followers (who came to be called “Muslims”) and other pagan communities of Medina, including Christians and Jews, he brought the community into unity.

Over a period of some eight years Muhammad developed a following that grew to number around 10,000. With them he embarked upon a course of conquest by raiding caravans,

murdering innocents, including women and children, and imposing Islam upon those he conquered. As Christians and Jews increasingly refused to accept Islam, Muhammad changed his original tone of benevolence toward them into a hateful pogrom to either eliminate or enslave any Jew or Christian with whom he came in contact.

Muhammad instituted the lunar-based Islamic calendar which governs Islamic countries. Some Islamic countries use the Islamic calendar for religious purposes but the Gregorian calendar for civil purposes in order to keep pace with the rest of the world's commerce and political interaction. The first year of the Islamic calendar traces to the year Muhammad allegedly made his supernatural journey from Mecca to Medina (A.D. 622), known as the Hijra. Every year since then has been designated by Islam as either H for Hijra or A.H. for the Latin *anno Hegirae* (in the year of the Hijra). Thus, Muslims typically call their calendar the Hijri calendar.¹

Interestingly, there is no history of Muhammad's existence prior to the emergence of the Qur'an which alleges to have been written by Muhammad. The earliest biography of Muhammad is Ibn Ishaq's *Life of God's Messenger* written ca. 767 (150 A.H.). The original no longer exists, but has been referred to by other Muslim writers, allegedly quoted verbatim at great length by Ibn Hisham and Al-Tabari. Another early source is the history of Muhammad's campaigns by al-Waqidi, but it, too, was written almost two hundred years after Muhammad was said to have died (A.D. 632).

Did Muhammad actually exist? Or was he the figment of a religious zealot's imagination? Until proven otherwise, we will assume that he did live, but that no history contemporary to his life exists. The alleged histories of his life relate some fantastic supernatural events which clearly never occurred. (I have a book that was given to me, which alleges that Muhammad never really existed, but I've not had time to read it as yet. Still, the idea that he may in reality be a fictional character is intriguing.)

In the 630s Arab Muslims wrested from Byzantium control the latter's southern provinces including Egypt and Syria. Throughout the rest of the 7th century, Islam under the Umayyad caliphs would besiege Byzantium, twice threatening to capture its capital Constantinople. By 640—the year of Muhammad's death—the Arabs had taken control of Mesopotamia and Islam's military expansion grew rapidly as the Umayyads, based in Egypt, conquered the remnant of the Persian Empire. The expanding Muslim empire soon engulfed Armenia, Cyprus and Iran and

began expeditions into North Africa where it would ultimately gain total control from Egypt to Mauritania.

Islam's attention turned toward Jerusalem in the first year A.H. (A.D. 622) when Muslims were instructed to face in the direction of the city when prostrating themselves in prayer. This is the year Muslim tradition says Muhammad made his night journey and ascension to Heaven. This alleged night journey became a vital doctrinal basis for much of Islam's beliefs and practices.² Over a year later the direction to face was changed to Mecca.

In 637 the Arab Rashidun Caliphs defeated the Byzantines at the Battle of Yarmouk and took control of Palestine, including Jerusalem, driving the Jews out of the city. The Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab allowed the Jews back into Jerusalem and signed a treaty promising to protect the Christians and their holy places. In 688 construction on the Dome of the Rock, the second most sacred shrine in Islam, was begun under the Umayyad caliph Abd al-Malik. It was built on the site where Muslim tradition says Muhammad ascended into heaven during his Night Journey, and where Jews believe Abraham prepared to sacrifice Isaac. It was completed in 691 and has been refurbished several times since then.

The Dome of the Rock fits perfectly the prophecy in Daniel which speaks of a coming king who will conquer Jerusalem:

"And the king shall do according to his will; and he will exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper until the indignation is accomplished, for that which is determined shall be done."

Neither shall he regard the god [*elohiym*: "gods"] of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god, for he shall magnify himself above all. But in his estate he will honor the god of forces, and he will honor a god whom his fathers did not know with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.

"He will do this in the most strongholds with a strange god whom he shall acknowledge and increase with glory. And he shall cause them to rule over many, and will divide the land for gain.

"And at the time of the end the king of the south [Egypt] will push at him, and the king of the north [Syria] shall come against him like a whirlwind—with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships—and he will enter into the countries, and will overflow and pass over.

¹ I believe Muhammad is the primary representative of the last-days "prince" or "king" among spiritual principalities whose final representative will be the coming anti-Christ according to Daniel 7. When Daniel speaks of princes and kings rising in the future he is not speaking merely of the men involved, but of spiritual entities that rule over the affairs of men. This final prince will "speak great words against the most High and will wear out the saints of the most High, and will think to change times and laws, and they will be given into his hand until a time, and times, and the dividing of time" (three-and-one-half years).

Under the prince of the final world power, Muhammad and Islam have sought to change the calendar and to impose Islamic law throughout the Holy Land, and have largely succeeded. His followers have built his tabernacle (the Dome of the Rock) on the holy mountain (Zion) between the Great Sea (the Mediterranean) and the inland sea (the Dead Sea) (Dan 11:45).

This is another reason to believe the last-days anti-Christ will be a Muslim who will negotiate a confederacy with the West under the papacy to share Jerusalem and drive the Jews into the wilderness for three-and-one-half years (Rv 12:14).

² The first part of the story—the *Isra* myth—begins with Muhammad praying in the Kaaba in Mecca. He claimed to have been visited by the archangel Jibril (Gabriel) who brought to him a steed named Buraq, the traditional heavenly steed of the prophets. Muhammad rides Buraq to the Masjid Al Aqsa—the "Farthest Mosque," believed by some Muslims to be the Al-Aqsa Mosque (where today sits the Dome of the Rock) in Jerusalem. There Muhammad leads other prophets, including Adam, Moses and Jesus in prayer. In the second part of the journey—the *Mi'raj* (Arabic for "ladder"), Buraq takes him to the heavens, where he tours the seven circles and speaks with the earlier prophets such as Abraham, Moses, John the Baptist and Jesus. Muhammad is then taken to Sidrat al-Muntaha—a holy tree in the seventh heaven that Gabriel is not allowed to pass. According to Islamic tradition, God instructs Muhammad that his followers (Muslims) must pray fifty times per day. Moses tells Muhammad that it is very difficult for the people and urges Muhammad to ask God to reduce the number to which God agrees to set at five times per day.

“He will also enter into the glorious land, and many countries will be overthrown, but these will escape out of his hand: Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon [present-day Jordan]. He will stretch forth his hand also upon the countries, and the land of Egypt shall not escape. But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt, and the Libyans and the Ethiopians shall be at his steps.

“But news out of the east and out of the north will trouble him. Therefore he will go forth with great fury to destroy, and to utterly slay many. And he will plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain [Zion]. Yet he shall come to his end, and no one shall help him.” (Da 11:36-45)

The “king” is the spiritual principality of this empire, embodied in the religion of Islam. The Ottoman Empire at one time advanced as far as France, and had a strong foothold in Spain until driven out. It was an empire characterized by great accomplishments in art, architecture, science and mathematics (primarily by using the genius of the captured nations). Islam’s holy sites are decorated with great splendor and wealth.

Today the Ottoman Empire has ceased to exist officially, but its Islamic influences remain. Jerusalem was taken by the Ottomans and remained in Muslim possession until the six-day war of 1967 when the modern state of Israel took control of the city. Today, one of Islam’s most holy sites—the “tabernacle” called the Dome of the Rock—sits upon the ancient temple mount (Zion), which is between the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea. Caliph Abd al-Malik did indeed “plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain.”

It is also believed that the Dome of the Rock sits directly over the ruins of the ancient Jewish temple, and specifically over the site of the Holy of Holies. Some dispute this, but there is no solid evidence for either position. It would seem, however, that the Lord purposely allowed this to happen in order to prevent the Jews from building a temple because there is no acceptable sacrifice for sin after Jesus offered the perfect sacrifice. He alone will build the next temple during the Millennium.

Over the centuries, anti-Christ’s most formidable weapon against true believers in Christ, as well as Jews, would combine the Roman Catholic Church in the West, and Islam in the East and in North Africa.

The 8th Century

Within one hundred years Islam would become a mighty empire in its own right, threatening conquest of Western Europe after having conquered the Middle East, North Africa, Southern Italy, and making inroads as far west as Spain. Except for the Catholic Church and its political and military strength, including the not-so-Holy Crusaders, Islam today would be in control of much of Western Europe. But its time for world dominance had not yet come, and the Lord used one ungodly world power against the other to keep it in check for the time being.

The quelling of the Muslim advance is attributable in large part to the famous Battle of Tours (Poitiers) in 732, in which the leader of the Franks, Charles Martel, defeated a large army of Moors led by ‘Abdul Rahman Al Ghafiqi, the governor of Cordoba, Spain. That epic battle established a balance of power between Western Europe, Islam and the Byzantine Empire. Christianity was preserved as the dominant religion in both Western and Eastern Europe.

The battle also laid the foundation for the Carolingian Empire in the early 9th century and established Frankish domination over Western Europe for the next one hundred years. Thus, anti-Christ’s design to stamp out even the corrupted version of faith in Christ was thwarted. And as imperfect as Christianity had become, there remained faithful brethren who survived both the corrupting of the faith and anti-Christ’s attempt to destroy it utterly.

The prince of Rome (represented by the pope) would not make way for the prince of Arabia (represented by Muhammad). For the remainder of time the two would co-exist as world powers which I believe will one day in the future unite into an uneasy alliance to form the domain of the anti-Christ.

There also arose in the late 8th century, conflict between east and west Europe when the Bulgarians waged campaigns against the Byzantines, ultimately overcoming Constantine VI’s forces at the Battle of Marcellae, forcing him to pay tribute to the Khans who ruled Bulgaria.

In the east, motivated by the prohibition of “graven images” in the Tanach, there arose a movement in Byzantium to destroy all religious icons in the churches. Byzantine Iconoclasm banned religious images, and instituted widespread destruction of images as well as persecution of those who venerated them. The “First Iconoclasm” lasted for 57 years from 730 to 787, then abated for a time until iconoclasm was revived in the “Second Iconoclasm” between 814 and 842.

A number of reasons for the rise of iconoclasm in Byzantium include the influence of Islamic culture which forbids the use of images. Iconoclasm also reflected social and class distinctions wherein the poorer non-Greek citizens of the eastern provinces of the Byzantine Empire who faced constant raids by Muslims saw the advantage in destroying their icons. The wealthier Greeks within the Balkan and Italian provinces, as well as in Constantinople, strongly opposed iconoclasm.

In the west the papacy maintained hierarchical dominance over the churches in both the east and the west, but had no political power until Pope Leo III crowned Charlemagne, king of the Franks, as Emperor of the Romans in A.D. 800 to begin the Carolingian dynasty, and to close out the century. Thus the Western Roman Empire was revived, though not to its former glory, to last for another thousand years.

The 9th Century

In 805 there began more conflicts between Islam and the Byzantines with successes and defeats on both sides, but with no total conquest for either.

The coronation of Charlemagne as the first Holy Roman emperor began the Carolingian empire named after him. He

died of pleurisy on January 28, 814, at age 71. He was embalmed and buried sitting upright on a gold-and-ivory throne, holding a gold scepter, shield and sword. His son Lothair would succeed him as Holy Roman Emperor as Louis I (the Pious), and would continue the Carolingian dynasty which would last until the death of Charles the Fat in 888.

Louis I divided the realm among his three sons from his first marriage: Lothair was named co-emperor and king of Italy; Pepin was made king of Aquitaine; Louis the German was made king of Bavaria. These were the precursors of modern Italy, France and Germany, and the struggle for power among Louis and his sons is filled with treachery and intrigue that laid the groundwork for centuries of antagonism among those three nations. The final division of the empire came with the Treaty of Verdun in 843. Lothair's kingdom would be further divided among his sons upon his death in 855.

In 823, Pope Paschal I began the papal tradition of handing the imperial sword to succeeding emperors of the Holy Roman Empire with the coronation of Louis I's son Lothair as co-emperor. This practice symbolized the temporal power granted by the Church to the state as the guardian of virtue and protectorate of the Church.

During his reign, Pope Paschal I instituted numerous reforms upon the Church and secured independence of the Roman see and the pope's sovereignty over Church states.

In 867, there began a schism within the Roman Church with an encyclical against Pope Nicholas I from Photius, the patriarch of Constantinople. The schism would grow to finally result in a split between east and west in 1054, which split remains today.

The 10th Century

Things continue much as before with anti-Christ fomenting wars among nations and schisms in the Roman Church, thus keeping true faith in Jesus Christ on a continual path of persecution from various factions at odds with one another: Islam; the Roman Catholic Church; barbarian invaders.

In 904, Pope Christophorus was deposed and strangled to death on orders from a cleric who succeeded him with the support of Alberic I of Spoleto. The cleric was consecrated on January 29 as Sergius III, who also had Christophorus's predecessor Leo V assassinated. Sergius III is rumored to have fathered a son by Marozia, the teenaged daughter of the papal dictator Theophylactus. This can be only a "rumor" because priestly celibacy had been imposed upon the church's clergy since the fourth century.

So much for the Roman Church's claim that the popes are chosen by the Holy Spirit as successors to Peter, the alleged first "pope" of the Roman Catholic Church.

Islam continued its incursion into the West and solidified its hold on Jerusalem.

The 11th Century

Although the Islamic rulers were at times benevolent, and at times harsh, Christians and Jews managed to survive in Palestine. But as time wore on the Roman Church began to show interest in taking back control of Jerusalem, partly because of the rising persecution of Christians pilgriming to the church's holy sites.

In 1009, the church's interest increased when the Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah ordered the destruction of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, deemed holy to Catholics because it was constructed on the site where the church believed Christ was buried and rose again. Because the Muslims realized that to antagonize Christians was seriously hampering its trade with pilgrims, the church was rebuilt, and the persecution of pilgrims abated, eventually to stop. But the church had already begun to react to the violence against Christians and was garnering support for Crusades that would spread across the Christian world.

The groundwork for the Crusades had been laid earlier in the Middle Ages when in 711 the Muslim commander Tariq ibn Ziyad began his invasion of Gaul. Turkish Muslim attacks further weakened the Byzantine Empire. As Islam continued to spread throughout the Holy Roman Empire the Catholic Church became convinced it had to do something to stop its advance.

In 1063, Pope Alexander II blessed Iberian Christians in their wars against the Muslims, authorizing the use of a papal standard. He also granted indulgences to those killed in battle. In 1074, Byzantine Emperor Michael VII requested aid from Pope Gregory VII. Eventually Pope Gregory VII's successor Pope Urban II blessed Christian armies fighting to reclaim the lands lost to the Muslim invaders.

Crusaders were less soldiers of the empire than soldiers for the church. This was due in part to the Investiture Controversy which pitted the papacy against the nobles of the Holy Roman Empire for authority in granting appointments to ecclesiastical offices. This conflict originated around 1075 between Pope Gregory VII and Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV. In 1075, Pope Gregory VII issued a series of canons in which he asserted that secular law resides solely under the pope's authority because the Roman Catholic Church, being founded by God, is the sole universal power. Henry IV rebelled against Gregory's dictum by withdrawing imperial support of Gregory and calling for the election of a new pope. Gregory reacted by excommunicating Henry and deposing him as German king.

Eventually the pope won because of the German princes and aristocracy who had been in rebellion since 1075. Needing to muster strength against the rebellion, Henry IV recanted and apologized in person to the pope. The intrigue that followed involved several kings and popes, with the eventual succumbing of imperial power to the papacy which held sway over the populous of the empire through fear and spiritual sanctions.

Anti-Christ succeeded in placing secular power under the papacy which would last until the Reformation. The power of the sword in the hands of the pope would be used to terrorize both non-believers and those alleged by the papacy to be "heretics."❖

NEXT: THE CLOSING CENTURIES OF THE DARK AGES



THE WYCLIFFE ARABIC BIBLE

(Continued from page 3)

consistent with the World-Christian Movement. The USCWM, located in Pasadena, California, was founded in 1976 by Ralph and Roberta Winter, ostensibly to “champion the cause of the ‘unreached peoples.’” As noble as this sounds, USCWM has engaged in less-than-biblical approaches to missions. Its *Perspectives* course, utilized by churches and missions organizations around the globe, is an eclectic mix of biblical truth and unbiblical reasoning, much of which revolves around a social gospel that, by some of its own accounts, is essential to the Gospel of salvation. In other words, the Gospel of salvation through Jesus Christ is ineffectual without social and political involvement. The USCWM also stresses that the conversion of a tribal leader to Christ is all that is necessary to count the entire tribe as being converted. Additionally, Christ can be found in some form or another through all the world’s religions, so it isn’t necessary for converts to leave those religions. They can worship Jesus within their religion. (An exposé of USCWM can be found in my book, *The World Christian Movement: A Great Delusion Leading to the Religio-Political State of the Anti-Christ*, 2001, Sword Publishers.)

Unless one understands the World-Christian Movement, one cannot understand fully why Wycliffe would embark on this approach to its Arabic Bible (Muslims can “worship” Jesus within Islam’s understanding of Him), or the impetus behind or nature of the neo-evangelical approach to missions. The objective is the transformation of society; the proclaiming of the Gospel (or what loosely resembles the Gospel) is merely a tool to achieve that transformation. It isn’t as important to convert individuals as it is to transform people groups and nations so that the World-Christian Movement’s concept of righteousness prevails in their societies. In order to achieve the transformation of society it is necessary to build bridges of understanding. This may often require setting aside the literal truth of Scripture for a more pragmatic approach in order to gain the confidence of those within the society targeted for transformation.

Thus, USCWM’s approach to the Gospel reveals a liberal mind-set that allows for the perversion of Scripture in order to achieve the dominionist agenda of converting the world to Christ—this for political and social advantage on the part of the dominionists who hope to rule the world with a rod of iron without Jesus present on the earth. (See *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion*, Sword Publishers.)

As far as Wycliffe and SIL’s appeal to WEA for consideration of substituting unbiblical words for the “Father” and “Son,” the WEA itself is corrupted by the World-Christian Movement. The stated objective of its affiliated European Evangelical Alliance (EEA) is the transformation of society:

Whatever its Christian history, Europe is now, far more secular, especially in the political elites of some nations. Increasingly, Christians find ourselves out of step with the mainstream beliefs, values and behavioural norms of our post-Christian societies. God calls us to be actively involved in these societies, **working for their transformation....**

A very important consideration in making our views known is how to substantiate them. If we use Bible verses or dogmatic arguments, we will lose the credit we gained with our introduction. The arguments we use should be credible for anyone, whatever worldview he or she may have. We don’t need to hide our convictions, but we will not convince others with arguments built upon a belief that they do not share. So we should – in the tradition of Christian apologetics – prove the Christian views to be the best for everyone, not “because God says so”, but because everyone will discover that God’s solutions are the best for all.⁴ (Emphasis ours)

What the authors are saying is that when everyone discovers that God’s solutions are the best for all, they will acquiesce to Christians in their midst to guide the transformation of their society. This is the goal of Christian Reconstruction, a neo-evangelical approach to dominion theology. (For an in-depth analysis of Christian Reconstruction, see our book, *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion*, 1990, Sword Publishers).

The EEA also suggests using the Alpha Course:

There are lessons we can learn from The Alpha Course, which is both an excellent evangelistic tool and a great model of communication. Everything about it is designed to **build communication bridges** with non-believers. The course allows for relaxed, nonthreatening discussion and questioning, the talks refer to relevant stories and do not presume any previous understanding.⁵ (Emphasis ours)

The WEA references a National Association of Evangelicals position paper on civic responsibility for evangelicals:

As Christian citizens, we believe it is our calling to help government live up to its divine mandate to render justice (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17). From the teachings of the Bible and our experience of salvation, we Christians bring a unique vision to our participation in the political order and a conviction that changed people and **transformed communities are possible....**

Thus **Christian civic engagement must seek to transform both individuals and institutions.** While individuals transformed by the gospel change surrounding society, social institutions also shape individuals. While good laws encourage good behavior, bad laws and systems foster destructive action. Lasting social change

⁴ “COMMUNICATING OUR CHRISTIAN VIEWS,” Kris Vleugels and EEA’s Public Authorisation Team, <http://worlddea.org/pdf/EEA-How-to-Communicate-Our-Views-KV-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ Ibid.

requires both personal conversion and institutional renewal and reform.⁶ (Emphasis ours)

The institutions targeted by the World-Christian Movement are the seven “mountains” or “spheres” of society—family, religion, government, the media, arts and entertainment, education and business. The idea is to transform these aspects of human society globally in order to bring about a more just order.

Not all involved in the World-Christian Movement believe in dominion theology to its fullest extent—that the “Church” will rule the nations without the Lord present. Many believe that only His return will bring full dominion. These do not realize that the original motivators of the transformation process are Christian Reconstructionists who do hold that aberrant theology. To Christian Reconstructionists it doesn’t matter if all involved in their activism understand or even agree with them; they are using them in the hope of realizing the fruition of their quest for dominion.

There are also those who may not agree with the ultimate end of Christian Reconstruction, but who are ignoring it because they honestly believe that the transformation of society is integral to the Gospel.

The influence of USCWM’s Rick Brown upon SIL’s translations, coupled with SIL’s affiliation to Wycliffe, is a solid link to the World-Christian Movement. Wycliffe also lists among its Ministry Partnerships, Campus Crusade for Christ, Youth With a Mission (YWAM), and Oakcliff Bible Fellowship pastored by Tony Evans, popular speaker for Promise Keepers.

Campus Crusade for Christ and YWAM are two organizations involved in C. Peter Wagner’s spiritual warfare strategy to transform society. One of Tony Evan’s outreaches is The Urban Alternative (TUA), “dedicated to **transforming individuals, families, churches and communities** through the sound teaching of the word of God.” (Emphasis ours)

At TUA, we believe that when we function as we were designed, there is a divine power that changes everything. It renews and restores ... because it is the life of Christ within our own (Gal. 2:20). As we align ourselves under Him, there is an alignment that happens from deep within – where He brings about full restoration. He turns chaos into calm, giving us the freedom to hope again, breathe again and dream again.

In His presence, we discover a power that permeates with peace. It is an atmosphere that revives and makes whole. As it impacts us, it impacts others – **transforming every sphere of life** in which we live.

We call it His Kingdom agenda ... where through Him, we are touching heaven and changing earth.⁷ (Emphasis ours)

Again, we must be careful not to paint all Wycliffe associates or workers with the World-Christian Movement. The vast

majority are dedicated to bringing the Gospel to people groups in those groups’ languages. The histories of both Wycliffe and SIL have displayed dedicated service from top to bottom. This is why many believers are so distressed about their decision to eliminate the Father-Son references in their proposed Arabic Bibles. By giving the World Evangelical Alliance the decision of whether or not to proceed with those translations, Wycliffe and SIL are essentially surrendering to the World-Christian Movement. It would be surprising if WEA did not confirm the approach to eliminate the Father-Son references.

William Townsend would be outraged to witness what his organizations have done here. Why is it necessary to seek input from a panel “representing a broad cross-section of the global Church”? And why is it necessary for WEA to take the better part of a year to come to any conclusion? Any novice to the faith should be able to recognize that to omit the Father-Son relationship destroys the essence of the Gospel. Jesus came to reveal the Father to us (Lk 10:22). Throughout His ministry He refers to God as His Father.

It is evident that such a course of action is either Wycliffe/SIL’s attempt to put off their detractors, or that the leaders of Wycliffe/SIL are so immature in the faith they should not even be in the business any longer. The third possibility is too onerous: they are not true believers and have usurped their positions in order to pervert the Scriptures, using their Arabic translations as the foundation for a new course away from the purity of the Gospel in favor of a liberal theology which puts social action and global peace above the Word of God.

As far as the “Father-Son” controversy is concerned, where is the controversy? This is a made-up “controversy.” The truth is not controversial; only lies are controversial, and every true believer in Christ must controvert the lie. It is the liar who deems the truth controversial.

What about the following Scriptures?

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son so that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who has sent Him. (Jn 5:22-23)

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater, for this is the witness of God that He has testified of his Son.

He who believes on the Son of God has the witness in himself; He who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he does not believe the record that God gave of his Son.

And this is the record: that God has given eternal life to us, and this life is in His Son.

He who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

I have written these things to you who believe on the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 Jn 5:9-13)

⁶ National Association of Evangelicals, “For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility,”

http://www.worldevangelicals.org/resources/rfiles/res3_318_link_1327803460.pdf

⁷ “About The Urban Alternative,” http://www.tonyevans.org/site/c.felKLOO.pGIF/b.6478425/k.E0BB/About_TUA.htm

It's one thing for Muslims to make God a liar; how much more culpable are Christians who call God a liar by pandering to Muslim theology?

This "controversy" is a case of utilizing the dialectic approach to Bible translation. We have the truth, but let's dialogue about other approaches to the truth so we can come to a consensus somewhere between the truth and the lie. The dialectic process is Satan's method expertly utilized by leftists, from atheistic communists to liberals in the churches, as well as by Muslims in their attempts to disarm believers in Christ.

And what about believers in Christ? We are also called sons of God, as are the angels in Heaven, both faithful and fallen. As a good brother in Christ has pointed out, other than Jesus, the sons of God in Scripture are direct creations by God. Adam was the son of God by creation (Luke 3:38), and we are all sons of Adam. In the spiritual sense we become sons of God only when we have been individually and directly born again, (Eph 2:10; John 1:12; 1 John 3:1-2). So God has many sons (Gen 6:14; Job 1:6,2:1, 38:7; Luke 3:38 and now us). Jesus, however, is the unique son (Gk, *monogenes*, usually translated "only-begotten" but meaning one of a kind [see D.A. Carson, *Exegetical Fallacies*, page 30]). In Heb 11:17, Isaac is called Abraham's *monogenes*. Abraham had other sons, but Isaac was the unique, one-of-a kind son.

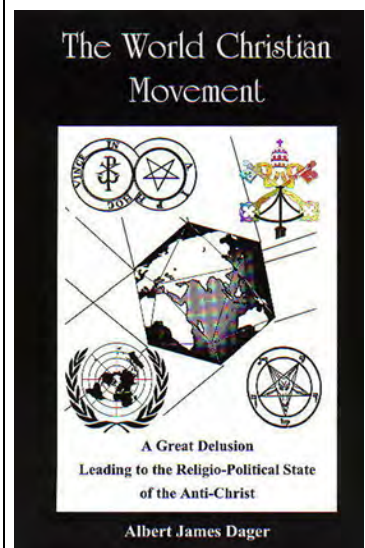
The term "son" is valid in all the above cases. So will these perversions of translations call us "messiahs"? Where does it end?

The first thing I thought of when reading the reasons for this vile approach to Scripture is, "If they think they cannot use the familial terms for Father and Son, at the least haven't they heard of footnotes?" I was pleased to find that this is what Biblical Missiology appeals to for any possibility of misunderstanding.

Yet why be afraid of misunderstanding in the first place? Is not the Gospel supposed to be an offense to those who refuse truth? Have these people become so enamored of their political and social agendas that they have forgotten that Jesus is a stumbling stone and a rock of offense?

Would it not be better to risk some misunderstanding in order to be true to God's Word? Or have these people forgotten that understanding comes through the Holy Spirit? God is certainly capable of imparting understanding to the pure heart seeking truth. All others will find fault no matter how far translators may go in attempting to placate them. Better to die for the truth than to make points with a lie. ❖

The first and only book written on the subject, *The World Christian Movement* offers in-depth insight into the course of many of today's popular neo-evangelical and church-missions movements which seek to transform society while compromising the truth of Scripture. The perfect companion to the ground-breaking book on Dominion Theology, *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion*, both from Sword Publishers. www.swordpublishers.com



Rabbi calls gentiles murderers, thieves, brainless

Jewish World reports that Rabbi Aharon Yehuda Leib Shteinman, leader of the Lithuanian branch of ultraorthodox Jewry calls gentiles "murderers, thieves, brainless people." It became clear he was speaking of all non-Jews when he added, "Non-Jews have no connection to Torah. The nations have nothing, no confidence (read, 'faith') and no good principles."

Shteinman's comments were in the context of stressing the need for Jewish children to study the Torah.

"This is what we need to aspire to, to see all the children, all our generations, make sure the sons study Torah," he said. "Anyone and everyone who wants to see 'nachas' (joy) from their children needs to make sure they study Torah. If not Torah they will be illiterates and no joy will come of them. Even if he has money, is that the goal (in life)? Can you take money to the grave with you? There is no such thing. What do you have in the grave?"

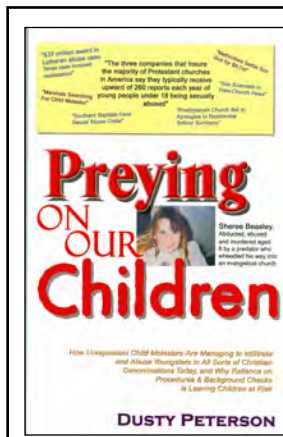
In response to Shteinman's comments, Rabbi Uri Regev, Chairman of Hiddush (for Religious Freedom and Equality), expressed outrage. "It is incredible and outrageous to hear these hate-filled statements against almost the entire human race. Rabbi Shteinman once again exposes the fact that his fable of moderateness was at best groundless, and at worst an act of deceit."

COMMENTARY

I understand Shteinman's passion for Torah—the first five books of the Bible, written by Moses; we should have the same passion for all of God's Word, but without the vitriol. One must wonder how much "nachas" the rabbi experiences. ❖

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Q & A

Dear Al,

Thank you for responding to my letter last month and providing a fuller explanation of your views. It was refreshing to see you don't allow dogma to trump your Christian love like so many others I've talk to about the doctrine of the Trinity. I hope I'm not being too pushy by writing again, but I felt it was worth one more shot.

My surprise over your position was based solely on your research (regardless of any former statements of your belief) which showed the Roman conclave that pronounced Jesus to be a Deity at Nicea to be noticeably lacking in the anointing of god. That it was simply a carnal gathering of carnal—even ungodly—men.

However, what really prompted me to write back was your statement: "If Jesus were really a man, or any other created being, he would not qualify to die as the sacrifice for sins." Where in the Bible does it say that? A sacrifice is sufficient when God says it is, not because its value equals the offense. An animal was an acceptable sacrifice under the Old Covenant to cover the sins of all Israel when offered with faith and true repentance. Surely the voluntary action of a sinless man deemed "the son of God" who was ordained by God to become a worthy sacrificial substitute for His chosen ones is sufficient for New Covenant Israel.

I believe that all the teaching of the Church Fathers, influenced as they were by Greek philosophy, must be tossed out. According to Matthew 7:18, Jesus said it was *impossible* to get good fruit from a bad tree. Can any good thing come from Rome—or Greek philosophy? Much less a central doctrinal belief? What is not clearly taught in the Bible cannot be taught by man's reason later on. And the Trinity is not taught in there.

When you say "the Spirit and the Word issue forth from the Father" I agree the Bible teaches that. But when you make them persons in themselves, especially divine persons, you leave the Bible and have entered the world of philosophic speculation.

To show you how illogical it is to say Jesus is the "logos," let me insert his name into the text in John 1:1:

"In the beginning was Jesus. And Jesus was with God (the Father), and Jesus was God (the Father)."

How can Jesus be with Father God and also be the Father at the same time? But it really gets weird when you put it into Trinitarian terms:

"In the beginning was the second person of the Trinity, and the second person was with the first person of the Trinity, and the first person was the second person."

It makes no sense, does it? God's word, whether written or spoken, is His seed which goes forth and creates life. Just as He spoke the world into existence in Genesis 1, he spoke Jesus into existence in Matthew 1. That doesn't make Jesus "the Word"—or another deity. Rather he is the manifestation of God's word in the "likeness of man." He was God's second Adam. The triune God explanation, like the Catholic teaching on transubstantiation, is just more Greek mumbo-jumbo.

As for the holy spirit, if "he is a divine person independent of the Father and son, what is his name? Jesus has a name. The Father has a name (Yahweh). But I can find no name for God's spirit other

than that. In Scripture the holy spirit is pictured as the breath of God, or wind, or water, or power—but I never see it as an independent person. I believe it is the influence and presence of God in the earth that equips the saints for service. It is Yahweh's spirit—which, like His word, He sends out to do whatever He wants it to do. Consider that Paul never mentions the spirit in any of his epistle salutations. It is almost always "Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Messiah." What's more, nobody in the Bible, including Jesus, ever prayed to "him" in the Scriptures. And if "he" was part of the Godhead, why is "he" not now seated on a throne next to the Father and Jesus?

And here is something else, Al. Since the main message the Hebrews gave to the world was that God was one Being, where is the debate in the NT concerning the explosive revelation that He is really three beings in one? You would expect this new doctrine, if it were truly being preached by the apostles to have created an uproar in Israel. The only major issues I see being debated in Scripture concerns the inclusion of the gentiles and the place of the Law in the life of a new covenant believer.

I see also you have your own understanding of the Godhead that is different from the traditional Trinitarian formula (and even the Oneness doctrine) in that you see Jesus as subordinate to the Father. The official Church doctrine states he is "co-equal, co-eternal, and consubstantial" with the Father. But then the real issue is his deity.

Thank you for hearing my side, Al. Hopefully I've raised enough irritating inconsistencies in your position to cause you to dig deeper.

Blessings,

B.H., Harleysville, PA

* * *

Dear B.H,

You are certainly correct that the Roman councils were carnal gatherings of carnal—even ungodly—men. They were the foundation for a great apostasy known as Roman Catholicism. However, the earlier councils were attended by men who disputed for truth as well as for error. The second-century "bishops," though tainted by the Nicolaitan spirit, were still close enough to the apostles to understand certain truths. The problem is, as I stated in our current issue of *Media Spotlight*, that one of the greatest errors was trying to codify truth and make it a "doctrine" that must be believed upon penalty of excommunication and worse. While codifying much truth, they also codified much error.

I believe you misquoted me. I didn't say, "If Jesus were really a man...." I said, "If Jesus were **merely** a man...." There is a significant difference. Jesus is a man in whom dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

Of course animals were used to atone for the sins of the Israelites until Christ came, but when He came and died as the perfect sacrifice, animal sacrifices were no longer acceptable to YHWH. The only sacrifice acceptable to Him is that of His only-begotten Son. Nor, as I said, could any mere man qualify to die as the sacrifice for sins. The operative words I used are "**the** sacrifice," as opposed to "**a** sacrifice." "**The** sacrifice" specifies a single sacrifice worthy of full acceptance by God. The animal sacrifices were "**a** sacrifice" that could not fully take away the penalty for sin. This would also apply to any human sacrifice.

To some extent I agree with your position about throwing out the teachings of the "Church Fathers." But although they were not necessarily wrong in all they taught, I do not go to them for

instruction; I go to the Scriptures alone. And the Scriptures clearly teach that Jesus is divine—that is, of the same nature and substance as the Father—yet distinct in personality. As I explained in my previous letter, your begotten son is of the same nature and essence as you: human. But your son is not you, and he is subservient to you. However, your love for your son would cause you to require that all who are subject to you would honor your son to the same degree they are required to honor you.

Because Jesus is divine, He is *Theos*—God in human flesh. And this is where I take exception with your reasoning. Your substitution of the words “Jesus” and “second person of the Trinity” for the word Greek word *logos* may seem logical. But that is not where I take exception. Rather, it is with substituting the word “God” (*Theos*) with “Father.” Nowhere do I equate Jesus with the Father, nor does the apostle John. The original language in which John wrote was Greek; there is no history or evidence of the letters of the apostles being written in any other language, including Hebrew. This is because Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Roman world, and the letters were written to the Gentiles as well as to Greek-speaking Hebrews. But I digress.

The Greek states: *en arche ane ho logos kai ho logos en pros ho Theos kai Theos ane ho logos*: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with the God, and God was the Word.”

The word *Theos* is never translated “Father.” It is always translated “God.” So yes, according to John 1:1 we could say, “Jesus was God,” but we could not say, “Jesus was the Father.” And thus, it is not illogical to say, “Jesus is the *logos*.” Who else is the *logos*? John 1:14 makes it clear: “And the Word (*logos*) was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory—the glory of the only-begotten of the Father (*Pater*), full of grace and truth.” Jesus has the same glory as the Father.

Jesus is the Word of God (*ho logos he Theos*) who was made flesh (a man). There are many Scriptures that confirm the deity of Jesus, but allow me to offer just a couple:

YHWH spoke through Isaiah, “I will do it for My own sake—even for My own sake—for how should my name be polluted? And I will not give My glory to another” (Isaiah 48:11). YHWH does not share His glory with any created being or with idols, correct?

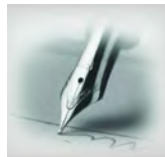
Now hear the prayer of Jesus: “I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work that You gave Me to do. And now, O Father, You glorify Me with Your own self with **the glory that I had with You before the world was.**” (John 17:4-5)

When Thomas knelt before Jesus and said, “My Lord and my God!” Jesus did not tell him to rise because Jesus is merely a man (as angels and prophets have done). He received Thomas’s worship as Thomas’s God.

So you see, Brian, Jesus as the *Logos ho Theos* existed with the Father from the beginning. Yes, the man Jesus was born at a given time in history. But His person—that of the *Logos ho Theos*—entered into the body that was given the name Immanuel: “God with us.”

As far as the Holy Spirit is concerned, I am planning a study on that from a strictly biblical perspective, without resorting to the Trinitarian theology. But for now, please consider how an improper understanding of the Lord’s nature may have severe consequences in terms of one’s sanctification and justification. We must be sure that we are not believing in “another Jesus.”

In His love,
Al



FEEDBACK

Media Spotlight,

Thank you for your newsletter. Living in prison I pass it on to the next brother as well, so it’s getting well read.

I always remember last year when I’d just finished reading the book *Heaven is for Real*. I loved it. Even passed it to some of the other believers. And yes, then I received your newsletter in regard to the meaning of the book. Not that you put the book down a great deal. You just pointed out some good facts.

Well, I passed that newsletter on to the other guys I shared the book with, and I believe we all learned from you to be mindful of what we read. Not everything with a Christian stamp on it is from God.

I’ll never forget that, thank you.

Many other topics you have schooled me on in your writings, and I’m grateful for them. I shared that one because prison is a feeding ground for false doctrine, false teaching, and then some. A lot of guys get here and are scared, lonely and looking for something to run to. And they get bombarded with garbage literature from Christian Science, Mormonism, Jehovah’s Witnesses, etc., and those people and their trash are everywhere in here. So instead of God’s Word they get that, sadly enough. That’s when I share with them about how important it is to know what you are reading.

Once again, thank you for everything you do. It is a blessing to read cold, hard Bible-based truth in today’s world. You speak truth—even if it steps on toes. I’d say that’s living 2 Tim. 2:15.

God bless you and your ministry.

Your brother in Christ,

J.G., San Luis, Obispo, CA

* * *

Dear brothers and sisters,

God bless you for your ministry which is desperately needed everywhere, but especially in the prison system. It seems the administration is attempting to blur the lines between all religions. Our chapels are now called interfaith, and when we walk out to our recreation yard we have Muslims, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Apostolics, Protestants. There is a handful of house of Yahweh and some Messianic Jews. This is all within 100 square yards.

So you can imagine how much work we have to do to be “the light of the world” in this place. Because most of these religions and cults are all for unity except the J.W.’s. This is across the board outside the Protestant faith, so we have to reach out to these groups.

And the fight to keep the administration out of the church, it’s almost as if the one world religion has been established. They just haven’t all moved into one chapel or given themselves one name. I’m planning a class on new religions and cults, so the books I’m requesting would really help. We could give them to those trapped in these false ways who would read them.

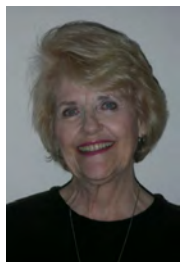
I believe God is doing something wonderful here, and this could make a wonderful impact on those seeking truth.

Would a donation of postage stamps be of any help to the ministry? This is something we can pass the hat for.

God bless you all as you fight the good fight.

Love in Christ,

S.M., Soledad, CA



Jean's Turn

Knitted Together In Prayer

By Jean Dager

**"For where two or three are gathered together
in My name, there I am in the midst of them."**

Matthew 18:20

If you're invited to attend a prayer meeting and your automatic response is to think to yourself, "Quick! How can I get out of this gracefully?" Perhaps you think this is going to be way too dull or that you're simply uncomfortable audibly expressing your prayers with others. Maybe you should reconsider – it just could be a blessing in disguise.

Al and I have found this to be true. We've been attending a prayer meeting in our neighborhood with a small group of brethren. Caring deeply for these brethren, we look forward to our time together each week. Sharing needs and praying together not only draws us closer to the Lord, but to each other. We cherish this closeness. Charles Finney once said: "Nothing tends more to cement the hearts of Christians than praying together. Never do they love one another so well as when they witness the outpouring of each other's hearts in prayer."

Not everyone can be a missionary. But everyone can pray.

"These all (disciples) continued with one accord in prayer and supplication with the women and Mary, mother of Jesus, and with His brethren." (Acts 1:14)

God commands us to love one another (1 Peter 1:22). Prayer is one way of showing obedience to this command. Some for whom we pray may not even be saved, but naturally, it's our heart desire that the Lord will awaken them so that they, too, might have a relationship with our loving Lord. Prayers stand in the gap for these lost ones. Group prayer is a perfect setting for becoming aware of suffering people both inside and outside the Body of Christ who require a touch from the Lord.

We are encouraged by one another as past experiences of the Lord's intervention in lives are shared. Listening closely to the soft inner voice of the Holy Spirit, we'll gently hear His prompting to persevere in prayer. My belief is that fervent prayer is a sweet fragrance to the Lord. James 5:16 says, "...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much."

Over the centuries, brethren all over the world have witnessed prayer after prayer being answered—some that seemed impossible at the time but not to our Almighty God! Prayers do have an impact on lives. Through our own experiences, He has proven that anything is possible in the Lord. God is faithful in answering prayers even in times of fear and unbelief.

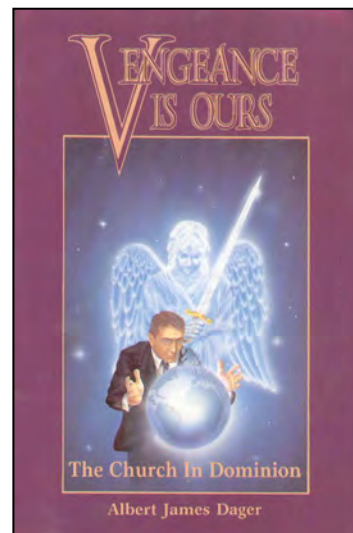
"And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything ACCORDING TO HIS WILL, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desire of Him." (1 John 5:14-15.)

THE BOOK

NO BOOKSTORES WILL CARRY

Long before many of today's popular Christian movements striving to attain mastery over this sinful world came into being, this book exposed the dominion theology behind them.

Published in 1990, *Vengeance is Ours: The Church in Dominion*, is a timeless exposé of Christian Reconstruction and the Latter-Rain movement that are turning Christians away from expecting the Lord's return.



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