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"Put on the whole armor of God" (Ephesians 6:13)

Spring- 2013

The Christian Passover — Holding On to What Has Been Handed Down

Study Paper

by David Miller



David Miller

Soon, members of God's church will once again commemorate the death of our Lord Jesus Christ on the anniversary of the night in which He was betrayed, and in which He instituted the symbols of the New Covenant. In doing so, we will be holding fast to an apostolic tradition that was received from Jesus Christ and that has been passed down through many generations.

This sacred tradition was abandoned soon after the death of the apostles by most of the professing Christian church. Some few, however, held fast to this tradition in the face of excommunication, persecution, and death. They were known as the *Quartodecimans*, from the Latin word for "fourteen," because they continued to celebrate the Christian Passover, pursuant to the apostolic tradition, on the 14th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar called Abib or Nisan.

Every member of God's church should be aware of their history, especially as we approach the spring holyday season, because their history is really *our* history. As did the Quartodecimans in their time, so we have been called, during this present generation, to hold on to and follow the example of Jesus Christ and the early New Testament church in observing the Christian Passover.

I. The Apostolic Tradition Regarding the Christian Passover

In the mid-first century A.D., the apostle Paul, writing to the primarily Gentile church in Corinth, praised them for holding to the "*traditions* just as I *delivered* them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:23, emphasis added). The Greek

words translated "traditions" and "delivered" are *paradoseis* (Strong's number 3862) and *paredooka* (Strong's number 3860), respectively. These words indicate that Paul had delivered to the Corinthians an authoritative set of apostolic traditions that specifically had to do with Christian worship.

In his commentary on the New Testament, Gordon Fee writes:

NIV "teachings" which with its cognate verb ("I handed down") [NIV "passed on"] is a technical term in Judaism for the oral transmission of religious instruction. In this case it almost certainly does not refer to "teachings". . . but to the "traditions" that have to do with worship (as in 11:23) (Fee, Gordon. *The New International Commentary on the New Testament*, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians." Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1980. p. 423).

As noted by Mr. Fee, just a few verses later, in 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, Paul uses nearly identical language in describing his transmission to the Corinthian church of the tradition regarding the observation of the Christian Passover. Paul writes:

For I *received* of the Lord that which I also *delivered* to you, that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: and when he had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you: do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes (emphasis added).

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Appreciating the Richness of Christ's Incarnation

by Bill Watson



Bill Watson

If you were to take a poll, Jesus Christ would most likely be voted the world's most controversial figure. He has been the most debated about, suspected, and questioned personality who ever walked this earth. The legacy He left, since His visitation just short of approximately 2000 years ago, is nothing but stunning!

When you consider the challenging, polarizing, and controversial effect He's had over the last two millennia, it's nothing short of amazing. As He said during His ministry, "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division [disunion, partition]: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three" (Luke 12:51–52).

The name of Jesus Christ has caused a lot of provocation and division in families, as well as nations, empires, and many cultures around the world down through the centuries. Sadly, the Christian legacy has been written in the blood, sweat, and tears of *tens of thousands* who gave their lives for living and defending the faith that was once delivered to the saints.

Just consider the results of these many controversies that have impacted the Christian community alone. There is such a variety of different movements and groups that have erupted due to these disputes over the beliefs and teachings of Jesus Christ—the Docetics, the Adoptionists, the Ebionites, the Modalists, and the Arians. Then there was Nestorianism, and we can't ignore so many more Gnostic sects that characterized Christ in some very unbelievably non-traditional, strange, and quite bizarre ways. It's astonishing, when one begins to understand the variations, aberrations, and disparity in teachings, instruction, and definition that Jesus Christ was described and portrayed as, by so many of these divergent groups and movements. And surprisingly, to this day, many of these dissimilarities and distinctions, when compared to the *original* apostolic faith, remain embedded in the statement of beliefs of many present Christian denominations. That's right!—and that is disturbing!

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Who's In Charge?

by Lloyd W. Cary

“Authority” is a distasteful word to many people. Some people “hate” cops, the boss, the government, and nearly every other kind of authority. This is understandable, because authority has often been abused—on the job, in the family, and by governments. The Bible states, “...there is a time wherein one man ruleth over another to his own hurt” (Ecclesiastes 8:9). From the world’s point of view, “authority” implies the right to control physically, psychologically, monetarily, or even spiritually.

World history is filled with the names of tyrants who have been ready to stoop very low to achieve political prominence. They have used bribery, lies, intrigue, and murder to gain power. Men have murdered their wives, and wives their husbands; sons, daughters, mothers, and close relatives have been imprisoned, enslaved, poisoned, beheaded, and slaughtered in a lust for governmental power. Some have even been willing to betray their country to an enemy nation for a price.

Jesus said, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship [rulership] over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. **BUT YE SHALL NOT BE SO:** but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth” (Luke 22:25–27). The same thought is repeated in Matthew 20:25–28 and Mark 10:41–45. In God’s church, “authority” should be understood as the right to influence, not “rule over.”

Some, even in the Church of God culture, conduct their organizations in a hierarchical form of church government—rule from the top down—in a harsh authoritarian manner, ignoring Jesus’ admonition above. Others take a softer approach, having a mixture of authoritarian “iron rod” rule while giving the lay member limited consideration. The *Church of God International* believes in “servant leadership.” That is to say, the ministry is neither “above” nor “below” its members. They are helpers alongside the members. If one member or another has expertise in some area, his or her input is considered. A big reason there is so much disunity in the churches today is that everybody wants to be “in charge,” and no one will submit one to another (1 Peter 5:5).

The *Church of God International* has received much criticism for its servant leadership. Some consider us “too lax,” or too “Laodicean” as some accuse, whereas, the real problem is that some just have difficulty handling the **FREEDOM** we have. Many feel more comfortable being told what to do. Our ministers are not “cops.” They *teach* the truth, but have no power to *enforce* the truth, other than what we relinquish to them. It is left up to the *individual* to prove all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21) and live up to what Jesus expects of us. There is no claim that we are “the one and only true church,” nor do we threaten “excommunication” if our directives are not met. Like a tree or flower, each Christian grows at his own rate, not out of fear, not because he wants to impress somebody, not because he wants to “get ahead.”

Several passages in Scripture fill in the picture of authority sketched by Jesus in Matthew. We see that it is not exercised from a position above others, but “among” them (Matthew 23:8–11). Rather than demanding that others act, servant leadership calls for providing a good example. Rather than relying on force or disguised threats to win conformity, this kind of leadership trusts in the working of God’s Spirit within the Christian. When Paul wrote about this spiritual authority to the Corinthians, he pointed out that the goal is to build others up (2 Corinthians 10:8). Servant leadership is effective because God is at work in believers to create a voluntary willingness to urge, but will not intimidate, demand, or threaten (cf. 2 Corinthians 8:8,9; 9:7).

Living in our society, it is difficult to visualize how servant authority works. We live in a world where those in authority tell, dictate, require, direct, reward, or fire the individual. The idea of servant leadership may at first seem weak by comparison.

But because it is a spiritual authority, with power to transform others *from within*, the servant authority is the most potent of all.

Here are some basic principles for exercising spiritual authority:

- Build a close personal relationship with others. Do not try to lead or to relate from an “above” position over them.
- Be a good role model or example. Demonstrate your own personal commitment to what you encourage others to do.
- Teach. Communicate as clearly as possible the beliefs and values that guide your own actions.
- Continue to relate, to model, and to teach faithfully, even when response seems to come slowly. Trust God to work in others’ lives, and pray that He will motivate and discipline them.

Of course, there is a place for secular power and position, or “authority” in the world of mankind. We would hardly try to replace the military chain-of-command authority with the family kind of authority called for in the church. In fact, it is only because of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in believers that this servant leadership has such power. But within the body of Christ, God’s authority is exercised through servanthood, and God’s people are transformed from within because they *want* to change, grow, and overcome, not because they “have” to.

When our children are small there will be times when we need to discipline them, to help them to obey. There is no need for harsh, heavy-handed authority. Neither is there a need for it in the churches of God at large. The basic approach in helping them grow will call for an exercise of biblical authority. God’s church is a loving family. In every situation we should heed Jesus’ warning about the authority of the world: **“BUT YE SHALL NOT BE SO.”** It is always best to do what Jesus, the real head of the Church, says. God has a far better, more powerful way.

The ultimate authority, of course, is God the Father, along with His Son, Jesus Christ. He rules with familial love, patience, and mercy. Shouldn’t we follow His example?

Ω

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Specifically commenting on the above cited passage, A.J.B. Higgins states:

Paul regarded himself as handing on unaltered the Church tradition which ultimately goes back to the Lord. . . Paul is in the position of a Christian Rabbi, handing on to others the tradition he has himself received. The words he uses are the equivalents of the Rabbinical terms for the reception and transmission of tradition. (Higgins, A.J.B. *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*. London: SCM Press Ltd, 1952. pp. 26–27).

Larry Hurtado also notes that 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 “is proof that some sort of Christian sacred meal tradition goes back earlier than Paul’s conversion to the Christian movement. It is well known that the terms ‘received’ and ‘delivered’ in v. 23 refer to the passing on of fixed tradition and that equivalent Hebrew terms were used to describe the handing on of Jewish traditions.” (Hurtado, Larry. *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*. Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1988, p. 111).

Indeed, the “fixed tradition” Paul had delivered to the Corinthians went back to the final Passover supper which Christ shared with His disciples “the same night in which he was betrayed.” The Gospels clearly state this event took place “at even” on the 14th day of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar when the Passover lambs were killed (Matthew 26:17–20; Mark 14:12–17; Luke 22:7–14). The Gospel of John demonstrates that Christ was crucified during the day portion of Nisan 14 because the following day was a high Sabbath, the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which fell on Nisan 15 (John 19:31).

That this fixed tradition was to be annually commemorated on Nisan 14 is indicated in the literal Greek translation of Christ’s command to “do this in the remembrance of Me.” The Greek twice in 1 Corinthians 11:24–25 contains the definite article *ho* (Strong’s number 3588) which should be translated “the remembrance” in English.

In this connection, Mr. Higgins’ comment in his book, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, is relevant:

The words [“Do this in remembrance of me”] . . . express the wish of Jesus that the annual Passover should be observed in his memory until the rendezvous in the Kingdom. The fact that the Church came [later] to remember the Lord at the weekly breaking of bread and not at an annual Passover should not be brought against the strong probability that what Jesus expected to happen was the latter. (*The Lord's Supper in the New Testament*, p. 55. Emphasis added).

In a footnote to the above-cited passage, Mr. Higgins notes: “Christians in Asia Minor in the second century regarded the Eucharist as a parallel to the Passover, and held a special celebration of it at the time of the Jewish Passover” (*Id.*, 55 fn. 2). As will be demonstrated further herein, the Christians of Asia Minor, called the Quartodecimans, held fast to the apostolic tradition of observing the annual Christian Passover.

That the annual observance of the Christian Passover was the practice of the apostolic church is reflected in 1 Corinthians 5:7–8: “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

On the above passage of Scripture, William Conybeare comments:

There seems no difficulty in supposing the Gentile Christians joined with the Jewish Christians in celebrating the Paschal feast after the Jewish manner, at least to the extent of abstaining from leaven in the love-feasts. And we see that St. Paul still observed the ‘days of unleavened bread’ at this period of his life, from Acts xx.6. (Conybeare, William. *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Company, 1978).

The fixed tradition of the annual Christian Passover, alluded to in 1 Corinthians 5:7–8 and 11:23, is recognized as one of the oldest traditions of the primitive Christian Church. Larry Hurtado, who has studied and written extensively about the worship and devotion practices of the early church, writes:

Of the surviving literature of Christianity, Paul’s writings are our earliest attestations of the beliefs and devotion of Christians; they even contain fragments of Christian tradition earlier than the time in which the letters were composed, ones that Paul receives and then passes on (e.g., 1 Cor. 11:23). If we seek to catch a glimpse of the formation of earliest Christian devotion, we can do no better than the evidence afforded in Paul’s writings. (Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, p. 98).

As noted previously, Hurtado writes that the tradition mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11:23 goes back earlier than Paul’s conversion and reflects the practice of the earliest Christian church which was made up exclusively of ethnic Jews (*Id.*, 111). Indeed, Paul may have been instructed regarding this tradition when he visited Jerusalem three years after his conversion, and met with the apostle Peter and James, the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:18–19).

In discussing the interchange between Peter and Paul during the fifteen days they spent together, F.F. Bruce writes:

Paul himself at least recognized Peter as a primary informant on matters regarding which it was now important that he should be well informed—the facts about Jesus’ ministry, the ‘tradition’ or deposit of teaching which derived its authority from Him, that ‘tradition’ concerning which Paul could later say to his converts, ‘I delivered to you...what I also received’ (1 Cor. 15:3; cf. 11:23) (F.F. Bruce, “Paul and Jerusalem,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 19 (1968): 3, 6).

The book of Acts clearly demonstrates that the earliest Christian church, indeed the mother church of all Christianity, was that of Jerusalem. As a consequence, the fixed tradition of the annual Christian Passover on Nisan 14, which Paul passed on to the Gentile churches, was the original practice of the mother church, having received it from Jesus Christ. The non-biblical historical record is clear on this point.

Many scholars of early Christianity acknowledge the uniform practice of the apostolic church in celebrating the annual Christian Passover on Nisan 14. In *Between Memory and Hope: Readings of the Liturgical Year* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2000), page 24, Maxwell E. Johnson writes: “[M]ost would now agree that the Quartodeciman Pascha [the Christian Passover on Nisan 14] was the original practice of the primitive community, not a deviation limited to the province of Asia” (emphasis added).

In Volume II of the two-volume work, *A History of the Early Church* (Cleveland and NY: Meridian Books, 1961), page 133, Hans Lietzmann writes:

In accordance with its respect for the Law, the first church naturally celebrated the Jewish Passover and the festive period of fifty days until Whitsuntide [Pentecost]; these festivals were accepted not only by the Jewish Christian church which was her successor, but also by the gentile church.

Finally, Alfred Loisy writes:

At the beginning this [Christian Passover] festival was held, as was natural enough, on the same day as the Jewish Passover which might fall on any day of the week, and with no difference except that it now commemorated the Christian’s salvation, won for him by the death of Christ, the true paschal lamb, as, the fourth Gospel teaches. The so-called quartodeciman usage, maintained by the congregations in Asia at the end of the second century and condemned by Pope Victor, was the primitive usage of all the Christian congregations and is indeed presupposed by the Gospel tradition (Loisy, Alfred. *The Birth of the Christian Religion*. New York: University Books, 1962, pp. 226–27. Emphasis added).

The apostle Paul repeatedly exhorted the Gentile churches to “stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2 Thessalonians 2:15). Later, he wrote: “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). And Jude, the brother of Jesus Christ, at the close of the New Testament era, exhorted his readers to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). Among the authoritative traditions mentioned by Paul, and part of the original faith that was once delivered to the saints, was the celebration of the Christian Passover on Nisan 14.

The record of history discloses, however, that the vast majority of the Christian church did not hold fast to the apostolic tradition of celebrating the Nisan 14 Christian Passover. Within just a few years after the death of John, the last of Christ’s original apostles, the mother church of Jerusalem and the church of Rome departed from the apostolic tradition, and transferred the Christian Passover to the Sunday following Nisan 14. In addition, the focus of the celebration was changed from commemorating the death of Christ to celebrating the resurrection of Christ. Eventually, the Sunday Passover was enforced by law throughout the Roman Empire, and later took on the name of a Teuton goddess Ostara, or Easter, along with attendant pagan customs. The original Christian Passover was maintained only by a small minority of Christians who were severely persecuted by the Roman civil government and branded with the name “Quartodeciman.” The remainder of this paper will document these facts.

II. Abandonment of the Christian Passover by the Jerusalem Church

Epiphanius, the fourth-century bishop of Salamis, in his work *The Panarion*, wrote against the sect of the Audians, a group of Christians who celebrated the Passover on the 14th of Nisan “with the Jews” (*The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*. New York: E.J. Brill, 1994, pp. 410–11). In doing so, this Catholic bishop made a stunning admission. “And indeed, it is true that this used to be the church’s custom” (*Id.*, 411. Emphasis added).

Epiphanius writes that there were fifteen bishops “from the circumcision” who were elders over the church at Jerusalem. He admits that these fifteen bishops observed the Passover on Nisan 14 “with the Jews.” *Id.*, 412. Epiphanius then writes: “And at that time, when the circumcised bishops were consecrated at Jerusalem, it was essential that the whole world follow

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and celebrate with them, so that there would be one concord and agreement, the celebration of one festival.” *Id.* (Emphasis added).

This was a clear acknowledgment on the part of Epiphanius that the entire church celebrated the Christian Passover on Nisan 14 during the time of the fifteen circumcised bishops of Jerusalem. After this time, however, Epiphanius noted that the Passover began to be celebrated at different times in the church. “This has been the situation ever since the church was thrown into disorder after the time of the circumcised bishops.” *Id.*, 411-412.

Eusebius, the fourth-century church historian, also makes reference to the fifteen Jewish-Christian bishops of Jerusalem. The first of these bishops was none other than James, the brother of Jesus Christ, who is referred to as one of the “pillars” in the apostolic church by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:9. Fourteen Jewish-Christian bishops succeeded James down to the time of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, which was about 135 A.D. (Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, (Middelsex, England: Penguin Books, 1984), 156.)

This was at the time when the Jews revolted under the leadership of a pretended Messiah named Bar-Kokba. After Hadrian’s legions crushed the rebellion, the Emperor had Jerusalem rebuilt under the name of Aelia Capitolina, in honor of Jupiter. This began an age of persecution when Hadrian prohibited the observance of the Sabbath and the feast days, including the Passover. Hadrian further ordered that no Jew could ever walk in the vicinity of the new city (“Bar Kokba and Bar Kokba War.” *Jewish Encyclopedia.com*, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/2471-bar-kokba-and-bar-kokba-war>).

Following these measures, Eusebius records that, for the first time, a Gentile named Mark was made bishop of Jerusalem. Eusebius, *The History of the Church*, 157-58. The racial change in the Jerusalem church’s leadership resulted in the abandonment of any observance that could be deemed “Jewish” including the Christian Passover on Nisan 14.

John Laurence Mosheim writes of this time:

For when Jerusalem, which had begun in some measure to revive from its ashes, was finally razed to the foundation by this emperor [Hadrian], and the whole Jewish nation were rendered subject to laws of the most rigorous cast, the greatest part of the Christians inhabiting Palestine renounced the law of Moses, to which they had before paid obedience, and placed themselves under the guidance of a leader named Marcus, who was not a Jew, but a stranger, and whom they appear to have selected for the express purpose of manifesting that they meant to have nothing in common with the Jews (*Commentaries on the Affairs of the Christians Before the Time of Constantine the Great*. London, T. Cadell & W. Davies: 1813, p. 195).

Mosheim goes on to relate: “Having thus openly divorced themselves from every connection with the Jewish law, they were permitted by the Romans to have free access to that district from whence the Jews were altogether excluded” (*Id.*, 195).

The renunciation of the observance of God’s law by the majority of the Christians in Jerusalem, and their election of a Gentile bishop, dovetails precisely with the statement of Epiphanius that disorder in the church regarding the celebration of Passover followed the exit of the circumcised bishops of Jerusalem. Several historians have made this same connection.

In Volume One of *Dictionary of Christian Antiquities* (London: John Murray, 1908), edited by William Smith and Samuel Cheatham, the following is stated:

The following conclusions of Bucherius from a passage in Epiphanius, will express the probable course of events . . . “First, that so long at least as the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem (those of Jewish descent) continued, the pascha was celebrated everywhere by Christians, or by a great majority of them, according to the lunar computation and method of the Jews. But they continued until the year 136 A.D., or to the end of the reign of the emperor Hadrian, when Mark was first taken from the Gentiles to be bishop. Secondly, that then began a time of dissension, as Epiphanius a little before more plainly testifies (*Id.* “Easter,” 588).

In an article entitled “Easter,” the *Jewish Encyclopedia* relates as follows:

Originally “Pascha,” or “Passover,” was the name given by the Christians to the fourteenth day of Nisan as the day of the Crucifixion, corresponding to the eve of the Jewish Passover, the season of the sacrifice of the paschal lamb . . . Under the first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem, who were all Jews, no difference occurred between the Jewish and Christian dates (“Easter.” 5 *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. New York: Funk & Wagnell: 1903, p. 29).

Further, other historians have come to the conclusion that observance of Passover on the Sunday following Nisan 14 was a practice that originated in Jerusalem at the time when Gentile leadership of the Jerusalem church was established and the law of Moses renounced. Thomas Talley writes:

Holl also drew attention to a notice of Epiphanius, which asserted that the controversies over the date of Pascha began only after the bishops at Jerusalem were no longer “of the circumcision,” that is, only after the departure of the original Jewish-Christian hierarchy

and their replacement by Greco-Roman bishops representative of the Gentile mission (Thomas Talley. *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*. Collegeville, Minn: 1991).

Whether or not the Sunday Passover originated in Jerusalem after A.D. 135 is still a matter of debate among historians. The record of history is clear, however, that the entire Christian church observed the Christian Passover on Nisan 14, in accord with apostolic tradition, while Jewish-Christians retained leadership of the mother church in Jerusalem. Observance of Nisan 14 was the practice of James, the Lord’s brother, and the next fourteen bishops of Jerusalem who succeeded him up to the year A.D. 135. At that time, Greco-Roman bishops obtained the leadership of the Jerusalem church, and the vast majority of that church abandoned the observance of the Nisan 14 Passover to secure their admittance to the new Roman city built by Hadrian. Finally, it is from this very time that the Passover began to be observed on different dates, and the entire church was thrown into disorder.

III. The Church of Rome Abandons the Christian Passover in Favor of a Sunday Celebration

In an article entitled “Easter,” the *Encyclopedia Americana* notes:

At first the Christian passover was celebrated on the same day as the Hebrew, the 14th day of the month Nisan (April). But the Church of Rome and other churches of the Latin world soon transferred the observance to the Sunday next after the 14th Nisan, primarily to mark the difference between Judaism and Christianity (Charles Leonard-Stuart. “Easter.” 9 *Encyclopedia Americana*. New York: The Encyclopedia Americana Corp., 1918, p. 508. Emphasis added).

Similarly, the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion* relates the following under an article entitled “Quartodecimans”:

[Quartodecimans were] those Christians who followed a Jewish tradition of dating and celebrating the Passover on the+ 14th of the month Nisan. The term is most frequently used in reference to the Churches in Asia Minor which Bp. Victor of Rome (190 A.D.) tried to excommunicate, on the strength of the newer and growing Christian custom of celebrating the Christian Passover, Easter, on the following Sunday, the day commemorating the Resurrection of Jesus. . . The sources, however, . . . suggest that there were at least two disputes . . . concerning, not simply one issue (the date of Easter), but several: a newer tradition emphasizing the Resurrection of Jesus vs. an apparently older tradition emphasizing Jesus’ Passion and death and looking forward to his return. . . maintenance of an ancient (Jewish) heritage vs. a conscious attempt to separate Christianity from Judaism (D.P. Efroymson. “Quartodecimans.” 3 *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Religion*. Philadelphia: Sister of St. Joseph of Philadelphia, 1979, p. 2949. Emphasis added).

Also, the *Catholic Encyclopedia* remarks under an article entitled “Quartodeciman”:

a term used to describe the practice in the early church of celebrating Easter on the 14th of Nisan, the day of the Jewish Passover (Ex 12.6). Quartodecimanism, prevalent in Asia Minor and Syria in the 2d century, emphasized the death of Christ, the true Paschal victim (Jn 18.28; 19.42), while Roman practice emphasized the observance of Sunday as the day of the Resurrection . . . As Christianity separated from Judaism, gentile Christians objected to observing the principal Christian feast on the same day as the Jewish Passover (“Quartodeciman.” 12 *New Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965, p. 13. Emphasis added).

Thus, it appears that the church of Rome led the way in transferring the Passover from Nisan 14 to the Sunday following that date. Instead of “proclaiming the Lord’s death,” the newer Sunday Passover tradition focused on the resurrection of Christ. As emphasized in the above articles, the basis behind the change in both the date and focus of the celebration was motivated by a desire to mark the difference between Judaism and Christianity. It must be underscored that the Sunday Passover was not an apostolic tradition but, rather, a departure from it.

The *Catholic Encyclopedia* notes, in an article entitled “Easter Controversy,” that a letter from Irenaeus, the second-century bishop of Lyons, demonstrates that the diversity of practice in regard to “Easter” existed from the time of Pope Sixtus, who reigned approximately A.D. 120 (“Easter Controversy.” 5 *Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Appleton, 1909, p. 228).

The letter of Irenaeus is preserved by Eusebius in his *History of the Church*. Irenaeus, writing to Victor, Bishop of Rome, in about A.D. 190 states:

Passover, Continued on page 6

Among these were the presbyters before Soter, who were in charge of the church of which you are the present leader—I mean Anicetus, Pius, Hyginus, Telesphorus, and Xystus. They did not keep it [Nisan 14 Passover] themselves or allow those under their wing to do so . . . And when Blessed Polycarp paid a visit to Rome in Anicetus's time, though they had minor differences on other matters too, they at once made peace, having no desire to quarrel on this point. Anicetus could not persuade Polycarp not to keep the day [Nisan 14 Passover], *since he had always kept it with John the disciple of our Lord and the other apostles with whom he had been familiar*; nor did Polycarp persuade Anicetus to keep it: Anicetus said that he must stick to the practice of the presbyters before him (Eusebius, *History of the Church*, pp. 232-22. Emphasis added).

This is quite amazing testimony from a man who personally knew Polycarp, the disciple of the apostle John. He noted that in the dispute regarding Passover between Polycarp and Anicetus, bishop of Rome, it was Polycarp who claimed the authority of the apostle John and other apostles for his observance of the Christian Passover on Nisan 14. Significantly, Anicetus did not claim apostolic authority for his practice; rather, he simply stated he would stick to the practice of the bishops of Rome who preceded him. As noted earlier in Ireneaus' letter, this practice went back to bishop Sixtus, apparently the first Roman bishop who discontinued the observance of the Nisan 14 Passover.

Ireneaus' letter complements the record left by Epiphanius, i.e. that disorder in the Church regarding the observance of Passover began at the time when Jewish Christians were no longer in the leadership position at the church in Jerusalem, during the reign of Hadrian. Bishop Sixtus likewise governed the church of Rome during the reign of Hadrian, when Roman law forbade the observance of any "Jewish" feast. This certainly would explain the implication of Ireneaus' letter that Sixtus was the first Roman bishop who did not observe the Nisan 14 Passover.

That the Roman church had departed from the apostolic tradition of the Nisan 14 Passover is confirmed in a letter written by Firmilian, bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, to Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, in about A.D. 256. The letter is quoted by the online *Catholic Encyclopedia* under the article "Firmilian" as follows:

And Rome has not preserved the Apostolic traditions unchanged, for it differs from Jerusalem as to the observance of Easter and as to other mysteries ("Firmilian." <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/06080b.htm>).

J. Patount Burns, Jr., in his comments on Firmilian's letter, writes:

The Romans had not always preserved customs accurately, he observed, as instanced by their deviation from the authentic practice of the earliest Christian church—the one at Jerusalem—on the proper date of Easter observance (J. Patount Burns. *Cyprian the Bishop*. London: Routledge, 2002, p. 122).

In addition, Karl Gerlach, in his work entitled *The Antenicene Pashca: A Rhetorical History*, notes the similarity between Firmilian's statement and the letter of Ireneaus quoted previously herein:

Firmilian's conclusion is so similar to that of Ireneaus' letter to Victor that it may be considered an indirect citation (Karl Gerlach. *The Antenicene Pashca: A Rhetorical History*. Leuven, Belgium: Vitgeverig Peeters, 1998, p. 322).

In a footnote on this page, Gerlach cites another historian for the proposition that Firmilian was a Quartodeciman, and was using the ancient practice of Jerusalem in celebrating a Nisan 14 Passover to bolster his claim that the Roman church had departed from apostolic practice in its Sunday Passover observance (*Id.*).

Eusebius records the dispute regarding the Passover between Victor, bishop of Rome, and Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, about A.D. 190. He writes:

Now, at this time, no small controversy was stirred up because the dioceses of all Asia, *as according to an older tradition*, thought that they should observe the fourteenth day of the moon, on which the Jews had been ordered to sacrifice the lamb, as the feast of the Savior's Passover . . . Then, synods and conferences of bishops on the same question took place, and they unanimously formulated in their letters a doctrine of the Church for people everywhere, that the mystery of the Lord's Resurrection from the dead be celebrated on no other day than the Lord's Day [Sunday] (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History: Books 1-5*. Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, Inc., 1953, p. 333. Emphasis added).

Eusebius preserved the response of Polycrates, bishop of Ephesus, to Rome's insistence that he should abandon his observance of the Christian Passover on Nisan 14:

We, therefore, keep the precise day, neither adding nor taking away, for even in Asia great luminaries have fallen asleep, which shall rise on the day of the coming of the Lord, when he comes from glory from heaven and shall seek out all the saints, Phillip of the twelve apostles, who have been sleeping in Hieropolis, and two of his daughters who had grown old as virgins, and another daughter of his who lived in the Holy Spirit and rests at Ephesus. Furthermore, there is also John, who leaned on the breast of the Lord, and was a priest wearing the breastplate, and a martyr, and teacher. This one rests at Ephesus. Then there is also Polycarp in Smyrna both bishop and martyr . . . *All these observed the fourteenth day of the Passover according to the Gospel, never deviating, but following according to the rule of faith*. And I also, Polycrates, do so, the least of you all, according to the tradition of my kinsman, some of whom I have followed. Seven of my kinsmen were bishops, and I am the eighth. And my relatives always observed the day when the people put away the leaven—I myself brethern, I say, who am sixty-five years old in the Lord, and have fallen in with the brethern in all parts of the world, and have read through all Holy Scripture, am not frightened at the things which are said to terrify us. For those who are greater than I have said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (*Id.*, pp. 335-36. Emphasis added).

Polycrates' letter is yet one more piece of historical evidence that the Christian Passover on Nisan 14 was the true apostolic tradition. The churches in Asia Minor and elsewhere were following this tradition, while the church of Rome, in its Sunday Passover, had departed from the practice of the apostolic church.

The *Encyclopedia Americana* sums up the relative positions of Asia Minor and Rome during the Passover controversy of the second century:

The churches in Asia and some in the West which were founded by missionaries from the East, were slow to adopt the usage of Rome, and the diversity of usage gave rise to no little controversy; the westerns taunting the easterns with subservience to Judaic custom, *and the easterns accusing the westerns of innovation and departure from the ways of Jesus Christ and his apostles* ("Easter." 6 *Encyclopedia Americana*. New York: Scientific American Compiling Dept., 1909. Emphasis added).

IV. The Triumph of the Sunday Passover at the Council of Nicaea

The Passover controversy continued until the fourth century when it was finally settled, under the auspices of the Emperor Constantine, at the Council of Nicaea in A.D. 325. In *The Life of Constantine*, the church historian, Eusebius, describes the dissensions regarding the celebration of the Passover just prior to Nicaea:

But before this time another most virulent disorder had existed, and long afflicted the Church; I mean the difference respecting the salutary feast of Easter. For while one party asserted that the Jewish custom should be adhered to, the other affirmed that the exact recurrence of the period should be observed, without following the authority of those who were in error, and strangers to the grace of the gospel as well in this as in other aspects.

Accordingly, the people being thus in every place divided, and the sacred observances of religion confounded for a long period . . . no one appeared who was capable of devising a remedy for the evil, because the controversy continued equally balanced between both parties. To God alone, the Almighty, was the healing of these differences an easy task; and Constantine appeared to be the only one on earth capable of being His minister for this good end (Eusebius. *The Life of Constantine*. London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1845, p. 118).

If Eusebius' statements are accurate, it would appear that a large number of Christians were still observing the Nisan 14 Passover in the early fourth century. According to Eusebius' contemporary, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, all "they of Syria, Cilicia, and Mesopotamia differed from us and kept the feast [of Passover] at the same season as the Jews" (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2, Volume 4, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 by Biblsoft, Inc.).

In his work *On the Celebration of the Pascha*, Eusebius briefly described the discussion that took place regarding the observance of the Passover at Nicaea. It is quite apparent

Passover, continued from page 5

that unanimity was reached only due to the presence of Constantine, who clearly backed the Sunday Passover celebration:

When, however, *the emperor most beloved of God was presiding in the midst of the holy Synod*, and the question of the Pascha was brought forward, there was said all that was said. And three [fourths] of the bishops of the whole world had the advantage in numbers as they strove against those of the East: The peoples of the North, the South, and the Occident together, being fortified by their harmony, pulled in the opposite direction from those of the Orient, *who were defending their ancient custom*. But at the end of the discussion, the Orientals yielded, and thus there came to be a single festival of Christ—and thus they stood apart from the killers of the Lord, and were joined to those who hold the same doctrine (Eusebius, *On the Celebration of the Pascha*, Chapter 8. http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_on_easter.htm#_ftnref38. Emphasis added).

After the council concluded, a synodal letter was sent out commanding “that *all our brethren in the East who formerly followed the custom of the Jews* are henceforth to celebrate the said most sacred feast of Easter at the same time with the Romans and yourselves and all those who have observed Easter from the beginning” (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, Volume 14, PC Study Bible formatted electronic database Copyright © 2003, 2006 by Biblsoft Inc., Emphasis added).

Constantine also wrote a letter to all the churches giving the *imprimatur* of Roman civil authority to the Sunday Passover celebration. He wrote, in part, as follows:

And first of all, it appeared an unworthy thing that in the celebration of this most holy feast we should follow the practice of the Jews, who have impiously defiled their hands with enormous sin, and are therefore deservedly afflicted with blindness of soul . . . Let us then have nothing in common with the detestable Jewish crowd; for we have received from our Savior a different way. A course at once legitimate and honorable lies open to our most holy religion. Beloved brethren, let us with one consent adopt this course, and withdraw ourselves from all participation in their baseness . . . For how should they be capable of forming a sound judgment, who, since their parricidal guilt in slaying their Lord, have been subject to the direction, not of reason, but of ungoverned passion, and are swayed by every impulse of the mad spirit that is in them? (Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, p. 129).

Thus it was that the visible Christian church officially renounced the practice of Jesus Christ and the apostolic church in regard to the observation of the Christian Passover on Nisan 14. Church historian Ernest Renan candidly wrote about the decision reached at the Council of Nicaea:

The question [of the Passover controversy] was not determined except by the Council of Nicæa. From thenceforth it was considered heretical to follow the tradition of John, Philip, Polycarp, and Melito. It happened as it had happened so many times. The defenders of the ancient tradition found themselves by their fidelity put outside the Church, and were no more than heretics, the quartodecimans (Ernest Renan. Book VII *The History of the Origins of Christianity*, Chapter XII. Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, p. 114).

Under edicts promulgated by the Emperor Theodosius between A.D. 380 and 394, capital punishment was inflicted by the Roman state upon the Quartodecimans who, in the words of Gibbon, “should dare to perpetuate the atrocious crime of celebrating on an improper day the festival of Easter” (Edward Gibbon. Vol. III *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1899, p. 199). Accordingly, anyone who held fast to the apostolic tradition of observing the Christian Passover on Nisan 14 was not only excommunicated from the church, but also deemed worthy of death by the penal statutes of a “Christianized” Roman Empire.

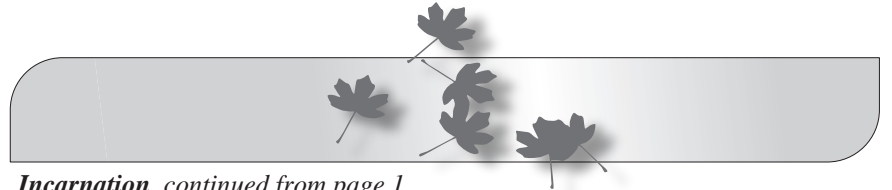
V. Conclusion

As the members of God’s church once again anticipate the renewal of their personal covenant with God the Father and Jesus Christ by partaking of the symbols of the New Covenant, we should be reminded that we are the latest link in a long chain of sacred tradition that reaches back through the apostolic church to the very night on which Jesus was betrayed. The Christian Passover is one of the traditions that was handed down from Jesus Christ to the apostles and then to the church with the ongoing admonition to “hold fast.”

While the majority of Christianity long ago departed from that apostolic tradition, there have been a faithful few who, despite decrees of excommunication and the threat of death, have held fast and remained faithful to that tradition. In every generation there have been those who, in the words of

Polycrates, have confessed, “We must obey God rather than men.”

Those of us in of God’s church today have been called for “such a time as this.” This is our time to hold fast to the faith once for all time delivered to the saints, including the observation of the Christian Passover. This is our time to hold on to what has been faithfully handed down for many generations from the days of the apostles. This is our time to run the race with endurance that is set before us (Hebrews 12:1), as we look forward to that day when the Passover will find its fulfillment in the Kingdom of God (Luke 22:16), and when our Lord will say to us, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matthew 25:23). Ω



Incarnation, continued from page 1

So Who Was Jesus Christ?

A wide variety of opinions about just who Jesus Christ was and whether or not He was a divine or human being remains controversial among many Christian organizations and/or denominations. This debate has not gone away! From the time of the first century, this question has been hotly contested, with people literally being killed over their disagreements with what was considered the orthodox view. Some have gone as far as promoting the idea that Jesus Christ could not have sinned—it was all predestined for Him to succeed without any risk of failure—but can this be true? Some also claim He was an angel, or some other kind of being who had a supernatural “edge” that gave Him a special advantage to resist sin, which afforded Him the ability to live a righteous life, untouched and uninfected by sin. Is this what the Bible teaches?

The answer to both of these questions is a resounding NO! God’s Word is clear: Jesus *could* have sinned, and He absolutely *could* have failed. When you understand this, only *then* can you begin to appreciate what Jesus Christ did for you and me, which was nothing less than spectacular and immensely heroic on His part! The Bible gives us background information providing us the knowledge of just what *was* sacrificed and at risk. It is an amazingly *incredible* event to recognize for its full value when considering the danger that was faced.

A key part of understanding the background is to recognize Jesus Christ was actually the *Creator* of all things. That’s right—that includes everything seen and unseen, physical and spiritual. As surprising as that may sound to some, this is what your Bible emphatically teaches: Jesus Christ is the actual Creator of all things!

Notice, in this context about Christ, Paul says to the church at Colosse: “In whom we have redemption through his [Jesus Christ’s] blood, even the forgiveness of sins: Who is the image of the invisible God [the Father], the firstborn [the firstfruit from mortality] of every creature [this is Jesus Christ]: For by him [Jesus] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him [Jesus], and for him: and he [Jesus] is before all things and by him [Jesus] all things consist. And he [Jesus] is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead: that in all things he [Jesus] might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him [Jesus] should all fullness dwell and having made peace through the blood of his cross [stake] by him to reconcile all things unto himself: by him [Jesus], I say whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Colossians 1:14–20).

Paul makes another plain spoken statement about Christ as Creator when writing to the church at Ephesus, while explaining the mystery surrounding what Jesus Christ has now made possible in the way of salvation. Paul says this: “And to make all men [Gentiles too] see what is the fellowship of the mystery [about being part of the family of God], which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:9).

Notice what the writer of Hebrews says about who Jesus Christ is: “God, who at sundry [various] times and in divers [diverse] manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1–2).

The apostle John also confirms in his Gospel, when talking about Christ’s preexistence prior to His incarnation, claiming very candidly: “In the beginning was the Word [Jesus is the Word, Revelation 19:13], and the Word [Jesus] was with God [the Father], and the Word [Jesus] was God. The same was in the beginning with God [the Father]. All things were made by him [Jesus Christ]; and without him [Jesus] was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1–3).

Later on in the same chapter, John mentions again, talking about Christ who was the true light, “That was the true Light [Christ], which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him [Jesus Christ], and the world knew him not [did not accept Him as the Savior]” (John 1:9–10). John then goes on to openly state, “And the Word [Jesus Christ] was made *Incarnation, continued on next page*

Incarnation, continued from previous page

flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John [the Baptist] bare witness of him [Jesus], and cried, saying, This was he [Jesus] of whom I spake, He [Jesus] that cometh after me [the Baptist] is preferred before me: for he was before me" (John 1:14–15). Remember, John the Baptist was about six months older than Christ *physically*, yet he claims Jesus was preferred *before* him and actually *was* before him—showing that John the Baptist is *confirming* Christ was favored over him and He, Jesus, preexisted before John was born.

This clearly identifies just who Jesus Christ really is. Many are completely unaware that He is actually the very Creator of everything that we *see*—and *don't* see in the spirit world. He is the actual Creator God! When we understand this and recognize this unfortunately *marginalized* fact about Jesus Christ's real identity, that is when we can really start to comprehend the magnitude and scope of just what was on the line and who it really was who put His very existence at risk. He loved us *that much*, that He was willing to jeopardize His own previously safe, assured eternal life as a God being and relinquish it, giving up His immortality and surrendering it to mortal flesh in order to obey the Father's loving desire for the redemption of all of us (John 3:16–21; 1 John 4:6–21). This is nothing short of courageous and noble heroism. You cannot help but to respect and honor the *magnitude* of love and commitment He had to please the Father, and the *enormous* dedication to rescue us from the certitude of eternal death due to our sins!

Was There Really a Risk?

There have been many over the centuries advancing the claim that Jesus Christ was not really human in the truest sense of the word. There are many variations of what some taught, attempting to illustrate He was a supernatural being manifested in the flesh, but not *really* flesh, as we know it to be. Some would have you believe He was kind of an alien, even a type of a hybrid angel. Some have gone as far as claiming He was an *illusion*, like a hologram. The point is, these teachings advanced that He was a different type of human being, not like us in every sense of how we are carnal and mortal. Many of these ideas came from the Gnostics; and disappointingly, far too many Christian denominations have retained these distorted, misappropriated, and delusional concepts. Over the centuries, these ideas have served only to undermine the value of this miraculous event that the Father and Jesus Christ really accomplished by Jesus becoming mortal, incarnate in flesh and blood. Many traditional Christians do not believe He died—that only His fleshly body died, and He remained detached like an immortal soul, alive, unaffected by death, consciously apart from His physical body.

For instance, some will use Colossians 2:9 as an explanation that Jesus Christ had two simultaneous natures within Him that afforded Him the advantage to avoid both *sin* and the experience of *actual* death. This belief is based on what some will characterize the Greek words, pronounced "Kat-oy-keh'-o," in combination with "play'-ro-mah."

However, when reviewing both words, what's simply being explained is that Jesus was indeed the God who is our Creator, formerly the Word of God, but now was contained, restrained, or confined—incarnate, in mortal flesh. Notice how Paul says it: "For in him [this physical, mortal person, Jesus] dwelleth [resides, inhabitants, is housed] all the fullness [replete, imbued, verified, complete, perfect, filled up, full] of the Godhead bodily [physically, fleshly, incarnated]" (Colossians 2:9). Clearly, we are being told Jesus Christ was an embodied human being who was formerly the immortal Creator God, but now was fully human—fleshly, carnal, mortal, and vulnerable to all that we as human beings think and feel, while being limited in our fleshly tabernacles. Death loomed over Him every day of His mortal human life! He was well aware He could die, because He was now a mortal being constrained and defined by the embodiment of His fleshly body!

Paul is testifying to the fact that Christ was the actual Creator God who walked in the flesh, representing the Father who sent Him (but was not actually the Father) to reveal the mystery they were intent on revealing to the church. Paul speaks to this as part of his ministerial commission. Notice: "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel [the resurrection and Kingdom of God], which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister; ... according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations [that of immortality as a spirit being in the family of God], but now is made manifest to his saints: to whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:23–29). And the hope of glory is accomplished by Christ in us and through the miracle of the Holy Spirit begetting us, which affords us the potential of becoming a glorious, empowered spirit being, literally born of spirit by the resurrection, into the kingdom of God—this is man's destiny! This truth, which now has been clearly revealed to the church as the Gospel, has unfortunately been spun, distorted, and camouflaged to the point that very few recognize it for its true value and richness.

What is the Trinity?

It is beyond dispute that more has been written about "the trinity problem" and the nature of God than any other Bible subject.

The word "trinity" is *nowhere* found in the Bible. The term "trinity" was first used by the early church father Tertulian, who attempted to provide a succinct term for the hand-me-down tradition that originated in ancient Babylon and Egypt (see *The Two Babylons* by Dr. Alexander Hislop, p. 12–19.) Simply put, the trinity, or *hypostases*, claims there is one God who exists as three distinct persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Most claim that Jesus assumed human nature so that He has two natures (and hence two wills), and is really and fully both true God and true human. A.W. Tozer, in his book *The Knowledge of the Holy*, writes that the trinity is "an incomprehensible mystery." He admits that churches, "without pretending to understand," have nevertheless continued to teach this doctrine (1961, pp. 17–18).

The World Council of Churches recently said that all religions belonging to that Council should advocate the belief that there is "one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit," that is, three persons in one God. Those teaching this doctrine admit that it is "a deep mystery." That is because it is not in the Bible! In the days of the apostles, the doctrine of the trinity was yet to be created some two to four centuries later.

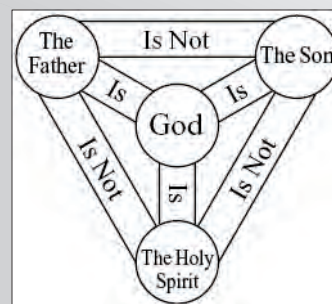
The Athanasian Creed, of the eighth century A.D., says that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (Spirit) are all three of the same substance; all three are eternal (and hence had no beginning), and all three are almighty. So the creed reads that in the trinity, "none is afore or after other; none is greater or less than another."

St. Augustine said, "He who will try to understand the Trinity fully, will lose his mind, but he who denies the Trinity will lose his soul." Is this reasonable? More importantly, is it in agreement with the Bible? God says in His inspired Word, the Bible, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD" (Isaiah 1:18). "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). How could one *reason* and *prove* the trinity if God made His existence an incomprehensible mystery?

This doctrine was totally unknown to the Hebrew prophets and the early church. *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (1967 Edition, Vol. XIV, pp. 306, 304) admits that "the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not taught in the OT [Old Testament]," and further says: "It is not, as already seen, directly and immediately the word of God." It also admits, on page 299: "The formulation 'one God in three persons' was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. But it is precisely this formulation that has first claim to the title the Trinitarian dogma. Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective." So the early Christians who were taught directly by Jesus Christ did not believe that God is a "trinity" (p. 299).

The doctrine of the trinity has been, and continues to be, enmeshed in confusion, argumentation, and ill will.

For a fuller understanding, simply request our FREE booklet, *Who, What Is God?* Ω



At left: The "Shield of the Trinity" or "Sacutum Fidei" diagram of traditional Western Christian symbolism.

Was Christ Human or Divine?

Many, if not most God-believing people, think and believe they have an immortal soul contained inside their flesh. Most religions have this as a common fundamental premise. Also, many Christians share this perspective and view the afterlife from this same premise. This is unfortunate, because it obscures and confuses the message and process God has undertaken to convert mortal man to immortal spirit. This original lie that Satan the devil promoted when he told Eve, "Ye shall not surely die" (Genesis 3:4), is a belief that has been around since the beginning. It has survived through the generations of mankind through multiple cultures down through history twisting and perverting their beliefs and understanding of God—succumbing to worshiping the creation more than the Creator. The apostle Paul recognized this very clearly and addresses it in Romans 1:20–32.

Fundamentally, what underscores the confusion of what Jesus Christ was, is this belief that man has a "soul," a spirit essence, which can exist outside of his body—a type of disembodied spirit.

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Incarnation, continued from page 7

If one adopts the belief that human beings have a separate spirit in them that can exist consciously outside of their flesh-and-blood body, then that opens up many possibilities for speculation about the afterlife and the guidelines of what rules apply to the spirit world. The varieties of religions throughout the world and the many denominations within the Christian religion are illustrations of the confusion resulting from this false teaching. You have everything from reincarnation, karma, heaven, hell, and purgatory, just to mention a few of these man-made ideas, which come directly from this original lie Satan introduced. Compound that with the misconceptions about God being three persons, or as others believe, three “modes,” and you have a swirling “cocktail” of spiritual confusion that just mixes up the meaning and nature of the Godhead.

If we are going to understand what Jesus Christ was while He tabernacled in the flesh, it’s important to know and embrace this biblical fact: human beings do not have immortality inherent within their flesh. Our Bible says, “...this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53). This is an important premise, because the Bible states, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself [Jesus Christ] likewise took part of the same [reflexivity, coreferent, comparative—ref. “same example,” Hebrews 4:11]; that through death [literally *die*, death] he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil: ...For verily he took not on the nature of angels [He had no special advantage or super edge]; but took on him the seed of Abraham [human, mortal, vulnerable, breakable, finite, destructible]. Wherefore in all things [thoroughly, whatsoever, whole, all manner] it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren” (Hebrews 2:14–17). Being made “like unto His brethren” means just that—He was human in every sense as His brethren, buddies, or fellow human beings were! Frankly, He was an air breathing creature whose life and consciousness depended upon His physical body to support His life and performance for His ministry. Outside of that body, in this incarnate, mortal condition, Jesus Christ could not exist consciously and perform His mission.

What the writer is plainly saying is this: Jesus Christ was human in every sense of the word! He was vulnerable and destructible, subjected to the same foibles, limitations, anxieties, and weaknesses that we as human beings experience, including death! In this incarnation He experienced for 33 and one-half years, it clearly provided Him a very special insight into our plight, our sufferings, and our struggles on the human level.

He also learned through His own human sufferings (Hebrews 2:9–10), and that caused Him to be “...a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that himself hath suffered being tempted [He, too, was tempted in all ways as we are], he is able to succour [relieve, help] them that are tempted” (Hebrews 2:17–18). Notice again, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities [He connects with our vulnerable condition]; but was in all points tempted like as [same as, comparable as] we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15). How much plainer, more pristine, can it be said? Christ was human, even to the point that He experienced the same struggles and anxieties we go through when fighting temptations within our natures that war against the spiritual expectations we have from God.

Consider the Context of Hebrews 2:8–18

Notice how the writer of Hebrews provides understanding and clarity to the question of why Jesus had to do what He did in the way that it was done—and, in the course of this narrative, explains and answers the questions surrounding the nature of Jesus Christ.

Talking about mankind and all that is potentially his, the writer explains, “...But now we see not yet all things put under him [mankind]. But [instead] we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God [the Father] should taste death [He was intended, created mortal, so He could literally die] for every man” (Hebrews 2:8–9).

We are being told very forthrightly that because God *only* hath immortality (1 Timothy 6:16), Jesus had to be made lower than even the angels. Why? “For the suffering of death.” Obviously, this means He was lower than the divine being level, too. It also explains why He had to be incarnated in flesh: so He could die, be killed! As an immortal, He could not!

The writer emphasizes this by mentioning it again: “Forasmuch then as the children [mankind, figuratively] are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same [same flesh and blood] that through death [by this means; this literal, actual experience] he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14). The inverse of this is obvious: if He didn’t die, He wouldn’t be able to destroy him, the devil, who has the power of death!

Here again, we are definitely told that by this method, that is, through death, He was able to destroy the devil’s power over death. This is confirmed by the apostle John. Notice: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to

What Is Modalism?

Modalism (also known as Sabellianism, Modalistic Monarchianism, Modal Monarchism, or Oneness Theology) is one of the more common theological errors concerning the nature of God.

Modalists claim God is *one* being who has merely manifested Himself in three different “modes” or appearances at various times. In other words, they claim God may appear one time as the Father, and another time as the Son, and again as the Holy Spirit.

The common teaching of the trinity is that God is three-in-one eternal coexistent persons, or *hypostases*, in one. By contrast, the modalist teaches there is but one God who manifests Himself in three different ways, or “modes”—as the Father, or the Son, or the Holy Spirit—but always consecutively, never at the same time.

Both trinitarianism and modalism experience great difficulty when attempting to reconcile them with Scripture. For example, *if* either theory is correct, we must ask:

1. Jesus said, “For my Father is greater than I” (John 14:28). Did He mean He was greater than *Himself*?
2. Jesus was begotten by His heavenly Father (Hebrews 1:18–19; Matthew 1:18,20). Did Jesus beget *Himself*?
3. When Jesus prayed to His Father in heaven (Matthew 6:9; John 17:1–26), did He pray to *Himself*?
4. When Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46), did Jesus forsake *Himself*?
5. When God said, “The LORD said unto my Lord, ‘Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool’ (Psalm 110:1; Matthew 22:44), did that mean Jesus was to sit on His *own* right hand?
6. When Jesus said of His return, “But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father” (Mark 13:32), did *one* part of Jesus know something that *another* part of Him did *not* know?
7. When Jesus ascended to His Father in heaven (John 20:17), did Jesus ascend to *Himself*?

Many more questions could be asked along this venue, but it is plain to any genuine truth seeker that neither modalism, nor trinitarianism are able to stand up to either logic or the bright light of Scripture. Both ideas present God as a “closed” Godhead into which no one else can enter. However, the Bible reveals that God is a family, now composed of the Father and the Son, and that He is now in the process of begetting *many* children who will reign and rule with Him in the soon coming Kingdom of God (Hebrews 2:10).

Be sure to request our free booklets, *Heresies Ancient and Modern*; *How To Study Your Bible*; and *Q&A—Questions and Answers, Volumes 1 and 2*. Ω

execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves [those who are dead] shall hear his [Jesus’] voice, and shall come forth” (John 5:25–29).

This goes to prove that Jesus Christ was dead. He tasted death for every man and woman so they could at some time have the opportunity to live eternally as an immortal if they should so choose—but it was through this experience and process of death that qualified Him with the authority over death. In other words, if Christ didn’t really die, and there was no resurrection, we’d all be doomed without a means of escaping the clutches of death’s conclusive grip (1 Corinthians 15:12–23).

Uniquely enough, we are encouraged to take time and remind ourselves of this fact annually when observing the Passover—it’s embedded foundationally in the holydays. It’s what our salvation is based upon. In other words, if Christ didn’t die, we don’t have a Savior—and as was already pointed out, we’d all be doomed to the bondage of death’s certainty! But notice what Paul says: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death [not His life] till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Incarnation, continued next page

Incarnation, continued from previous page

It is critical we acknowledge that the Creator God really did *literally* die for us, and while here in the flesh experienced the same exact temptations and pulls *we* do, yet without sin. This is the great achievement the Father and our Lord accomplished for us at immense risk and with enormous jeopardy surrounding them!

Now let's get back to Hebrews. "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings [Christ suffered in the flesh]. For both he that sanctifieth [Jesus Christ] and they who are sanctified [mankind] are all of one [Jesus and mankind were the same in flesh]: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren" (Hebrews 2:10–11).

That is an enormous realization, a convincing factor. A God Being condescending to the level of flesh and blood and experiencing similar suffering against sin. This is why He "will declare the name of His brethren" in the church—because He was like them and shared life in their dimension, on their level, including the bondage of death hovering over Him in His incarnated life. Notice, "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on them the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham [He was a human being]. Wherefore in all things [in every sense a human; all means *all*] it behooved him to be made like [not partially, but in exact likeness] unto his brethren [He was just like them], that he might be [moved by *empathy* to be] a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation [propitiation, atonement] for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:15–17).

What we're being told is, this was a moving experience for our Creator, formerly the Word of God, but now the born Son of God. "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour [help, relieve, aid] them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18). In other words, He too was tempted, and unless He could have failed, missed the mark (sinned), and disqualified Himself and eternally died, He would not have been tempted in all things as we are. Actually, that would promote a doctrine of predestination, advancing a "once saved, always saved" teaching, which we know are erroneous concepts.

No, quite the contrary, He had free moral agency, the freedom to choose. He could have failed and died the death with no reciprocating resurrection. That's why He is ultra-sensitive to our challenges and fears as mortal humans. He knows exactly what we are like and what we are in bondage to, death being the greatest bondage of all—and what I mean here is primarily the second death—a death with no associated resurrection attached—eternal death!

The Simplicity of Christ

The first generation of Christians, especially the original apostles, had no problem or confusion connected with Christ's humanity or divinity. They understood He was the Word incarnate—and vulnerable to human appetites any common mortal contends with who walks the earth. They watched Him live a human life and go through the normal human experiences of carnal living, but without sin, blameless to the corruption surrounding Him. However, it wasn't without pain, sacrifice, and suffering with the same struggles all of us go through as we engage our human nature with the Spirit of God that bears witness with ours (Romans 8:16).

Clearly, Christ was a divine being, but limited now from the glory and power He previously had, due to the restricted condition and limitations of confinement that comes with mortal flesh. Throughout Scripture He claimed He could do nothing without the Father and the Father worked through Him (John 5:19–24; 10:36–38; 14:9–11). But He knew who He was, and in His closing prayer, prior to His arrest, he prayed for strength and a return to the glory He had before His human birth. Notice what He said, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before [prior to, in front of] the world was" (John 17:4–5).

Unquestionably, Jesus the Christ was indeed the Word, the Creator of the God family who acted upon the request of the Father, representing Him and dying on behalf of the plan of salvation that was designed before the world was (2 Timothy 1:9) for the redemption of humanity. Christ was indeed humanly vulnerable and powerless, when compared to the way He was prior to His human incarnation. He was now completely dependent upon the Father to uphold Him, perform miracles through Him, and ultimately rescue Him from the strangle hold of death by a resurrection back to Spirit life after three days and three nights, entombed in the blackness of this unconscious death. And yes, the good news is the Father returned and did in fact resurrect Jesus back to life, thereby making the way possible for many more sons and daughters to be "born again," as glorious immortal spirit beings into the Family of God.

It is indeed a stupendous destiny that mankind has been created for, and now, thanks to the heroics and courage of both the Father and the Word—who now is His firstborn Son, Jesus the Christ, our elder brother, High Priest, and Savior—we have access to eternal life in the Kingdom of God. Now that is something to really be grateful for and to deeply appreciate! Ω

Questions & Answers

The Book of Life

Q A reader from San Diego, California asks, "What does it mean to [have one's name] written in the Book of Life?"

A The "Book of Life" is mentioned a total of seven times in the following passages: Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 20:15; 21:17.

Those whose names are in the Book of Life are the redeemed, or saved—those who "keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 12:17); who have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (7:14); who "follow the Lamb wherever He goes" (14:4). Those whose names are not in the Book of Life are the unsaved.

Revelation 3:5 suggests that unfaithfulness can lead to a person's name being blotted out of the Book of Life. It follows, then, that sinners, through repenting of their sins and putting their trust in Jesus Christ and His sacrificial and redemptive work, can have their names added to the Book of Life.

The expression "from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8; 17:8) does not mean that the names of all who would be saved were in the Book of Life from the very beginning. It merely indicates that the Book of Life has been open for entries since the beginning. Ω

Should We Use Leavened Bread at Passover?

Q A reader from Beeville, Texas writes: "It is my understanding that the Greek word *artos* always refers to leavened bread, while the word *azumos* means unleavened bread. The New Testament says that Christ gave His disciples *artos* at the Last Supper. Why, then, does the *Church of God International* use unleavened bread at the Passover service?" [paraphrased and condensed]

A The word *artos* is not limited to the definition "leavened bread." It can refer to bread of any kind, including the unleavened variety. The LXX (the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament, dating from before Christ) sometimes uses the term *artos* in texts that speak of the bread that was used during the Days of Unleavened Bread.

Having determined that the term can refer to any kind of bread, the next step is to determine which kind of bread best represents Christ. Since the memorial of His self-sacrifice is rooted in the ancient Passover/Unleavened Bread festival, and since leavening (in relation to the spring festival) is associated with sin (1 Corinthians 5:7–8), our conclusion is that unleavened bread is a most fitting symbol of the sinless Savior. Ω

Is the Devil Confined to Earth?

Q A reader from Westmoreland, Tennessee asks, "If Satan is confined to the earth, as we have traditionally believed, why does the book of Job record Satan visiting God in heaven?"

A While Scripture clearly teaches that Satan is active here on earth, I'm aware of no passage that says he is confined to our planet or its atmosphere. The descriptions of Satan appearing among the sons of God in their assemblages before Yahweh (Job 1–2) *could* mean that heaven is in some sense accessible to Satan. The description in Revelation 12:7–12, unless understood as purely symbolic, supports this possibility. However, there are other plausible explanations for these descriptions. In Job 1:6–12 and 2:1–7, the "sons of God" present themselves before Yahweh, and Satan (literally, *the Adversary*) comes among them. But the text does not identify the place of this assemblage. Yahweh and two angels appeared to Abraham in the plains of Mam're (Genesis 18). Then again, why should we think the meeting described in the book of Job could not have taken place on earth? Ω

Understanding How God Sees You

During this time of God's spring holydays, we are admonished to "count the cost" of being a Christian and to "examine ourselves whether we be in the faith" (Luke 14:28; 2 Corinthians 13:5). But do we truly understand how God sees us?

by Lloyd W. Cary



Lloyd W. Cary

As we grow through sequential stages of our lives, we all develop what we call a "self image"—a visualization of how we see ourselves. Many believe your self image is the "real" you. Some may see themselves as good, bad, beautiful, or ugly. Some may see themselves as superior, lucky, or just plain "hot." Others visualize themselves as inferior, poor, downtrodden, or unlucky.

Do You Care What Others Think About You?

Many are overly concerned about what *others* think about them, especially if their opinions of us do not match our *own* self image. Things get more complex when we mix in a plethora of rumors, gossip, misperceptions, untruths, half-truths, and a variety of extenuating circumstances. When things get testy, we tend to evaluate, appraise, and judge others by an assortment of yardsticks of our *own* making, resulting in "people problems," slanted attitudes, suspicions, and outright paranoia. Young people, especially, are intimidated by what others think of them. Many are driven by the opinions of their peers. A few become so sensitive and despondent that they are driven to suicide.

But should we allow the opinions of others to bother us all that much? Should we allow the negative opinions, attitudes, and perceptions of others to determine our behavior and outlook in life?

As a Christian, much of your happiness in life depends on *HOW YOU THINK GOD SEES YOU*. Perceptions vary widely. Some professing Christians with a distorted view on law and grace believe in universal salvation—that *all* men, including Satan and his demons—will be saved. Others, who are not obediently conscious of God and the Bible, believe the majority of mankind will spend an eternity of pain and suffering in an ever-burning hellfire or a state in between.

So, amid a glut of perceptions and misperceptions, let's take a birdseye view of what GOD thinks about you. After all, *His* is the only opinion that really counts.

Sadly, many of us have a *mistaken* idea of God's opinion of us. Many search the Bible for verses such as, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23) and "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23) and ask, "Who then can be saved" (Mark 10:26)?

We may sometimes think God is *disappointed* in us, or that we'll *never measure up*. We may even believe God is *angry* with us, because try as we might, we can't stop sinning.

Christian, beware! Whenever a Christian thinks *less* of himself than what GOD thinks of him, that person is truly out of touch with spiritual reality.

But if we want to know the *truth*, we need to go to the source: God Himself!

What does God require of us? Let the Scriptures speak: "And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God REQUIRE of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good" (Deuteronomy 10:12–13)?

2 Corinthians 6:17–18 goes on to say, "Wherefore *come out* from among them, and *be ye separate*, saith the Lord, and *touch not* the unclean [sinful] thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, **AND YE SHALL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS**, saith the Lord Almighty." (Also see Revelation 18:4.) Did you catch that? God will be our Father and "**YE SHALL BE MY SONS AND DAUGHTERS**, saith the Lord Almighty."

If we have done what God's Word *tells* us to do in Acts 2:38—repented of our sins and been baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, God promises that we will receive the free gift of His Holy Spirit. This places us in a whole different category from what we had been in before. Our sins have been forgiven and we are, indeed, begotten sons and daughters of God the Father. Our sins are now covered by the atoning blood of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Since the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), either we trust and accept the atoning blood of Jesus Christ to pay for our sins—or

we will have to pay the penalty for sin ourselves!

Our God is a pragmatic, realistic God. He is so certain of the outcome of things that to Him, they are a certainty. Therefore, He often calls things that *will* be as though they *are*. Take, for example, the matter of prophecy. Prophecy is merely history written in advance. However, God is so certain about the outcome of prophecies of certain people, countries, and events that He can predict the outcome with certainty even before it happens.

So, first and foremost, as 2 Corinthians 6:17–18 points out, God now sees you as His beloved sons and daughters! If you are a Christian, you are *not a stranger* to God. You are *not an orphan* (even though you may sometimes feel alone). Know this: our heavenly Father *knows* you, has *called* you, *loves* you, and *sees* you as one of His very own children! *If* God had a refrigerator, *your* picture would be on it!

Continued on next page

A Most Important Question

What does it *mean* to be a Christian? How would you answer? A random selection of people were asked this question, and following is a sampling of their responses:

- "To follow Jesus and copy Him."
- "To accept Christ as Lord and Savior in your heart."
- "To be a good person and to share with others."
- "To go to Mass, say the Rosary, and receive Holy Communion."
- "I don't believe you have to go to church to be a Christian."

Even dictionaries offer a vast array of definitions, from "believing in or belonging to the religion of Jesus Christ" to "a decent or presentable person." It is not surprising that many find it difficult to explain what it means to be a Christian.

The Trend Of Liberalism Throughout Christendom

Today, among professed Christians—even among those in the same denominations—one can find a wide range of views on such subjects as the theory of evolution, the divine inspiration of the Bible, church involvement in politics, and the sharing of one's faith with others. Moral issues on topics such as abortion, homosexuality, and couples living together without being married, often become a hotbed of controversy. The unmistakable trend is incremental liberalization. Situation ethics reigns supreme. The Bible is seldom consulted for final answers.

Several Protestant churches, for instance, recently voted to uphold the right of a church "to elect an openly gay elder to its governing board," reported the journal *Christian Century*. Certain theologians have even proffered the view that faith in Jesus is not crucial to salvation. They believe that Jews, Muslims, and others "may be as likely to enter heaven [as Christians are]," said a report in *The New York Times*. Yes, opinions, opinions, opinions! BUT WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Can you picture, for example, a Marxist advocating capitalism, or a free society promoting dictatorship, or an atheist recommending Christianity? Hardly. Yet, when you consider the contradictions and non-uniformity of views held by today's professed Christians, you see beliefs that are poles apart and that frequently contradict what Jesus Christ plainly taught. Who, what is their ultimate authority? God and His Word—or opinions?

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that ye all speak THE SAME THING*, and that there be *NO DIVISIONS among you*; but that ye *be perfectly joined together in the SAME MIND and in the SAME JUDGMENT*" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

Ω

Questions? Be sure to request our booklet, *How To Be A Real Christian*.

How God Sees You!

Turn to 1 Peter 2:9 in your own Bible and believe what it says. Once you have repented of your sins, been baptized, and received God’s Holy Spirit, **THIS IS HOW HE SEES YOU NOW!!**

“BUT YE ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION, A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD, AN HOLY NATION, A PECULIAR PEOPLE; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Let’s examine this verse a little more closely. God begins describing His people this way: **“BUT YE ARE A CHOSEN GENERATION** [people].”

Webster defines “chosen” as “selected from a number; picked out; elect; to pick from among others.” Matthew 22:14 tells us, “For many are called [that is, many have heard the true Gospel preached], but few are chosen [that is, comparatively few chose to respond to it]” (Matthew 22:14). Jesus said, “No man *can* come to me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw* him” (John 6:44). He went on to confirm, “Therefore said I unto you, that no man *can* come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father” (John 6:65).

We are not chosen because of race, creed, talent, money, our good works, or even our good looks (Titus 3:5). We are called and chosen of God the Father because He *saw* something in us—something He can refine and use. His calling was not based on how righteous or unrighteous you thought you were. At conversion and baptism, your sins were washed away, and God said, “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). There is *nothing* you can do to earn salvation; it is entirely through grace. He pardoned you, had mercy upon you, and loves you as His begotten sons and daughters. Romans 8:1 reassures us, “There is therefore now *no condemnation* to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

We were chosen because we are an active part of God’s plan in establishing His coming government—the Kingdom of God on earth. In what way? In what capacity?

1 Peter 2:9 goes on to say, **“YE ARE...A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD** [people].”

Webster defines “royalty” as “having characteristics of a king; kingly; elite; noble; majestic.”

God’s people are ROYAL because of their begettal into the royal Family of God (Romans 8:14–15). They are God’s offspring, His very sons and daughters, destined to be kings and priests (Romans 5:10).

In this life we act as a priesthood when we intercede for others in our prayers (1 Timothy 2:1).

1 Peter 2:9 continues, **“YE ARE...AN HOLY NATION** [people].”

Webster defines “holy” as “set apart for holy use; spiritually whole; of proven virtue; godly.”

God’s people deliberately and voluntarily set themselves *apart* from the world in the worship and service of God (for example, by observing the Sabbath and holydays, by avoiding unclean meats, and especially in the ways we *think*).

The Holy Spirit pricks our consciences and empowers us to walk the Christian walk.

God’s Word predicts that, as a result, **“YE ARE...A PECULIAR PEOPLE”** (1 Peter 2:9).

“Peculiar,” as used here, according to Websters, means “privately owned; not common; private property.”

The Christian who truly belongs to God is no longer his own. This sets him apart and makes him different, or peculiar, to the world, and outstanding to God. We are bought with a price—the life of our precious Savior (1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23).

God “Shoved Out”

Sadly, the world has pushed God out of its consciousness—out of its schools, out of its courtrooms, and out of its life. Romans 1:28 puts it this way: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient.” Have *we* ever “shoved God out” of our lives in favor of something else?

Predictively, in direct proportion to the degree people—and the nation at large—push God out of their lives, the more evil moves in. Is it any wonder there is so much evil and suffering in the world today?

Although the world at large has turned its back on God, *you* have not! God *sees* the difference! The Christian glorifies God by giving Him *first* place in his life (Matthew 6:33). We are analogized as the *salt* of the earth and the *light* of the world (Matthew 5:13–14). Do others see Jesus in you?

Psalms 1:1–2 reads, “Blessed is the man that *walketh* not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor *standeth* in the way of sinners, nor *sitteth* in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” This sets you light-years apart from most of humanity.

When you see yourself as *God* sees you, it can change your entire perspective on life. It’s not pride or vanity or self-righteousness. It’s the

GOD CAN USE YOU!

There are many reasons why God shouldn’t have called you. But don’t worry—you’re in good company. . . .

- Moses stuttered.
- David's armor didn't fit.
- John Mark was rejected by Paul.
- Timothy had health problems.
- Hosea's wife was a prostitute.
- Amos' only training was in the school of fig tree pruning.
- Jacob was a liar.
- David had an affair.
- Solomon was too rich.
- Jesus was too poor.
- Abraham was too old.
- David was too young.
- Peter was afraid of death.
- Lazarus was dead.
- John was self-righteous.
- Naomi was a widow.
- Paul was a murderer.
- So was Moses.
- Jonah ran from God.
- Miriam was a gossip.
- Gideon and Thomas both doubted.
- Jeremiah was depressed and suicidal.
- Elijah was burned out.
- John the Baptist was a fearless loudmouth.
- Martha was a worry-wart.
- Samson had long hair, was an adulterer, and a mass-murderer.
- Noah got drunk.
- Moses had a short fuse.
- So did Peter, Paul—lots of folks did.

Furthermore:

- Satan says, “You’re not worthy”—and he’s right.
- Jesus says, “That’s OK. I AM.”
- Satan looks back and sees our mistakes.
- God looks back and sees the stake.
- God is not through—He can still use you!

Note: “And these *all*, having obtained a good report through faith, received *not* the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without *us* should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:39–40). Ω

truth, supported by the Bible. We need to develop the talents and gifts God has given us and walk the walk He has set before us. Live knowing you are a child of God, mightily and wonderfully loved. Stay humble. Study His Word. Be instant prayer. Get involved in His Work. Praise God. Always.

In conclusion, whenever you may be feeling unworthy, low, down or blue, **just remember who you *are* and how *God* sees you!** Ω

Who Gets the Credit?

by Lonnie C. Hendrix



Lonnie C. Hendrix

Over the years that I have been a part of God's church, I have observed members give ministers compliments on their messages, articles, and books. Although there is certainly nothing wrong with giving someone a compliment, I have often wondered if we really understand and appreciate the source of those messages. I wonder if we sometimes look at the instrument in God's hands instead of looking at God.

Moreover, it appears to me there is a widespread inclination on the part of humans to take credit for any successful outcome with which they have been involved or associated. There is an old proverb which states "Success has many fathers, but failure is an orphan." Some would characterize this phenomenon as pride; others would call it ego. Whatever we decide to call it, we can all agree that it seems to be a common affliction of humankind.

During the recent election cycle for President of the United States, a great hullabaloo was made of the fact that one of the candidates implied there were other factors that contributed to the successes of individual businesses besides the enterprise and industriousness of their founders. "How dare he suggest that I didn't build my own business!" responded many. "I built my business with my own two hands," others declared.

In the midst of this mayhem, I was thinking about a scripture that my family reads every year at Thanksgiving. Moses wrote: "For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass. When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee. Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God...Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein; And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied; Then thine heart be lifted up and thou forget the LORD thy God...And thou say in thine heart, *My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.* But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth..." (Deuteronomy 8:7-18).

Who gets the credit? The right answer is *God!* James wrote that God is the source of **EVERYTHING** that is good and perfect in our lives (James 1:17). We can take credit for the mistakes and imperfections.

Some years back, there was a young Jewish couple suffering through a period of intense persecution in the country where they were living. At the time, the state of Israel did not exist. There was no refuge or place to flee the suffering.

Even so, in the midst of this hardship, they had a baby. Their joy at the birth of their son, however, was cut short by circumstances there. The country where they were living at the time had just embarked on a policy of genocide against their people—a policy of systematic destruction and murder. Moreover, the outside world appeared to be either completely indifferent to the fate of their people or powerless to intervene on their behalf.

Hence, in order to ensure the child's survival, the couple decided to give him to a young woman who belonged to the ruling party. Over the years that followed, the boy witnessed some of the abuse, mistreatment, and murder of his people in the wretched labor camps that the ruling party had instituted. Nevertheless, the boy personally survived the horrors.

As an adult, he left the country and began wandering around the world in search of a new life for himself. Even so, the memory of what he had witnessed in the camps continued to haunt him. The images of what had gone on there were seared into his memory. "How could God abandon His people to such a fate?" he asked himself. It gnawed at him. There was no relief in having escaped their fate. He simply could not forget what had happened to his people.

Nevertheless, before too long, he met and married a nice young woman and settled down in her country to raise a family of his own. He worked for his father-in-law, and the couple was soon blessed with a son of their own.

Although the man was overjoyed by the birth of his child, the old memories of the labor camps continued to haunt him. They would not let him go.

Then something wonderful happened. God began to draw the man to Himself. God began to call the man into His church. With that calling came awareness that God had a mission for him. God made it clear to this man that He had a service He wanted him to perform on behalf of His people.

Of course, many readers will by now have guessed that we have been talking about Moses. Likewise, many of you are probably wondering why I pulled a "Paul Harvey" and did not clearly identify my subject at the start.

The reason that we approached this person's story from the vantage point of anonymity is an integral part of the point that this article is attempting to make. Most of us place Moses on a pedestal, almost on a divine plane. The truth is that he was just a man with profound gifts and faults, just like the rest of us. He was an instrument in God's hands. Unfortunately, just like the Israelites before us, we have a tendency to look at the man before us instead of the God above us.

Moreover, Moses himself was not immune to this phenomenon. When God called him into His service, Moses was reluctant to undertake the mission because his eyes were not on God. He was looking at himself, and he did not care for what he saw. In short, he did not have any confidence in his ability to carry out God's mission. It simply did not occur to this man we hold in such high esteem to look at God's ability to carry out His mission through him (Exodus 4:1-17).

Once again, in fairness to Moses, this seems to be a common affliction of humans. We all tend to look at ourselves or each other instead of God. "I'm the one who is actually going to have to do this!" we tell ourselves.

Although it is written that Moses was the most humble person on the face of the earth at the time (Numbers 12:3), it may surprise some of us to learn that Moses struggled with this phenomenon throughout his ministry. This fact is made plain by an incident at the Waters of Meribah.

We are all familiar with the story of how God allowed Egypt to be afflicted with ten plagues, and how Pharaoh eventually consented to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt as a consequence. Likewise, we all remember how God led them out into the wilderness under Moses' leadership, and how they bickered, griped, and complained the whole way. They were looking at the man in front of them instead of the God above them. Then they came at last to a place we call Meribah.

How many times have we read these scriptures without grasping the import of what they were telling us? What happened at Meribah? Whatever happened there, it kept Moses and Aaron out of the Promised Land!

Our understanding of this event is not helped by the fact that there are a number of references to what happened there (one of which was probably written by Moses himself), and that all of these accounts are somewhat obscured by the language of the King James Version of the Bible. Hence, it is imperative that we bring the different accounts together and employ more modern language in examining these scriptures. Toward that end, we will be employing *The New Living Translation* in the quotations that follow.

In the book of Exodus, we read: "At the LORD's command, the whole community of Israel left the wilderness of Sin and moved from place to place. Eventually they camped at Rephidim, but there was no water there for the people to drink. So once more the people complained against Moses. 'Give us water to drink!' they demanded. 'Quiet!' Moses replied. 'Why are you complaining against me? And why are you testing the LORD?' But tormented by thirst, they continued to argue with Moses...Then Moses cried out to the LORD, 'What should I do with these people? They are ready to stone me!' The LORD said to Moses, 'Walk out in front of the people. Take your staff...Strike the rock, and water will come gushing out. Then the people will be able to drink.' So Moses struck the rock as he was told, and water gushed out as the elders looked on. Moses named the place Massah (which means 'test') and Meribah (which means 'arguing') because the people of Israel argued with Moses and tested the LORD by saying, 'Is the LORD here with us or not?'" (Exodus 17:1-7). From this scripture, it is clear that the Israelites were looking to Moses, not to God; but what did Moses do wrong?

Whatever it was, it had to be pretty bad, because we read in Deuteronomy: "That same day the LORD said to Moses, 'Go to Moab, to the mountains east of the river, and climb Mount Nebo, which is across from Jericho. Look out across the land of Canaan, the land I am giving to the people of Israel as their own special possession. Then you will die there on the mountain. You will join your ancestors, just as Aaron, your brother, died on Mount Hor and joined his ancestors. For both of you betrayed me with the Israelites at the waters of Meribah at Kadesh in the wilderness of Zin. You failed to demonstrate my holiness to the people of Israel there. So you will see the land from a distance, but you may not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel'" (Deuteronomy 32:48-52). It is clear from these scriptures that God felt betrayed by whatever Moses and Aaron had done, and that they had failed to demonstrate His holiness to the Israelites.

We read in the book of Numbers: "In the first month of the year, the whole community of Israel arrived in the wilderness of Zin and camped at

Credit, continued on page 13

I Saw the Storm!

by Vivian Hall



Vivian Hall

Recently, I had the opportunity to leave the South, where I am accustomed to the surroundings, traditions, and weather, for an extended visit in the north-eastern part of our nation.

My travel was by air, shortly before the fall holidays. The flight was a bit mundane with neither positive nor negative happenings, and took a full day.

I settled into a comfortable state and enjoyed the luxury of schedules made by others.

I was amazed and intrigued to look around and watch scampering birds and squirrels and a rabbit or two. It becomes easier to pray quietly as you look outside yourself.

Quickly the Feast of Tabernacles arrived. The brethren were warm and the hotel satisfactory. Loving Feast-goers were all about.

The eight days went quickly. The messages were inspiring and great. Fellowship was warm and loving, making lasting impressions. My visit was centered in New York, where we went back to when the Festival was over.

A couple of days later, havoc erupted. Clouds rolled in bringing rain, high winds, and walls of ocean water. About 36 to 48 hours of destruction followed. The Eastern Seaboard was under attack by this powerful storm called Sandy. The devastation paralyzed mostly three states and three islands. The news reported multiple states losing power, transportation, goods, and lives. High winds blew houses off foundations and washed them down streets that now looked like rivers. Giant trees were toppled or broken and houses were struck by lightning.

This super-storm broke records of destruction, anguish and turmoil. My position on the west side of a mountain remained reasonably intact. Unlike

many lower down, we had heat, lights, TV, telephone service, and running water. I saw giant trees rock and break, and homes tossed about like toys, then squished and destroyed. Sadly, many lost all in minutes.

If any good was seen, it was all the different people showing compassion for other people. People truly can love if they decide to. Could be, stress of life makes some hostile and mean.

Airports were damaged and closed. Busses were stalled and stopped. Rail movement was halted. Taxis were limited and different. Multiple groups shared taxis when they were found. Subways were damaged and flooded. The few modes of travel available had limited access, with long lines and waits. A curfew was set and law enforcement from other areas were activated to assist. Surprisingly, the crime rate was the lowest in recent history. Less than a dozen looters were about.

Eventually, some form of order was restored, and travel finally resumed. Airports reopened with masses of displaced people making effort to finally leave. My flight was finally rescheduled and I was allowed to go back to the South. There were very few people on the arriving planes. My flight status was elevated to VIP. What my outstanding lesson was in all this was something I already knew: GOD REALLY DOES HEAR AND ANSWER PRAYER! Now cemented, this became a great comfort. Ω

In All Things...

Be it big or small, go to GOD with ALL.

There is nothing of which HE is unaware. HE truly does answer PRAYER.

HE takes away the anguish. HE replaces it with TRUST.

HE relaxes you when squeamish. COMMUNICATION is a must.

It is foolish to decide not to bother. GOD only is our FATHER.

The outcome depends on you. What you say. What you do.

You CAN listen. You MUST obey. Do not learn all lessons THE HARD WAY.

Vivian Hall

Credit, continued from previous page

Kadesh...There was no water for the people to drink at that place, so they rebelled against Moses and Aaron. The people blamed Moses...Moses and Aaron turned away from the people and went to the entrance of the Tabernacle, where they fell face down on the ground. Then the glorious presence of the LORD appeared to them, and the Lord said to Moses, 'You and Aaron must take the staff and assemble the entire community. As the people watch, *speak* to the rock over there, and it will pour out its water. You will provide enough water from the rock to satisfy the whole community and their livestock.' So Moses did as he was told. He took the staff from the place where it was kept before the LORD. Then he and Aaron summoned the people to come and gather at the rock. 'Listen, you rebels!' he shouted. 'Must **WE** bring you water from this rock?' Then Moses raised his hand and *struck* the rock twice with the staff, and water gushed out. So the entire community and their livestock drank their fill. But the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, 'Because YOU DID NOT TRUST ME ENOUGH TO DEMONSTRATE MY HOLINESS TO THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL, you will not lead them into the land I am giving them! This place was known as the waters of Meribah...because there the people of Israel argued with the LORD, and there he demonstrated his holiness among them' (Numbers 20:1-13).

Finally, a clear picture emerges about what happened at Meribah. The Israelites were focused on Moses and Aaron as their human leaders, and both men were feeling the pressure. God told them to *command* the rock to surrender its water in His name, but Moses and Aaron made it look like *they* had provided the water for the Israelites. In short, they did not give God the credit for this miracle, and this kept both of them out of the Promised Land!

Jesus Christ knew where the credit belongs. He always pointed to the Father (John 5:31-47; 12:44-50). When God called the Gentiles into His church, Peter understood who got the credit for what had happened (Acts 10). Finally, the apostle Paul proclaimed that everything he and his associates had done was just a part of God's work (1 Corinthians 3:1-9).

Brethren, we also have to accept and fully understand this point: GOD deserves the credit for anything and everything that is good in our lives. Paul said that even people who have never had the Bible should understand this concept. He said that the world around us teaches us that God is THE SOURCE (Romans 1:18-21). Even our repentance from sin is God's gift to us (Romans 2:4). We cannot do anything to earn our salvation. It is entirely God's gift to us. The good works that we do in this life are the ones that He designated for us to do (Ephesians 2:4-10). We exercise the **GIFTS** that He has placed within His church (Romans 12:3-8). If we really want to get into God's promised land and not just see it from a distance, we must understand that to God alone goes the glory, the credit, and the praise! Ω

Have You Seen This?

Here is an archive of written material for you to study right alongside your own Bible. It is the *Armor of God* periodical.

The story of the Church of God down through the annals of history is quite a saga. It is written in the blood, sweat, and tears of literally tens of thousands of God-fearing devoted people simply caught in the cross-fire of so-called "Christian" religious persecution. Over the centuries, this true story develops into an epic that is sometimes stranger than fiction when considering who was responsible for inflicting what some considered a merciless genocide on quiet, hard-working, God-fearing family communities—all in the name of Jesus Christ and Rome's Universal (Catholic) Church.

What is the truth concerning these historical benchmarks that discolor and blister the alleged Christian church? How is it that a "work of charity" in the name of Jesus Christ can continue to be so revered in our modern day and yet be responsible for so much innocent bloodshed—and not be held accountable, but instead remain believable? Could it be because most of today's secular society and culture is unaware? Or perhaps they just don't care, because our humanistic *pop-culture* has them too distracted. Maybe they really are "too busy" to take the time to search out the information that discloses these atrocities and changes. Or perhaps many have simply lost the love for God's truth.

Whatever the reason, this issue of the **Armor of God** has assembled a variety of in-depth, hard-hitting articles revealing information which for some will be extremely eye opening regarding Christian church history. You can also find it on our new website at www.cgi.org

Here are some of the articles in this Church History edition:

- The Chronicles of the Early New Testament Church
- Polycarp: A Man On Fire, Lighting The Way
- The Church That Jesus Built Is Not What Most People Think
- A Snapshot of The Historical True church
- Who Changed The Sabbath to Sunday?
- A History of Church Buildings
- Heresies: Ancient And Modern
- How Passover Was Replaced By Easter
- Is Christmas Christian?
- The Trinity: Is It Biblical?

My Bible And I

(John 3:31-33 and Psalm 119)

We've traveled together,
My Bible and I,
Through all kinds of weather,
With smile or with sigh!
In sorrow or in sunshine,
In tempest or calm!
Thy friendship unchanging,
My lamp and my psalm.

We've traveled together,
My Bible and I,
When life had grown weary,
And death e'en was nigh!
But all through the darkness
Of mist or of wrong,
I found there a solace,
A prayer, and a song.

So now who shall part us,
My Bible and I?
Shall "isms" or schisms,
Or "new lights" who try?
Shall shadow for substance,
Or stone for good bread,
Supplant thy sound wisdom,
Give folly instead?

Ah, no my dear Bible,
Exponent of light!
Thou sword of the spirit,
Put error to flight!
And still through life's journey,
Until my last sigh,
We'll travel together,
My Bible and I.

—Charles Sandford—

Hope and Change God's Surprises

by Alice Bounds



Alice Bounds

Can you believe it? If you were around in 1970, did you expect to see the year 2013—with no Jesus Christ on the Throne in Jerusalem? I certainly did not.

America is still America! The "fiscal cliff" has so far been survived. President Obama's wants seem to be satisfied—for now. The country continues its downward spiral—that is, if it all depends on the federal government. Fortunately, it doesn't.

Now! We the people will reveal the DNA of Americans! Already, I can feel it in the air!

First of all, the states—26 of which have refused the "exchange" demands from Washington, pertaining to the healthcare law—may well begin to better publicize and communicate their ideas and improvements. Also, higher taxes and the Obama "war on the rich" and "war on business," which appeared to depress growth and activity, may instead reveal the actual resiliency and determination that drive the American spirit. While they pay the new taxes and obey the new laws, that fiery work ethic of the American spirit—that indomitable spirit of accomplishment and success—will rise above the street clamor and mobbish gangsterism that seem empowered today.

Whereas their timidity and fear of censure or criticism have hushed the sounds of the institutions of charitable hospitality and neighborly assistance in recent decades, they, having little to lose now, could blossom forth in ways that the present generation may never have seen before.

Local groups of concerned citizens—Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, Civitan Clubs, business and professional groups—may well become organized to sponsor and encourage greater civic responsibility in towns and cities.

The general population may begin—from window plants to vegetable gardens—to supplement their diminished paychecks with the delightful, nourishing products of their new experiment with nature. They may teach their children the pleasure and satisfaction of planting a seed, watching it sprout and grow, and then seeing its fruits on their table. In all of this, there are thousands of opportunities to inject powerful information about God. Better still, there will be time to learn deeply from personal contact with God through observing His Creation and taking time to pray to Him and to talk together about Him.

Neighbors may actually learn to leave televisions and computers, preferring to get together for picnics, cookouts, backyard foot races, ball games, croquet, and badminton. Families will become neighbors; neighbors will become neighborhoods; and neighborhoods will be brethren, meeting together in their common desire to praise God for the new joys they now share.

Schools will be joyful places of real learning, with actual patriotic allegiance and recognition of our dependence upon and reverence for God. Our minds will certainly not be wasted, but will be exercised and challenged to reach their highest possible potential.

Could it be that what many of us have mourned as the worst possible curse—the destruction and loss of all the wealth, technologies, and habits of our twentieth century world—may actually turn out to be a very great blessing?

God is so good at such surprises!

Ω

Feast Pictures From Mananasi, Kenya

These belated Feast of Tabernacles photos just came in:

"The main reason which made us to fail to send the photos you asked us to send is on 15th of February there was disconnection of network services in our home town. We apologize for this."



Members of CGI During the Last Great Day

Alice Bounds is from Bossier City, Louisiana. She is a longtime member of the Church of God, is disabled, and is 80 years young. Her son, Kenneth, is a member of the Shreveport Church of God International.

Church News

Ordination of Horane Smith, Toronto

On December 8, 2012, Horane Smith of the Toronto congregation was ordained into the ministry.

Horane started attending the CGI in February of 1985, at the congregation in Kingston, Jamaica. “I saw 12 members sitting in a semi-circle that day,” he recalls. “We listened to the featured sermon on an audio cassette player. It took a few minutes for that to sink in, because I had no clue that the church service was going to be like that. Nevertheless, from that day, I never looked back.” Horane was baptized during the Feast of Tabernacles in October of that year. His wife Beverly followed the next Feast.

When Horane migrated from Jamaica to Canada in December of 1990, the Jamaican congregation had grown to approximately 60 people. On arrival to Canada, Horane, Beverly, and their four children began attending the CGI Toronto congregation, and on his first day at services, to his surprise, there were once again 12 people in the congregation as well. “I remember saying to myself, this is truly a start all over again,” Horane recollects.

Horane has been with the Toronto congregation from 1990, serving as host from 1996 to 2009, and as deacon from 2004 to 2012. Also a credentialed speaker with CGI since 1996, he has spoken at a number of congregations throughout North America. A former journalist, television news producer/director, and award-winning author of ten published books, Horane also serves as editor of CGI Toronto’s flagship magazine, *Prevail*. He has also written and directed two Christian-themed plays for the youth in the congregation.

Horane is a graduate of the CGI’s Ministerial Apprenticeship Program and was mentored by pastor George Ramocan over a two-year period.

Horane’s ordination, which was attended by CGI pastors Charles Groce, Wayne Hendrix, George Ramacon, Murray Palmatier, and Bill Watson, was received with great joy by the Toronto congregation. Horane accepted the ordination with his wife Beverly and children Shey, Samar, Jordi, and Codi by his side.

When asked what becoming an ordained minister means to him personally, pastor Smith responded: “It’s also about service. I’m not in this for me. It’s my answer to God’s call for me to serve His flock in this capacity, which is in itself a very serious responsibility. It took a long time for me to decide whether I should be in this role, mainly because I wanted to be absolutely sure that it was God’s calling and I would be ready for it.”

Horane will serve as pastor of the Toronto congregation, alongside pastor George Ramocan, and under the leadership of senior pastor Bill Watson.

On behalf of the Toronto congregation and the entire *Church of God International*, we congratulate pastor Horane Smith on his ordination into the ministry, and we wish him all the very best as he continues to fulfill God’s will for his life. In all things we give God the honor and the glory. Ω

Submitted by Zion Hezekiah



The Laying On of Hands by the Ministry



Horane Smith and Bill Watson



Horane Smith



Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path (Psalms 119:105).

Questions & Answers

Q What is the meaning of “Sela,” which occurs frequently in the Psalms?

A It is believed to be a musical sign, similar to what is now called the “rest” sign. It has been variously defined as meaning “pause” or “meditate.” One rather good suggestion is that it means “Stop and think about that!” Ω

The Law of God

Old Testament

- 1. *Thou shalt have no other gods before me* (Exodus 20:3)
- 2. *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments* (Exodus 20:4–6)
- 3. *Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain* (Exodus 20:7)
- 4. *Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it* (Exodus 20:8–11)
- 5. *Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee* (Exodus 20:12)
- 6. *Thou shalt not kill* (Exodus 20:13)
- 7. *Thou shalt not commit adultery* (Exodus 20:14)
- 8. *Thou shalt not steal* (Exodus 20:15)
- 9. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour* (Exodus 20:16)
- 10. *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's* (Exodus 20:17)

The Law of God

New Testament

- 1. *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve* (Matthew 4:10)
- 2. *Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen* (1 John 5:21); *Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device* (Acts 17:29)
- 3. *That the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed* (1 Timothy 6:1)
- 4. *Pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day* (Matthew 24:20); *The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath* (Mark 2:27–28); *For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works* (Hebrews 4:4); *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his* (Hebrews 4:9–10); *And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures* (Acts 17:2)
- 5. *Honour thy father and thy mother* (Matthew 19:19)
- 6. *Thou shalt not kill* (Romans 13:9)
- 7. *Thou shalt not commit adultery* (Matthew 19:18)
- 8. *Thou shalt not steal* (Romans 13:9)
- 9. *Thou shalt not bear false witness* (Romans 13:9)
- 10. *Thou shalt not covet* (Romans 7:7)

Ω



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