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PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH



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## DEITY or DECEIVER?

### Jesus Christ According to the Scriptures

by G. Richard Fisher

“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ saith the LORD. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.’” So says Yahweh through the prophet Isaiah (55:8,9).

Evangelicals recognize that when it comes to the deep truths of the essence and character of God we are totally dependent on the revealed Word of God and not our feelings or the unaided human mind.

Louis Berkhof in his **Systematic Theology** discusses the difficulty of completely understanding the Trinity and the Deity of Christ and gives some historical perspective on man’s attempt to grasp these truths. He shows that the age of reason brought a diminishing of trust in Scripture and moved men toward total dependence on human reasoning. He states it thus:

“But from the last part of the eighteenth century on this doctrine was made the butt of persistent attacks. The Age of Reason set in, and it was declared to be unworthy of man to accept on the authority of Scripture what was clearly contrary to human reason. That which did not commend itself to this new arbiter was simply



declared to be erroneous. Individual philosophers and theologians now tried their hand at solving the problem presented by Christ, in order that they might offer the Church a substitute for the two-nature doctrine. They took their starting point in the human Jesus, and even after a century of painstaking research found in Jesus no more than a man with a divine element in Him. Schleiermacher spoke of a man with a supreme God-consciousness, Ritschl, of a man having the value of a God,

Wendt of a man standing in a continual inward fellowship of love with God, Beyschlag, of a God-filled man, and Sanday, of a man with an inrush of the divine in the sub-consciousness; — but Christ is and remains merely a man. To-day the liberal school represented by Harnack, the eschatological school of Weiss and Schweitzer, and the more recent school of comparative religion, headed by Bousset and Kir-sopp Lake, all agree in denuding Christ of His true deity, and in reducing Him to human dimensions. To the first, our Lord is merely a great ethical teacher; to the second, an apocalyptic seer; and to the third, a peerless leader to an exalted destiny. They regard the Christ of the Church as the creation of Hellenism, or of Judaism, or of the two combined. To-day, however, the whole epistemology of the previous century is called in question, and the sufficiency of human reason for the interpretation of ultimate truth is seriously questioned. There is a new emphasis on revelation” (pg. 316).

The Deity of Jesus and the related doctrine of the Trinity are perhaps the most difficult doctrines in the entire range of Scripture. These issues have to be approached prayerfully and reverently not like the old preacher who bragged that he could “unscrew

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# EDITORIALS

## WHO IS KING OF THE HILL?

Latrun! Not many know about the Battle of Latrun, but it makes an instructive model to illustrate the Christian life. Latrun, named after the Trappist monastery on the heights, is a hillock overlooking the main pass into West Jerusalem. The Arabs call the valley below Bab El Wad and the pass is famous because of Joshua's exploits there when the sun stood still (Joshua 10).

In May, 1948, the Jordanians occupied and controlled Latrun, giving them control of that major pass into Jerusalem. Dominating the heights the Arab Legions reveled in the fact that they were able to destroy one Jewish convoy after another. Food shipped by truck from Tel Aviv was intended for the undernourished population of Israel's capital city, but the Arabs kept that food from arriving. (See, **Atlas for the Arab-Israeli Conflict** by Martin Gilbert, pp. 45-46.) Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion knew the city was on the brink of starvation and possible annihilation. Severe rationing had already begun.

Latrun had to be conquered. The road had to be opened. Consequently, Ben Gurion ordered an assault on the hill. Israeli soldiers were briefed on attempting a charge up its slopes. This was to be done in the middle of the night so that the Arab forces could be taken unaware. But everything went wrong. The attack began three hours late. Day began to break and the advancing Israeli soldiers were as visible as ducks in a gallery.

The Israelis were stuck to the sides of the hill in full view. The Arabs fired down unmercifully and the volleys wounded and killed many. Those left alive were pinned in place. Black flies bit and tormented the Jewish soldiers. Gunfire set a wheat field nearly aflame adding heat, smoke and more misery. Choked, bloodied and blinded, the Israeli soldiers tried to retreat, which further exposed them. They suffered severe casualties because of Arab gunfire. The hill was lost and the enemy stayed entrenched. It was a devastating and brutal loss for the fledgling State of Israel.

Lynn Reid Banks sums up the disaster at Latrun in her book, **A Torn Country**, page 161:

"The Teggart fortress at Latrun - that vital spot, the key to Jerusalem - had actually lain empty for forty-eight hours at the time Glubb sent in his forces. On May 14, Kawakji, who had been occupying it, pulled his men out without prior notice and without informing his so-called allies. Had the Israelis capitalized on this godsent opportunity to secure Latrun for themselves, much bloodshed would have been avoided. As it was, the chance was lost. The

Legion arrived to fill the breach and dug in, not only in the stronghold itself but in several flanking positions. No fewer than four subsequent efforts by the Israelis to dislodge them failed, at a disastrous cost in lives and morale."

For many Latrun could be a model for "spiritual warfare." True, Christians are called "soldiers." True, we have armor as Ephesians 6 plainly declares. But just as Saddam Hussein overstated his army's power in the Gulf War, so Satan overstates his abilities and position. It is regrettable that "Christian" books perpetuate this distortion.

According to some writers, we are struggling, fighting and under constant attack. We are trying to take the hill, but the smoke and the gunfire and the fiery darts make it extremely difficult. We need warfare prayers that we have to utter. They are almost like magical incantations to ward off the swarm of demons coming down the hill. The hand-to-hand combat of exorcism is often said to be needed — even on believers. The smoke of the battle is dense and thick. "Don't look for a demon under every rock" they say, but the books indicate he is around every corner and in every room.

One only has to look at Frank and Ida Mae Hammond's hot-selling book, **Pigs in the Parlor**, to see how subjective, strange and even lunatic the so called "deliverance" people have become. Here are some quotations:

"As unreasonable as it may seem, some Christians are not as ready to get rid of indwelling demons as one might assume" (pg. 3).

"Five years ago I was delivered from the demon of nervousness and related spirits" (pg. 25).

"I announced to the congregation that we would have a special ministry meeting that afternoon in which they would minister deliverance and cast out the demon of heart attack" (pg. 26).

"Involvement to any degree in religious error can open the door for demons" (pg. 29).

"Another manifestation of the serpent is through the nose" (pg. 47).

"Arthritic spirits often manifest themselves in the hands" (pg. 48).

"Odors are another facet of demon manifestation. I recall one time when we were conducting a ministry in a parsonage. The house was filled with an unpleasant odor.

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# NEWS UPDATE

## PFO NEWSLETTER FILES AVAILABLE ON COMPUTER BBS

Personal Freedom Outreach's newsletter articles are now available through a computer bulletin board service (BBS). Files from newsletters, including the first issue published in 1981, are downloadable by personal computers equipped with a modem.

Selection may be made from the nearly 500 files, including all major research articles, editorials, news update items and book reviews. The files are available in ASCII and accessed through IBM-compatible, Macintosh and other computers.

The *PFO File Collection* is accessible on the **Christian BBS** located in Lakewood, N.J., operated by William H. Carl, Jr. The phone number is (908) 905-5046. The service operates 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Baud rates available are 300/1200/2400.

New users to the **Christian BBS** will have immediate access to downloadable files and the service's message base. Initial access is limited to 30 minutes per day. Upon validation of the caller, the time limit will be increased to 60 minutes.

In addition to the *PFO File Collection*, the BBS offers Bible Quizzes, Bible Studies, and Bible Godspeed Concordance. The PFO files are posted by permission of Personal Freedom Outreach. All others are either Shareware or Public Domain files.

Files from newly released issues of **The Quarterly Journal** will not be posted on the BBS until 8 weeks following publication. Those desiring immediate computer file accessibility to newly released newsletters may subscribe to **The Quarterly Journal** on floppy diskette. Inquiries on subscriptions should be addressed to PFO's Saint Louis office.

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-MKG

## DESPERATELY SEEKING MARY

Since the first reported apparitions of the Virgin Mary in 1981 by six teenagers in Medjugorje, in what was once Yugoslavia, 13 million people reportedly have made pilgrimages there in an effort to receive a sign of the Madonna's presence, a healing, or some other mystical experience of the alleged phenomena. (See further, **The Quarterly Journal**, Vol. 10, No. 3.)

Today, those from the North American continent need

not pack their bags and passport for Europe. They need only travel to a 900-acre shrine in Colorado to join the Marian vision movement. On Dec. 8, 6,000 people flocked to the Mother Cabrini Shrine, 15 miles west of Denver, where it was claimed that the Virgin Mary would appear and bestow blessings. The gathering resulted from the claims of a 31-year-old mother of three, Theresa Lopez of Highland Ranch, Colo. Lopez says that the Virgin Mary instructed her: "Great favors shall be rained upon you on my feast day. Gathered in my presence for you, my children, are my angels." She claims to have seen 11 apparitions of Mary during the past 18 months.

As the Marian movement continues to grow, followers offer their opinions as to the increase in "visitations" by the Virgin. According to a **Denver Post** report, Sharon Worrying of Stuttgart, Ark., stated, "Mary is to raise an army to defeat Satan." Ruth McDonald, the business manager of **Caritas**, a Marian newsletter in Birmingham, Ala., asserts, "We've muffed it. God is giving us a last chance by sending Mary." Yet, the Marian followers claim "they are not more devoted to Mary than to Jesus, the supreme figure in Christianity. They say their devotion to Mary leads to deeper faith in Jesus and Mary's appearances are a warning to people to return to the faith before Jesus returns to Earth," the **Post** article reported.

However, at least two dozen of the 6,000 devotees who gathered for the December feast day, were less than rewarded for their faithfulness. According to a Religious News Service article, several "persons reportedly suffered from eye damage recently because they looked directly into the sun hoping for a sign of the Virgin Mary's presence at a shrine near Denver." The report also stated that "Ophthalmologists said that some of the pilgrims who stared into the sun expecting to see the Virgin Mary suffered severe and permanent eye damage."

One eye-damaged Marian, who journeyed to the shrine to pray for her 2-year-old physically and mentally disabled son, is re-evaluating her faith. "Did you ever hear of people going to Jesus for a miracle and coming away crippled?" she asked.

More than 300 Marian apparitions have been reported worldwide since the beginning of the 20th century.

-MKG

## SCIENTOLOGISTS SUE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Sterling Management Systems, a division of Worldwide Institute of Scientology Enterprises, has filed a lawsuit against Watchman Fellowship Inc., an interdenominational

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# *Placing Faith in the Baptizer, Not the ~~BAPTISM~~*

## One Man's Exodus from The United Pentecostal Church

by David Vivas, Jr.

"Am I your brother in Christ, yes or no?" asked Dr. Walter Martin in a debate with United Pentecostal Church representatives Nathaniel Urshan and Robert Sabin, which took place on the "John Ankerberg Show" in 1985. As I sat and observed Brother Urshan's reluctance to give a direct response to the question, my mind pondered in dismay over the fact that my own General Superintendent would not answer, "**No, you are not my brother in Christ.**" This would have been a common response coming from a Oneness adherent to a Trinitarian believer.

I would like to share with you my experience in the United Pentecostal Church. The intentions of this article are not to bash Oneness believers, but rather to help inform the Christian Church of the dangers that exist in legalistic movements of our day.

I was raised in the Assemblies of God. My mother, who was Catholic, had intentions of sending me to the Catholic Church. My father, who was Protestant, would not allow my mother to send me to the Catholic Church. Instead, he sent me every Sunday with his parents to Sunday School at the Assemblies of God. My mother and father were saved several years later, and we attended a Pentecostal Church in a nearby city. I was involved in the church and saw 15 of my high school-friends saved. By this time I was 15 years old. At school I began encountering classmates who attended the United Pentecostal Church in our city. I had countless discussions with them on the subjects of the godhead and water baptism. After several vigorous attempts to respond to their Oneness claims and the many scriptures on water baptism, I became persuaded of their theology, and even went as far as

to doubt my salvation.

I became very angry and bitter with my parents, pastor, and Sunday school teachers whom I thought had led me in error since I was a child. I was told by the UPC that the doctrine of the Trinity was in actuality a belief in "three Gods." They also told me that I had been baptized the wrong way. They insisted that the name Jesus Christ must be spoken over an individual when being baptized and that those who have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit had been erroneously baptized. They asked me to show them in the Bible where anyone was baptized in the Triune formula and insisted that every instance of biblical baptism occurred "in the name of Jesus Christ," (that is, with the name pronounced over them).

I soon told my parents of my decision  
(continues on page 10)

### *The United Pentecostals at a Glance...*

- 3 History: The United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) began in 1945 as a result of a merger of the Pentecostal Church, Inc. and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Jesus Christ.
- 3 Organization facilities: The UPCI has as its headquarters a three-story building located in Hazelwood, Mo., in the northwestern St. Louis metropolitan area. This building also holds its publishing house, Word Aflame Press, which produces the church's tracts, books, Sunday School materials and other church-related items.
- 3 Educational facilities: The UPCI supports nine Bible colleges throughout the United States and Canada.
- 3 Missionary Efforts: The UPCI has a foreign mission division, which sponsors and oversees the work of more than 400 missionaries and national workers in more than 100 countries. The church's foreign mission budget was about \$12 million in 1987. Domestically, the denomination sponsors an orphanage, a rehabilitation center for boys, and a ministry for alcohol and drug addicts.
- 3 Membership: The UPCI claims a worldwide membership in excess of 1.4 million. In 1988, the sect reported 400,000 members, 3500 churches, and over 7,000 ministers within the United States and Canada. The denomination's organizational structure is congregational, with the local churches being autonomous in their conduct of business.
- 3 Doctrinal distinctives: The UPCI insists that water baptism by immersion in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38) must be performed for the remission of sins. The UPCI also holds to a non-trinitarian view of God. The church maintains that there is only one person in the Godhead, Jesus Christ. This one-person God has revealed Himself as the Father in creation, as the Son in redemption and as the Holy Spirit in regeneration. Because of this latter doctrine, the sect has, at times, been nicknamed "Jesus Only." The denomination also emphasizes the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the evidence of speaking in tongues. Finally, the church stresses a strict social behavior and holiness code.

(Sources: **Dictionary of Christianity in America**, **Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements**, and **Encyclopedia of American Religions**, Vol. 1.)

# The Deity of Jesus Christ

## Does It Really Matter?

by Edgar L. Havaich

It is rare these days to meet someone who doesn't have an opinion or idea as to who Jesus Christ is. Opinions on the identity of Jesus Christ run from one extreme to the other. There are many who say that He wasn't God at all, just deified by gullible, superstitious followers. Then there is the crowd that says He became a god, by progressing to it through self-discipline. Then we have the group that says he couldn't have been God simply because there is no evidence that he ever existed. Then there is a fourth group that says "Yes, he is god, but then again we are all gods." Dissenting views on Jesus are the norm, just as they were in the first century.

Multiple views about Jesus really shouldn't take us by surprise. Jesus Himself dealt with them. When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples:

"Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" And they said, "Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets." He saith unto them, "But whom say ye that I am?" And Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered and said unto him, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:13-18).

Jesus made it apparent that He wanted his disciples to be sure as to who He was.

The identity of Jesus Christ is no

less important than the reason He came. Some people would like to divide the man from the message. Yet, it is obvious that in this unique situation one cannot separate Jesus Christ from the message He proclaimed. The person of Christ and the message of Christ are a package. They stand or fall together. They are inseparable. His claims are true only if He is true. Some may ask: "Well, what is more important, His Deity or the message He preached?" A question like this is like asking a pilot which wing of the airplane is more important. Obviously it takes both of them to fly the plane. Jesus did not come to bring reform by preaching some abstract philosophical self-discipline. Nor is He introducing some kind of prescription for living based on a disciplined life. The radical implications of what Jesus is saying is "I am your answer to life. Follow me." He places Himself in the forefront. This is so drastically different than what others have offered. They came saying, "I am a mere messenger, it is the message that is important."

Jesus spoke with authority. There was never any reservation or hesitation on His part. His word implies that he was the object of people's attention. He never suggested that His teachings were pointing to someone yet to come, or correcting people's misunderstandings and misplaced devotion and worship. He got attention, attention that He cultivated by His constant emphasis on Himself.

He never lumped Himself in with those he talked to. There were things that Jesus told us to do that we

find no example of in His own life. He told others to repent, but He never did. He told others to humble themselves while telling others to honor Him as they honor the Father. When offering someone a piece of gum, is there any debate over what is most important, the gum or the wrapper? No,

as soon as the gum is delivered, the wrapper loses its importance. If Jesus is only a man with a mission or message, then His importance should diminish upon the delivery of the message or the fulfillment of the mission. To place any significance beyond this would be analogous to keeping the gum wrapper after the gum is gone.

If Jesus were not God it is implausible for Him to step forward and say or ask the sort of things He did. "Whom do men say that I, the Son of man, am?" We could rightly ask, "Who cares who you are. Do you think that anyone is interested in you, it is God who is to be exalted. You're just one of 'Jehovah's Witnesses,' just like we are. True, you may be his chief one, pre-eminent by virtue of the fact that you are the first and greatest creation. Granted you are the ransom sacrifice, you bought back what Adam had lost, but in the final analysis you are ONLY a creature who like the rest of us creatures must worship the creator.

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You need to get on with the vindication of Yahweh's name and stop worrying about what people think of you."

If Jesus was Yahweh's field marshal, Yahweh's chief witness, then He did a lousy job. Not only did He fail to get people to use the divine name in a wholesale manner, but He ended up giving the impression that He was the one who was to be revered. The disciples also missed this point. The book of Acts tells us that the disciples did not cease preaching and teaching Jesus Christ (Acts 5:42).

Why do religious people hate the idea of the divinity of Christ? There are a couple of reasons. When a person recognizes the Deity of Christ, he is saying, in essence, that there is no higher authority. If Jesus Christ is Lord, then we are not. We march to the tune of His authority, and we submit to earthly authority as long as it glorifies Him. There is nowhere else to go in respect to the options we have been presented. However denying the Deity of Christ enables the detractor to relegate Jesus to any number of lesser positions. They maintain the credibility and draw that comes from the name of Jesus, but will prohibit the Lordship of Jesus lest their role is circumvented. Thus Jesus is held up as an example, a chief spokesman, but certainly not the desire and the object of our affection. This shifts Jesus from the object of worship and point of salvation to something else. Be it an organization, or a pattern of works.

Organizations are important and they do have a role to play but that role is not in the salvation of souls nor in people's relationship with God. A believer's church or denomination could fold today and it would not affect that person's relationship with the Lord. However, relegating Jesus to the status of a creature obscures His nature and work. It then opens the door for something or someone else to take His place.

### Claims of Deity Are Rare

Those who tell us that claims to be Deity are not unusual have never taken into consideration what the world's religious leaders have — or haven't — said about themselves.

- ◆ Socrates never claimed to be Zeus.
- ◆ Moses never claimed to be Yahweh.
- ◆ Zoroaster never claimed to be Ahura Mazda.

◆ Confucius never claimed to be Bramah.

◆ Mohammed never claimed to be Allah.

◆ Jesus Christ claimed to be God.

C.S. Lewis clearly demonstrates the scarcity of assertions of divinity among religious leaders in comparison with the claims of Jesus Christ:

"If you had gone to Buddha and asked him 'Are you the son of Brahma?' he would have said, 'My son, you are still in the veil of illusion.' If you had gone to Socrates and asked, 'Are you Zeus?' he would have laughed at you. If you had gone to Mohammed and asked, 'Are you Allah?' he would first have rent his clothes and then cut your head off. If you had asked Confucius, 'Are you Heaven?' I think he would have probably replied, 'Remarks which are not in accordance with nature are in bad taste.' The idea of a great moral teacher saying what Christ said is out of the question. In my opinion, the only person who can say that sort of thing is either God or a complete lunatic suffering from that form of delusion which undermines the whole mind of man" (**God in the Dock**, pp. 157-158).

Before examining what the Scriptures say of Christ, it is helpful to understand the various attacks upon His nature. The denial of the Deity of Christ comes to us in so many varieties and forms.

For example, noted author, comedian and songwriter Steve Allen, in his work, **Steve Allen on the Bible, Religion, & Morality** wrote:

"While to millions of Christians the idea that Jesus was not God in human form is abhorrent, the great majority of the inhabitants of our planet, including many who consider themselves good Christians have no need to believe Jesus to be God, in order either to believe in a supreme being or to construct a moral code of ethics. Some Christians nevertheless assume that, if Jesus is not God, then the entire Christian religion is groundless and worthless.

But this does not necessarily follow. It is true that many confessions of faith in the various Christian denominations would have to be reworded; pastors of the more flamboyant variety who shout to their audiences about the 'blood of Jesus saving us' would have to alter

their sermons (which would not be a bad idea); and the words of some hymns would need be changed; but the God of love, preached by Christianity, would remain unaltered. Indeed, this might free many ministers and priests to teach Jesus' message of brotherhood and peace instead of asking adherents to repeat endlessly the belief that Jesus is God.

Certainly, there have been hundreds of millions of devout believers in the teachings of Confucius, Lao-tse, Zoroaster, Buddha, Moses, Mohammad, and other 'prophets' and 'saints' who were able to revere these men, without worshiping them or feeling the need to declare them divine. Each inspired people in some part of the world to adopt an admirable code of ethical behavior.

A perfectly sound reason for respect for Jesus, even by non-Christians, is the important service his image provides to mankind. This would be true even if, as a few historians have argued, Jesus is a mythical rather than an actual historical figure. My own belief is that he did indeed live in the time of Augustus Caesar; but whether he did or not, our notions about him serve to set forth the highest ideals. Heroic figures invariably embody ideals, but among human heroes, Jesus is supreme. For he not only preached but apparently demonstrated the virtues of compassion, charity, love, courage, faith, and intelligence. To millions he seems perfection in human form.

If it is the case, as it clearly is, that the Scriptures occasionally depict him in less-than-perfect moments — as, for example, in his rudeness to his mother — He nevertheless approaches the ideal of perfection more closely in anyone else who has ever lived" (pg. 229).

Yet with others there seems to be a real temptation to believe that even if Jesus never existed, what is attributed to him would still be valid. The person of Christ is unimportant. A.J. Hoover, in his publication, **The Case for Christian Theism**, claims:

"I may say that I have never been interested in an historical Jesus. I should not care if it was proved by some one that the man called Jesus never lived, and that what was narrated in the Gospels was a figment of the writer's imagination. For then the Ser-

mon on the Mount would still be true for me” (pg. 170).

What they seem to be implying is that even if this man Jesus never existed, the moral code that has been linked to His name would still be sufficient. The historicity of His divine claims whether by His own acclamation or others would be irrelevant. This is an example of splitting the man from the message.

Word-Faith proponent Kenneth Copeland delivered a prophecy in Dallas, Texas, in which he has Jesus as the source of this quote:

“The more you get to be like Me, the more they’re going to think that way of you. They crucified Me for claiming that I was God. But I didn’t claim I was God; I just claimed I walked with Him and that He was in Me. Hallelujah” (**Believer’s Voice of Victory** magazine, February 1987, pg. 9).

Yet when Copeland was challenged as to the validity of the “prophecy” he stated that he never denied the Deity of Christ. He only maintained that Jesus never claimed He was God when He walked upon the earth:

“The phrasing of the statement you referred to is very important. I didn’t say Jesus *wasn’t* God, I said He didn’t *claim* to be God when He lived on the earth. Search the Gospels for yourself. If you do, you’ll find what I say is true. During His earthly ministry, Jesus acknowledged that He was the Son of God, the Messiah. He referred to God as His Father (which enraged the Pharisees), but He never made the assertion that He was the most High God. In fact, He told His disciples that the Father God was greater and mightier than He (John 14:28). Why *didn’t* Jesus openly proclaim Himself as God during His 33 years on earth? For one simple reason. He hadn’t come to earth as God, He’s come as man” (**Believer’s Voice of Victory** magazine, August 1988, pg. 8, italics in original).

This statement and others like them stem from people’s thinking that if something is not stated propositionally then it can’t be true. Since there is no verse in the Bible with the exact words “I am God” emanating from the lips of Jesus, then they say He must never have laid claim to the title. He was in fact misunderstood. It is also of interest to note, that in the case of Copeland’s

response, he announced: “I didn’t say...,” “I said...,” and “I say...” These are telling and intriguing admissions in light of the fact that the “prophecy” featured in his 1987 magazine claimed Jesus to be speaking and even concluded with the words, “saith the Lord Jesus Christ. Hallelujah!”

In addition, various cults, although maintaining that Jesus is an important part of their theology, relegate Him to a secondary or subservient position. He certainly is not to be looked at as the object and affection of our faith. Consider the following examples:

- ◆ Jehovah’s Witnesses say Jesus is Michael the archangel.
- ◆ Moon says Jesus failed because he didn’t get married.
- ◆ Modern liberals believe Jesus to be a great teacher, a moralist, the flower of humanity who was deified by His gullible followers.
- ◆ Mormons say Jesus was one of many gods.
- ◆ Hindus teach Jesus was a guru.
- ◆ Unity says Jesus was a perfect man indwelt by the Christ Consciousness.
- ◆ Spiritists say Jesus was an advanced medium.
- ◆ Witches will tell you that Jesus was a super witch.
- ◆ Christian Science says Jesus was a man who demonstrated the Christ principle, that Christ is an ideal truth, a divine idea, the spiritual or truth of God.
- ◆ Black Muslims maintain Jesus was a prophet, not even equal to Mohammed.

### Who Is Jesus?

Turning now to the biblical account, we will consider in context exactly who Jesus is. We will also show why the only biblically consistent position that one can come to is that Jesus is God.

There are only two categories a person can fall into, creator and creation. If Jesus isn’t the creator then He is by means of elimination a creation. The creation always worships and serves the creator, never the reverse. As high as the heavens are above the earth so is the creator above His creation. It is unthinkable from a scriptural standpoint for a creation to worship another creation. This is idolatry and it is condemned by scripture.

“What think ye of Christ” (Matthew 22:42) still remains the most important question of the ages. Asking this question is a good way of separating the sheep from the goats. As Christians we believe and maintain, unequivocally and without dispute, that Jesus Christ is God, while others regard Him as only the Son of God. There are those that see Him as a great moral teacher, an avatar or a great emancipator. Since the New Testament is the primary source for the life and times of Jesus Christ the question “Who is Christ” will be settled ultimately on the pages of the scripture. It is here that the issue of the identity of Christ will be established.

One often hears that the evangelical position is just one interpretation and that it is wrong. This statement is made by people who often don’t realize that one position can’t be called wrong without knowledge of another position that is right.

### Jesus Is God

John 1:1 - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

John 5:18 - Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 10:30 - “I and my Father are one.”

John 20:28 - And Thomas answered and said unto Him, “My Lord and my God.”

Hebrews 1:8 - But unto the Son He saith, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.”

Revelation 1:8 - “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.”

Revelation 22:7 - “Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book.”

Revelation 22:12 - “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Revelation 22:20 - He which testifieth these things saith, “Surely I come quickly.” Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

## No Man Spoke Like This Man

Jesus said things that could only be interpreted as claims of Deity. Keeping in mind that the only two categories under consideration are creator and creation. Jesus spoke and laid claim to things that only belonged to God.

If, as some say, Jesus was only a creation, then He could have never said the things that He did, because a creation is not the object of honor, praise, or worship. The following scriptures are just an example.

John 7:46 - The officers answered, "Never a man spoke like this man."

John 5:23 - "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."

John 8:19 - Then said they unto him, "Where is thy Father?" Jesus answered, "Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."

John 14:1 - "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me."

John 14:9 - "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, 'Shew us the Father?'"

John 16:15 - "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you."

Luke 19:40 - "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out."

Matthew 18:20 - "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

John 6:48 - "I am the bread of life."

John 8:12 - "I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

John 10:7 - "Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep."

John 10:11 - "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

John 11:25 - "I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

John 14:6 - "I am the way, the truth,

and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

John 15:1 - "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman."

## Jesus Christ is Worshipped

The scriptures clearly teach us that only God is to be worshiped. We are never to worship another creation, or creature. If Jesus is only another creation then we have no business worshiping Him. However, if He is the creator, and one with the Father, then not worshiping Him would dishonor the Father (John 5:23).

However, the major repudiators of the Deity of Christ have experienced extreme difficulty justifying the worship of Christ. At one point in the Watchtower's history they did teach and promote the worship of Jesus Christ. Consider the following proclamations from Watchtower literature:

"... Was he really worshiped, or is the translation faulty? Answer, Yes, we believe our Lord Jesus while on earth was really worshipped, and properly so" (**Zion's Watch Tower**, July 15, 1898, pg. 216).

"Since Jehovah God now reigns as King by means of his capital organization Zion, then whosoever would worship Him must also worship and bow down to Jehovah's Chief One in that capital organization, namely, Christ Jesus, his Co-regent on the throne of the Theocracy" (**The Watchtower**, November 15, 1945, pg. 313).

Today, the Watchtower Society has sought to downplay the worship that Jesus received because of the obvious implications. Jehovah's Witnesses now play word games, explaining that worship is rendered to Jehovah, while obeisance is that form of worship given to Christ. Yet in one of its publications, readers are told that "obeisance" is equal to worship. Under the title of idolatry this subheading is found "Bowling in **worship** before men or even angels as representatives of God forbidden." The verses that they quote do not even contain the word worship; they contain the word "obeisance." Are we to understand that these two words are similar in meaning? If they are, then Jesus received what Peter and the angel of Revelation refused. (See, **Make Sure of All Things - Hold Fast to What is Fine**, pg. 249.)

Nonetheless, Scripture is clear in its

command of whom worship may be ascribed. Examine the following:

Exodus 34:14 - For thou shalt worship no other god; for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

Nehemiah 9:6 - Thou, even thou, art LORD alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.

Isaiah 42:8 - "I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images."

Likewise, Scripture is equally clear in its descriptions that Christ was worshipped:

Matthew 2:11 - And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary His mother, and fell down, and worshipped Him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto Him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.

Matthew 8:2 - And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."

Matthew 14:33 - Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped Him, saying, "Of a truth thou art the Son of God."

Matthew 15:22-25 - And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto Him, saying, "Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil." But He answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying, "Send her away; for she crieth after us." But He answered and said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." Then came she and worshipped Him, saying, "Lord, help me."

Matthew 20:20 - Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him, and desiring a certain thing of Him.

Matthew 28:9 - And as they went to tell His disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, "All hail." And they came and held Him by the feet, and worshipped Him.

Matthew 28:17 - And when they saw Him, they worshipped Him; but some

doubted.

Mark 5:6 - But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him.

John 9:38 - And he said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped Him.

Finally, Scripture provides instances of the attempted worship of men and angels and the result:

Acts 10:25-26 - And as Peter was coming in, Cornelius met him, and fell down at his feet, and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, "Stand up; I myself also am a man."

Revelation 19:10 - And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me: "See thou do it not; I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy."

Revelation 22:8-9 - And I John saw these things, and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, "See thou do it not: for I am thy fellow servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God."

### Is Jesus Christ Michael the Archangel?

The name Michael is mentioned in the Bible about 15 times (see **Strong's Concordance**). Of these 15 references to Michael only 4 refer specifically to the archangel. They are Daniel 10:13,21; 12:1; Jude 9; Revelation 12:7.

### What Evidence Is There That Michael is Jesus?

The Bible does not propositionally say that Jesus is Michael the archangel. In other words we can find references of Jesus and also references of Michael, but there are no references that say that Jesus is Michael. The only way one can come to this conclusion is to have a preconceived idea already as to who Jesus and Michael are.

If Jesus is Michael, then that would mean that Michael created Lucifer. We know this because the Bible clearly says that Jesus is the creator of all things, which would include Lucifer. Yet Lucifer, who is in a fallen state, cannot be rebuked by Michael, who is supposed to be his creator. Jude 9

says: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, 'the Lord rebuke thee.'" Here Michael, who is supposed to be Jesus, can't rebuke the devil. However, Jesus rebuked the devil on various occasions and did it when He was lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7). How is it possible, given that Jesus and Michael are both the same, that the devil is easily rebuked by Jesus but not by Michael?

Michael is called the chief prince, but the scriptures reveal that there are more than one. Daniel 10:13 declares that Michael is one of the chief princes. This would indicate that there are more than one, implying that Jesus is not unique.

It is impossible for Jesus to be Michael and say the things that He did. No creation could say the things Jesus said. It wouldn't make any difference how exalted Jesus was. Even granting that he was the first and greatest creation of God, He could still never say the things He did if he were only a creation. One must keep in mind that the creation, no matter how exalted, still would be required to worship, serve, honor and obey God.

Ultimately there are only two categories, the creator and the creation. If Jesus is not the creator, then by default he is a creation.

### No Created Being Could Say The Things That Jesus Said!

How is it possible that a creation of God, commissioned to be His witness, proclaimed that if we don't honor Him even as we honor the Father we dishonor the Father? As a creature Jesus would be subject to the same restrictions as we are. Elevating Him to "Number One" doesn't warrant giving Him God-like respect or honor. Jesus is supposed to be Yahweh's chief witness, yet we don't find Jesus behaving like a witness should. He is soliciting for Himself that which He should be soliciting for Yahweh. If Jesus is Michael, then He truly is out of line in the following declarations:

John 5:23-24 - That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and

believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."

John 8:19 - Then said they unto Him, "Where is thy Father?" Jesus answered, "Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."

John 14:1 - "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." (Note that Jesus takes His place right beside Yahweh and makes Himself along with God the object of belief.)

John 16:15 - "All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you." (Name one thing that the Father has that does not belong to Jesus? There is not one exception. Jesus was laying claim to all honor, praise, glory, and so forth.)

Luke 19:36-40 - And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest." And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke thy disciples. And He answered and said unto them, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." (Jesus was being rebuked because the people were rendering to Him things that would not belong to Him if He were only a man. Yet upon the rebuke He doesn't turn and say to those doing the praising, "Hey guys, knock it off, you really should be directing this to Yahweh and not me.")

Yes, the Deity of Jesus Christ **really** does matter. "He was doomed to death, the death that overtakes all men. Nevertheless He had the audacity to demand that they make him the object of faith. He made himself the key to the question of destiny, and clearly stated that their future depended on His work. He promised to prepare a place for them, and to return to claim them" (**John: The Gospel of Belief** by Merrill Tenney, pg. 213). Will you accept His declarations and His promises which go with them? ✨

sion to attend the United Pentecostal Church. They opposed my decision. By this time I had attended the UPC on several different occasions without the consent of my parents. After becoming aware of my excursions they grew concerned. After my first few visits, I was determined to be baptized “the right way” so that I could surely be saved.

Since my attending the UPC went against my father’s will, I moved out of my parents’ home at age 16. As a result, I found myself living with different members of the church. Three months later, I was set up on the platform for preaching purposes.

I became heavily indoctrinated with various books and materials published by the UPC. I devoted my time to the listening of debate tapes between Oneness preachers and Trinitarians. I learned all the Oneness responses to Trinitarian theology, and became dogmatically opposed to Trinitarians. In August 1989, after being a part of the ministerial staff of the local UPC church, I became licensed with the organization. I started a prison ministry in which about 75 inmates were baptized in two years. I was very zealous with church activities.

I was familiar with Dr. Walter Martin and had obtained a number of his writings and tapes. Although I didn’t believe he was saved at the time, I admired his knowledge in the area of comparative religions. Upon hearing of Dr. Martin’s passing in June of 1989, I attended his Memorial service in Southern California. During the Memorial Service, I was moved by the comments made by different individuals concerning him, and was battling in my mind how I was to consider this man lost and in error, when his very life and ministry had helped so many thousands through the years. Yet, I could not compromise with what I thought was the “Truth.”

I was loaned a video of the debate mentioned above which took place on “The John Ankerberg Show” (“The Trinity or ‘Jesus Only’: What Do The Scriptures Teach?”). My first impressions of the debate left me disappointed. Dr. Martin and Cal Beisner were very thorough in their presentation and defense of Orthodox Christianity, while

in my prideful opinion, the opposition delivered a poor defense of Oneness theology. So to more effectively present and defend Oneness doctrines, I began investing in scholarly works in the areas of Church History and Word Studies in Hebrew and Greek. To my astonishment, I discovered several faulty interpretations of church history as taught by the UPC. There were also a number of grammatical discrepancies of certain key passages that had gone by unnoticed and are in fact used to distort the meaning within the context of the passage.

During the last year of my involvement with the UPC, I analyzed the teachings of my local church. We were taught by our local pastor that he was going to answer for us on Judgment Day concerning our lives and personal experiences with God. We were taught that if we missed a church service, we would have to give an account to God as to why we missed. We were discouraged from attending family outings on a church night. When wanting to do so, members young and old alike, had to ask permission from the pastor. More often than not, the answer was “no.” “Where are your priorities,” he would ask, “to God or your family?” This would engender a sense of guilt among the members of the church. Scriptures were manipulated and effectively used to intimidate members who consequently had no rights or say-so. The pastor was always right, because he proclaimed himself “the man of God” who was not to be questioned.

In my experience I wanted to attend a Memorial Service of a relative. I was asked by the pastor if it was really necessary for me to attend since it was on a church night. He answered “Let the dead bury the dead.” Needless to say I was in church that night. I found that not only did he manipulate scripture and coerce the people but was in fact acting as a dictator.

There were also the extremes of legalism which exist in most United Pentecostal congregations. Men were not permitted to wear mustaches, women were not allowed to wear pants or slacks, make-up, jewelry or cut their hair. And neither could wear sleeves above the elbows. These were all considered “Holiness Standards.” Television was disapproved of since it was considered “a pipeline from hell

into the home.” To violate any of these standards, a member was considered to be rebellious and disobedient to the Word of God, not to mention their pastor. It became a salvation of works rather than grace. If a person did not follow these standards, they could not possibly be saved. The church was governed by modern-day Phariseeism.

Looking back now, I can see the bondage of the people caused by presumed self-righteousness — which they flaunted by their “holy” attire. It became, as the Apostle Paul said, “...a form of godliness” (II Timothy 3:5).

Another incident happened that further disturbed me. Different people from our local church left to attend another United Pentecostal Church and were informally disfellowshipped because they did so. We were taught that we must attend the church wherein we were “saved.” If one left the local assembly to attend another Oneness Church, they were considered rebels and lost, thus the disfellowshipping.

I knew that this teaching was not even remotely Biblical. I then began to thoroughly re-examine the teachings of the church. These and other situations prompted me to analyze the teachings of the organization as a whole. I asked a friend of mine (who was a disfellowshipped member attending a nearby United Pentecostal Church) to once again review with me the Ankerberg debate, this time, with open hearts, open minds, and unbiased intentions.

All of the evidences given by Martin and Beisner were irrefutable. We checked out many of the references and found them to be accurate and correct. Martin explained many of the passages the UPC representatives quoted. For example in John 10:30 Jesus said, “I and my Father are one.” Oneness adherents maintain that this proves Jesus and the Father are one person. Yet Martin brought out that the Greek in this passage reads: “...we are in union.” (See further a Greek Interlinear Bible in this passage for the Greek word “**esmen**.” It translates “we are.”) Deuteronomy 6:4 was also quoted. Again, Martin and Beisner explained that the Hebrew word for “one” in this passage is “**echad**” — meaning a compound unity.

Finally, at the end of the program Martin asked Nathaniel Urshan if all

those who had been baptized in the "Triune formula" were lost and going to hell. Urshan expressed his uncertainty with a hesitant response. My stomach turned because the answer should have been an emphatic: "Yes! They are lost and going to hell." The UPC emphatically teaches that one must be baptized with the name Jesus Christ pronounced over them. Further, one must speak in tongues as the essential evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit. One could not be saved otherwise. In addition, members must follow the legalism taught in their church, be it shaving off one's mustache or wearing sleeves below the elbow, or for women refraining from wearing pants, cosmetics jewelry, and so forth. Therefore it then becomes a salvation by works, and not by grace.

What I never understood was how one who believed in the Trinity, and yet was filled with the Holy Spirit, could be lost. "How could the Holy Spirit dwell in an unclean temple?", I thought. Sins were washed away only after being immersed in water. The Scriptures did not teach baptismal regeneration as I was taught to believe. This doctrine was contrary to the biblical concept of salvation by grace.

I was deliberating at this time whether to continue with the UPC or withdraw membership. I finally decided one month later to turn in my ministerial license with the UPC. At first I questioned my decision. I felt as though my very soul was in jeopardy.

But I just could not deny the evidence of Scripture. What was I to listen to? My pastor? The UPC? No! The Word of God! The Bible was clear in Ephesians 2:8-9, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast."

I could not deny the fruit of the Spirit I saw in other Christians who were not United Pentecostal. This began to bear witness with my spirit and consequently appeased my unsettled conscience. I learned a very valuable lesson when I realized God's love was unconditional! The local UPC pastor taught members to have nothing to do with those who left the church. Upon leaving the church, I was marked "off-limits" to the general membership and considered to have reached a reprobate state. I deduced by this their love for me and former members was purely and unmistakably conditional.

The Bible encourages us to: "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). Even the Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:15 "...judge for yourselves what I say." 1 John 4:1 exclaims, "Beloved, **believe not** every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." Finally, we are to be like the Bereans in Acts 17:11 "...they searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

If you are in the United Pentecostal Church or some other form of legalistic movement, and are disturbed by what

goes on, do not be afraid to stand up for truth.

The members of the local UPC church I attended looked to the Pastor as the authority figure. Members would not question his stand on any particular issue, for fear of being marked. Members could not go on a vacation or miss a church service without the pastor's permission. He became their dictator and ruled over them with unchallenged authority. The Bible does not support this. (See further, Matthew 20:25-27; 1 Peter 5:3.) If this is the situation you find yourself in, and want out, there is hope for you. I began to see that the general attitude of the UPC as a whole, likened itself to that of the Pharisees of the New Testament. They appeared outwardly to men as being holy, but their insides were corrupt and rotten. (See further, Matthew 23.)

Now that I am out of the UPC, I have found out what true liberty in Christ is. My identity is now with The Baptizer, and not with "a baptism." My sincere prayer for those who are trapped inside of a legalistic movement, such as the UPC, is for them to come out and experience what true freedom in Christ is, and that in their search for truth, they will come to know Him who is Truth.

Should you have any questions concerning my experiences before and after my decision to leave the UPC, please don't hesitate to call me at: (805) 721-1914. ✨

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Deity

(continued from page 1)

the inscrutable."

The tri-personality of God is totally and exclusively a truth of **revelation** and lies above the realm of natural reason. John Calvin had a humble approach to the Scripture. He said he accepted everything that was in the Word of God even if it was beyond his comprehension and reason. In Calvin's **Institutes** (3:23.4) he states emphatically, "monstrous indeed is the madness of men, who desire thus to subject the immeasurable to the puny measure of their own reason." We therefore recognize our own mental limitations and bow before the Word of God.

In Loraine Boettner's **Studies in**

**Theology**, he addresses the tri-personality of God and reminds us, "We do not presume to give a full explanation of it. We can only know as much of the inner nature of the Godhead as has been revealed in the Scripture" (pg. 74).

In approaching the doctrine of the Deity of Christ we must remember that it is the **finite dealing with the infinite**. Let's remember that though we can touch the earth we cannot embrace all of it. To think that we can fully understand all there is to know about God is like trying to put a lake in a bucket! God asked Job "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Can we put a lake in a bucket?

For our feeble minds to have a **full**

explanation of the nature of God is like asking a second grader to pull an "A" in advanced physics. Turning to Boettner's **Studies in Theology** again we find helpful words on page 125, "We must distinguish between apprehension and comprehension. We can know what God is, without knowing all He is... Most people will admit for instance, that they do not understand Einstein's theory of relativity; yet few will be so bold as to declare it irrational. We do not understand how such a vast amount of energy can be locked up within the atom; but the recently developed atomic bomb proves beyond doubt that it is there. Unless God were too great for our full intellectual comprehension, He would surely be too small to satisfy our spiritual needs. But while the doctrine

of the Trinity presents a mystery, it does not present a contradiction.”

Having said all that, we do not want to diminish the personal experience that we as believers can enjoy with Christ. A child may enjoy the comfort, love and personal presence of a parent and yet not fully understand everything about that parent. The relationship and fellowship of the child and parent are real and vital even though there are gaps in the child’s comprehension. Within the limits of our feeble minds and as far as language will permit and with the help and guidance of the Holy Spirit (guarding against extremes, errors and heresies which unaided reason has produced in the past) we have the right to grasp and attempt to understand the revelation God has given of Himself. **Revelation in the Scriptures must be the final court of appeal.**

We will look at the Source of our belief, the Scriptures for our belief and a summary of our belief.

### The Source Of Our Belief:

Please note: we are absolutely dependent on divine revelation in the Scriptures. We must be ready to receive what God has seen fit to reveal and only that. Gilbert Chesterton quipped that if lost on a desert island, the one book he would want and need was a book on ship building. When building good doctrine we need God’s book.

Boettner addresses the core of the issue:

“...either the Christian doctrine of the Trinity must be true or the Scriptures are self-contradictory; either the Scriptures recognize more Gods than one, or Christ, together with the Father and the Holy Spirit is that one God.

All the ascriptions of holiness, eternity, life, immutability, omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, creation, providence, raising the dead, judgment of all men, prayer and worship due to Christ most clearly teach His Deity. Such attitudes of mind if directed toward a creature would be idolatrous” (**Studies in Theology**, pg. 87).

Yes, the source of our belief is Scripture.

### The Scriptures For Our Belief:

All through the New Testament attri-

butes of Deity are repeatedly ascribed to Christ. These attributes are applied to Jesus not in an oblique or general sense but in a way that could only be attributed to God alone.

When we say Deity of Christ we are saying that Jesus was always, fully, completely God in every sense. That in Him is all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

We will look at samplings of Scripture that attribute the attributes of God directly to Jesus Christ.

1. The attribute of holiness (God is absolute holiness).

John 6:69 - “He did no sin.”

1 Peter 2:21 - “He who knew no sin.”

2 Corinthians 7:26 “Holy, guileless, undefiled, separate, from sinners.”

John 8:46 - “which of you convicts me of sin?”

And even the demons bore witness in Mark 1:24 - “you are the Holy One.”

Jesus takes to Himself and is given characteristics of absolute holiness.

2. The attribute of eternity.

John 8:58 - “Before Abraham was, I Am.”

Colossians 1:17 - “He is before all things.”

Isaiah 9:6 - In messianic prophecy Jesus is called the “everlasting Father.”

Micah 5:2 - “He is from everlasting.” Jesus is the King of the Ages! He is the Rock of Ages.

3. The attribute of life.

John 11:25 - “I am the resurrection and the life.”

John 14:6 - “I am the way, the truth and the life.”

John 10:28 - “I give unto them eternal life.”

4. The attribute of immutability.

Hebrews 13:8 - “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever.”

Hebrews 1:11-12 - “The heavens shall perish but thou continuest, they shall be changed but thou art the same.”

Christ is immutable — unchanging in nature. He may change His program or His activities in various dispensa-

tions but He does not change in His essence or character.

5. The attribute of omnipotence.

Matthew 28:18 - “All authority is given to me.”

Revelation 1:8 - “I am the Almighty.”

John 5:25 - “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.” Jesus Christ has power over life and death!

Isaiah 9:6 states prophetically that Jesus is El Gibbor. “The Mighty God.”

6. The attribute of Omniscience.

Matthew 9:4 - “Jesus knowing their thoughts.”

John 2:24-25 - “He knew all men... He knew what was in man.”

John 18:4 - “Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon Him.”

Jesus knew the future, predicted His own death and resurrection. Time and eternity are open to His omniscient view.

7. The attribute of creative power.

John 1:3 - “All things were made by Him.”

Colossians 1:16 - “In Him were all things created.”

Hebrews 1:10 - Directly applying words spoken of Jehovah in the Old Testament to Jesus. The writer says, “Thou Lord in the beginning did lay the foundation of the world, the heavens are the work of thy hands.”

Add to the above the fact that Jesus claimed authority to forgive sins and in doing so He assumed one of the prerogatives of God.

In instituting the Lord’s Supper, Jesus made it plain that He would shed His blood for “the remission of sin.” He is the Lamb of God who “takes away the sin of the world.” No wonder Thomas fell before the risen Christ and said “Lord of mine - God of mine” (Literal translation of John 20:28). Thomas believed it and we believe it!

Princeton theologian Benjamin B. Warfield observed that the recognition of Christ as God was a mark of a Christian for the early church (**Christianity and Criticism**, pg. 372).

## The Summary Of Our Belief:

In John 5:18, "The Jews sought the more to kill Him because He had not only broken the Sabbath but said that God was His father making Himself equal with God." When Jesus called Himself "Son of God," the Jews understood perfectly what He was claiming. They understood clearly the oriental sense of His claim and equated it with blasphemy of the worse kind. Our western mind-filter blocks our understanding of this crucial passage. Let's let Boettner explain and clarify:

"To our occidental type of mind the terms 'Father' and 'Son' carry with them, on the one hand, the ideas of source of being and superiority, and on the other, subordination and dependence. In theological language, however, they are used in the Semitic or oriental sense of sameness of nature... What underlies the conception of sonship in Scriptural speech is just likeness; whatever the Father is that the Son is also... It happens, oddly enough, moreover that we have in the New Testament itself what amounts almost to formal definitions of the two terms Son and Spirit and in both cases the stress is laid on the notion of equality and sameness. In John 5:18 we read 'On this account, therefore, the Jews sought the more to kill him,

because not only did he break the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father making himself equal with God. The point lies, of course, in the adjective 'own.' Jesus was, rightly, understood to call God 'his own Father,' that is, to use the terms 'Father' and 'Son' not in a merely figurative sense, as when Israel was called God's son, but in the real sense. And this was understood to be claiming to be all that God is. To be the Son of God in any sense was to be like God in that sense; and to be God's own Son was to be exactly like God, to be 'equal with God'" (**Studies in Theology**, pp. 112-113).

Boettner further drives home the point again with these words: "Thus we find that the divine and original ideas of fatherhood and sonship in sameness of nature" (pg. 114).

Our primary reason for accepting the doctrine of the Deity of Jesus Christ is because it is clearly revealed in Scripture. A clear understanding of the Scriptures pertaining to this doctrine leaves us with no other choice. We are under **no** obligation to fully and completely explain it, only to accept it.

The Bible everywhere applies the attributes of God to Jesus without apology. As well, Jesus claimed Deity for Himself and accepted worship. He

let people worship Him! If Jesus taught, so as to lead us to worship Him and exalt Him as God, and He is not, then the inescapable conclusion is that He has constructed a huge system of idolatry.

The compelling words of C.S. Lewis make for a fitting summary and conclusion:

"I am trying here to prevent anyone saying the really foolish thing that people often say about Him: 'I'm ready to accept Jesus as a great moral teacher, but I don't accept His claim to be God.' That is the one thing we must not say. A man who is merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic — on the level of a man who says he is a poached egg — or else he would be the devil of Hell. You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool, you can spit at Him and kill him as a demon: or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. **He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to**" (**Mere Christianity**, pp. 55-56, emphasis added). ❀

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## Editorials

(continued from page 2)

It reminded me of cabbage cooking" (pg. 49).

"Spirits of nervousness and tension may cause pain in the back or neck" (pg. 51).

"When demons are cast out they normally leave through the mouth or nose" (pg. 51).

"Phlegm may be brought up in excessive amounts. Similar material may be brought up through vomiting, drooling, spitting or foaming. It is not unusual for this material to flow out of a person for an hour or longer" (pg. 52).

"Persons who yawn or sigh out their demons are just as delivered as those who have the more violent manifestations" (pg. 52).

Could anything be more subjective, paranoid, sickening and extrabiblical? The above is pure nonsense. Yet, on page 51 of the July 1991 **Charisma** magazine there is an ad reporting 400,000 copies sold and touting the book as "a recognized source book for deliverance!" Who is kidding whom?

In reading most literature on spiritual warfare, one gets

the distinct message that Jesus has armed the Christian and he is fighting up the sides of the hill. It is as if Christ's death gives the believer some ammunition for the fight, but it doesn't significantly alter the total picture or the "Latrun model" with him as the Israeli soldier bloodied, struggling and vulnerable.

Read the literature! It says that demons can enter and control Christians through all kinds of avenues. The oft-quoted Jessie Penn Lewis says the demons can reside in our jaws and other parts of the anatomy. Through weakness, through besetting sins, even our ancestors' sins, we are under siege and vulnerable to demonization, control or possession by demons. Preconversion sins can even do it. We are stuck to the sides of the hill!

However, the Latrun model is not the biblical model. If you please, Jesus has taken the hill. We are now on the top of the hill with Him. Following our Latrun illustration, we are the Arab army.

Ephesians 2:5-6: Even when we were dead in sins he hath quickened us together with Christ (By grace ye are saved) and has raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Colossians 2:9-10: For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of

the Godhead bodily and ye are complete in Him which is the head of all principalities and powers.

Revelation 1:5-6: Unto Him that loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us Kings and priests unto God and His Father.

We are on top of the hill with Jesus. We share His life and victory now. Yes, we have skirmishes, but the victory is won — the hill is ours. Our warfare is offensive warfare — the Word and prayer — from the top of the hill.

Salvation has significantly altered the Christian's place on the hill. Salvation takes him out of the depths and elevates him to the heights. He is a member of Christ's "flesh and bones" (Ephesians 5:30).

As children we played "King of the Hill." One boy, bigger and stronger than all of us, was the permanent "king." Jesus is our "King of the Hill." In Luke 10:18, Jesus said, "I beheld Satan as lightning, fall from heaven." The context is that now that Jesus has come, Satan's position is changed significantly. He doesn't have the power he once had. He was weakened drastically by the Messiah's power. Somehow, with the Messiah's coming, Satan "fell," or he came off the top of the hill. Jesus is bigger, stronger and He shares that strength and victory with His own. At the very least, the degree of Satan's power over believers is radically altered.

Calvary dramatically and eternally affected the direction of the battle. Christians fight not for victory but out of victory. Satan is pinned to the hill trying to advance. He is getting the worst of it. As Martin Luther observed in his great hymn, "one little word shall fell him."

Any model that has us struggling up a hill that Christ has already secured and taken and does not have us on the top warding off the attackers is a heretical view of sanctification and the Christian life. Satan can tempt, solicit, snipe, but he can't take the hill. Jesus is all-powerful!

The model makes the difference. Who, after all, is "King of the Hill?" I Corinthians 15:57-58:

"But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

-GRF

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News Updates

(continued from page 3)

Christian counter-cult ministry.

The \$9.5 million suit, which was filed last Nov. 25, alleges that Watchman Fellowship and other defendants influenced existing clients to seek refunds from Sterling, influenced potential clients not to participate in Sterling's

programs and conducted a "civil conspiracy to interfere with business relationships."

Also named in the suit are Craig Branch, Southeast Director of Watchman Fellowship; Cult Awareness Network (C.A.N.); Cynthia Kisser, Executive Director of C.A.N.; and Priscilla Coates, Southern California C.A.N. Affiliate Director.

The Rutherford Institute, a civil liberties organization composed of attorneys that specialize in constitutional issues, is representing Branch and Watchman Fellowship. Rutherford attorney Eric Johnston issued the statement that "this kind of case carries significant implications of censorship on the freedom of religion and freedom of speech guaranteed for religious organizations."

"One of the questions is whether Christian organizations have the right of free speech to publicly speak out against groups that are in conflict with their faith and/or who fraudulently represent themselves as compatible with Christianity," Johnston said.

The suit alleges that the defendants are seeking to destroy the plaintiffs "through malicious anti-religious campaign of lies and deceit through public and private channels ... because of the membership of its owners and some of its employees in the Church of Scientology."

The suit claims that defendants have "adopted a plan and practice of spreading derogatory and unverified information about business consulting firms which they considered to be related to religions they deemed as 'unworthy' (termed by the defendants as 'cults') ... in order to impede and destroy those businesses due to the religious beliefs of principals of those businesses."

Branch responded that Watchman Fellowship periodically prints factual information about Scientology and its front organizations such as Sterling Management, in its newsletter publication, the **Watchman Expositor**.

Branch also acknowledged that he sent letters to all 1,400 dentists in Alabama warning them of "some controversial, and in some cases destructive groups (cults) that have adapted their programs to take advantage of this business market," listing Sterling Management among others.

The letter also stated, "If you go into one of these programs with full knowledge of its purposes, then there is no deception for you. However, if you are contracting only for a straightforward business-training program, then you can possibly be deceived and should be aware of its additional and unknown aspects."

Branch stated that Watchman Fellowship only quotes from firsthand experiences or from reputable, established publications.

The cover story for **Time** magazine's May 6, 1991, issue was "Scientology: The Cult of Greed." The article reported that Sterling Management Systems "has been ranked by **Inc. Magazine** as one of America's fastest-growing companies," but is a "front group and financial scam" whose "true aim is to hook customers for Scientology."

The same story was carried by **Reader's Digest**.

Similar articles on the criminal history, destructiveness, and exploitative practices has been reported in **Forbes** magazine, **St. Petersburg Times**, **The Psychiatric Times**, **Washington Post**, a six-day in-depth investigative report by the **Los Angeles Times**, **Podiatry Today**, the **Journal of the American Dental Association**, the **Journal of American Veterinary Medical Association**, and many other media sources.

The Better Business Bureau of Los Angeles, in its September 1991 newsletter, called Sterling Management "one of the many of the Scientology cult's front groups" in a lengthy article detailing a summary of the complaints received against it.

-WFI

## NEWSPAPER EXEGESIS

There is a trend in recent years that is both dangerous and misleading. We can call it "Newspaper Exegesis." It is the attempt by some to take current events and news headlines and to try to create fulfilled prophecy. One instance of this is seen in a book by Charles Dyer.

Dyer claims that modern Iraq is the fulfillment of Revelation 17-18 (**The Rise of Babylon, Sign of the End Times**). This trend can be very sensationalistic as some twist Scripture into strange shapes. Another instance of this is in the book **Hidden Beast** by E.H. Skolfield. The premise of this publication is that the Antichrist is, in fact, Islam. The reader is also informed that the Dome of the Rock (the Moslem mosque on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem) is the abomination of desolations mentioned in Matthew 24.

One cannot deny that militant Islam is on the rise and that the world's attention often focuses on the Mideast. However absolute identifications of people and events are risky indeed. For example, Skolfield gives two conflicting dates in his book regarding the start of the building of the Dome of the Rock. He gives 685 A.D. and 688 A.D. It is unclear as to which date he says the building started. In his charts, however, he maintains the 685 A.D. date, and all of his chronology and date settings seem to hinge on that year. In fact, his whole scheme rises and falls on the 685 A.D. date. The author goes on to say that his work is built on "historic fact."

What is interesting is that his premise is demolished by "historical fact." The Dome of the Rock was begun in 691 A.D. Dr. Zev Vilnay, considered an authority on Jerusalem, writes in his **Israel Guide**, that Abd el Melek himself gave the date as 691 A.D. This is confirmed by the inscription put inside by the builder himself. Israel guidebooks, such as Bazak or Fodors, will confirm this.

Skolfield does not list any sources, so one can only wonder where he got his misinformation. Eugene Hoade, who like Vilnay, spent his life in study in Israel, confirms the date in his **Guide to The Holy Land**.

We must recognize this kind of "newspaper exegesis" and disregard it. Ultimately world events will conform to

Scripture. We do not have to torture Scriptures to make them fit into local headlines. As these schemes fail (as they did with the old Adventists) people will become skeptical of Scriptures and of Christians. We must be very, very cautious as we interpret God's Word.

-GRF

Editor's note: See further various PFO articles from **The Quarterly Journal** on date setting (Vol. 9, No. 3), Islam (Vol. 11, No. 1), and the rebuilding of the Temple on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem (Vol. 10, No. 4).

## JESUS MAKES THE HEADLINES

The Dec. 23, 1991, **The New York Times** carried a front-page article "Peering Past Faith to Glimpse the Jesus of History." Jesus on the front page of the **Times** may impress a Bible believer, but the article is not as positive as one would hope.

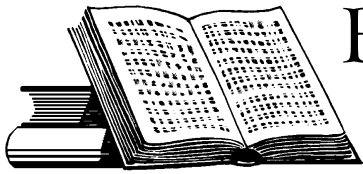
The article concerns two new books written by Roman Catholic priests. Both purport to unveil the real Jesus. John Crossan (DePaul University, Chicago) and John Meier (Catholic University of America, Washington) claim to use "scientific information" to reveal the "true" Jesus. Both books are filled with speculations such as Meier's assumption that Jesus "was possibly married!" These books are obviously not based on scientific research but rather on speculative interpretations of cultural information. Meier rejects the Gospel accounts. In doing so, he rejects the eyewitness information given by the contemporaries of Christ (Luke 1:1-3, 1 John 1:1-5). Meier seems to rely on his interpretations of Greco-Roman culture and then imposes these interpretations on the life of Jesus.

Crossan also rejects the Gospels, but he turns to noncanonical writings and so called "Gospels" written a century after Christ. Crossan uses the pseudo-Gospel of Thomas written by Gnostics in Egypt to support their heresies. Crossan sees Jesus as a Jewish peasant, while Meier sees Jesus as a marginal Jew. The history of the "pursuit of the historical Jesus" (finding the so-called real Jesus) is really an attempt to reconstruct a Christ of fantasy. Liberals continue to contradict one another with their mythical Jesuses. The use of noncanonical sources and false gospels has been exposed repeatedly throughout church history. Both Meier and Crossan claim to have finally discovered the real Jesus based on scientific evidence, yet both of their accounts contradict one another's.

The success of these books will probably be based more on the skill of marketing than the helpfulness of content. These books give us nothing new but are simply a rehashing of familiar old liberal themes. It is a tragedy that Catholic priests are now resurrecting Protestant Liberalism.

-GRF

Editor's Note: For further information on the pseudo-gospels see the PFO articles: "What About The Lost Books of the Bible?", (PFO's Mini-Newsletter, Feb., 1986) and "The Aquarian Gospel," (The Quarterly Journal, Vol. 10, No. 1).



# BOOKS IN REVIEW

## **THE SUBTLE POWER OF SPIRITUAL ABUSE**

by David Johnson and Jeff VanVonderen

Bethany House Publishers, 235 pages, \$8.95

The subtitle of this book explains it all — “Recognizing and Escaping Spiritual Manipulation and False Spiritual Authority Within the Church.” This is a timely book as increasingly people are getting hooked into cultic groups and abusive religious systems. The authors spell out the things that mark false and overbearing leadership. They show how some leaders misuse the Scriptures to control the lives of professing Christians.

Christians who are under a burden of legalism and guilt will benefit from this insightful book. Many believers are being manipulated and shamed by unscrupulous leaders who dominate others for their own gratification. The book breaks down into three main categories:

- ◆ Spiritual Abuse and Its Victims;
- ◆ Abusive Leaders and Why They Are Trapped;
- ◆ and Post Abuse Recovery.

Even people not trapped in such abusive systems will benefit from this information in that it will equip them to help others.

The only problem this reviewer has with the book is its reference to spiritual abuse as an “illness” and a “disease.” Perhaps the authors meant the words in a figurative way. Spiritual abuse is a real problem. However, it is sinful behavior practiced by proud and sinful men who wrongly mistreat others. Mistreatment of others is sin according to Ephesians 4:22-32.

-GRF

## **MISGUIDING LIGHTS?**

Stephen M. Miller, Editor

Beacon Hill Press, 132 pages, \$3.95

Editor Stephen Miller and Beacon Hill Press have enlisted several noteworthy cult critics to contribute to a book on the cults, the occult and world religions. Among the writers are Ronald Enroth, Sandra Tanner, Douglas Groothuis, Jerry Johnston and Kurt Van Gorden.

The book is intended to be part of a Church Elective/Sunday School curriculum, but its usefulness goes well beyond that. The book examines such major cults as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons), Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Unification Church (Unificationists or Moonies), and Scientology; critiques the metaphysical thinking found in the New Age Movement, Unity School

of Christianity and Transcendental Meditation; and analyzes the major world religions of Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. The introduction and concluding chapters present the “appeal of the cults” and the “appeal of Christianity” respectively.

Each of the concise chapters of the work opens with a one-page overview of the sect, followed by a more detailed analysis of the movement’s history and the doctrinal clash with Christianity. Most chapters also conclude with a few brief suggestions for Christian evangelism. In addition, many of the chapters are interwoven with accounts of events from the lives of people involved in the cults. This helps hold the reader’s attention and may even entice some of those less curious about cult evangelism.

The lone appendix of the book provides “a comparative chart” of the major tenets of the examined groups. It is reminiscent of the old Moody Press tract, “Spirit of Truth, Spirit of Error.” For those wishing to use the publication for its express purpose, a 13-lesson Leader’s Guide is also available.

Very rarely, in today’s Christian publications market, does a publication with this much information by noted authors come along for so small a price. This book is well worth twice its price.

-AMG

## **THE MIDDLE EAST MAZE**

by David Rausch

Moody Press, 208 pages, \$9.99

This very timely book explains to us how the “Mideast” became the “Mideast.” It gives us discernment into the facts and factions of Israel and her neighbors.

Christians need perspective and an historical overview of the Ottoman Empire, World War II and the major developments in the Middle East since 1945. They need this information from a Christian perspective. They also need to understand the religious and cultural issues of this region and the reason behind its unique problems. The Middle East is a very complicated place but Rausch manages to analyze the region in an understandable way.

The author looks at various Christian views of Israel today. He looks at Israel and the 1991 Persian Gulf War as well as presenting insight into Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and Libya. Understanding the Middle East maze will not only get you up on current events but will give you a deeper appreciation of God’s Word.

The extensive bibliography and index make this publication a gold mine of information.

-GRF

**Editor’s Note:** The above publications are available from Personal Freedom Outreach (P.O. Box 26062, Saint Louis, Missouri 63136). Please add \$1.25 to the price listed to cover postage costs. These publications are also available to those who help to financially support the work of PFO. Please see our funds appeal flyer for details.