



CHURCH OF GOD
GENERAL CONFERENCE

THE RESTITUTION HERALD

PROCLAIMING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE **KINGDOM OF GOD** | ACTS 3:21

... heaven must receive [Jesus] until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Colossians 1:15-20 Preexistence or Preeminence?

By William Wachtel (WA)

In standard evangelical commentary, two texts from Paul's writings are constantly used to teach the personal preexistence of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:15-20. These texts are considered to be bulwarks of trinitarian theology, expressing in some sense Christ's status as deity. At the time of the Nicene Council, both Arians and Athanasians were fond of using them to prove that Christ existed as a personal being before his birth or "incarnation." The difference, of course, was that the Arians thought he had a beginning and was the first creature whom God made, while the Athanasians thought he had no beginning and was himself "co-equal, co-eternal, and consubstantial" with the Father. The result of such terms was the claim, still insisted on by trinitarians today, that Jesus must be seen to be God just as the Father is seen to be God.

This writer questions seriously, however, whether any such ideas were in Paul's mind or in God's inspiration through the Spirit upon Paul's writing of Scripture. In Philippians 2:5, for instance, Paul declares he is holding forth the *historical* example of the man Christ Jesus (as in 1 Tim. 2:5), not some prehistoric example into which can be read ideas of personal preexistence. Can the same be said to be true of Colossians 1:15-20? Let us take a careful look at the text and its implications.

Christ, the Image of God

Verse 15 tells us that God's "beloved Son" (v.13 NASB) is the "image" of the unseen God. An image, of course,

is a visual representation, the copy of an original. The very fact of using a word such as "image" suggests necessarily that there is a difference in identity between the copy and the original. When one looks in the mirror, he sees an "image" of himself. He does not consider himself to be the person who is "behind the glass" but the person who is "in front of the glass." The only reason to labor this point is that many foolish things have been said about the word "image" in this and other verses, seeking to prove that Christ, "the image of God" (2 Cor. 4:4), is God himself!¹ The word "image" establishes, by its very meaning, that Christ is not God. The image is not the same as the original, and in this case the original is God.

When Jesus told his disciples, "Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9), he was not claiming to be the Father (a claim that would prove too much, if trinitarianism were correct), but rather that he is like the Father. The writer of Hebrews (1:3) says that he is the "express image" (KJV) — "exact representation" (NIV, NASB) — of God's being, or God's nature. Again, our two words "exact representation" and the single Greek word *χαρακτήρ* (*charakter*)², from which those two words are translated, imply that a copy is being set forth, based on an original. The writer of Hebrews is telling us that God has spoken to us by a Son who is just like God. But to say this Son is "just like" God is to recognize that he is not, in fact, himself God, i.e., the one to whom he is now being "likened." The

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writer goes on to say that this person who is like God, after purging our sins by his death, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, a further differentiation between the man who is "just like" God, and the being who is God, himself!³

Christ, the Firstborn

Verse 15 continues by calling Christ the firstborn of "every creature" (KJV) or "all creation" (NIV, NASB). If "first" in the word firstborn means only precedence in time, and if "creation" means the original creation of Genesis 1, then the case for Christ's personal preexistence must stand. The Arians and Athanasians would have to be right in their claim that Christ existed as a person before his birth and that this person in fact abandoned his previous mode of existence in order to become a human being. This, precisely, is what any views of personal preexistence must find in the texts in Philippians 2 and Colossians 1. What we are questioning here is whether several crucial terms mean, in their context and in Scripture as a whole, what they are popularly interpreted to mean!

Let us begin by examining the word translated "firstborn" — *πρωτοτοκος* (*prototokos*). This word is used a number of times in scripture, often to designate the child born first in a family. When Esau came to his father Isaac to receive the blessing that was due him, he pleaded the fact that he was Isaac's firstborn — his *prototokos* (Gen. 27:32 LXX). Jacob, the second born son, had already deceived his father and received the blessing intended for Esau. The custom of conferring special privileges or a major inheritance on the firstborn son is not only seen in the Bible, but also in the later laws of "primogeniture" in England and other countries, awarding the family inheritance to the eldest son.

There is, however, in Scripture a further meaning to the term *prototokos*. Since the Greek word *protos* can mean either "first in time" or "first in rank," the "firstborn" may be used to designate one who is honored with first or chief position, regardless of time of birth. This idea is seen in Exodus 4:22, where God commands Moses to tell Pharaoh, "This is what YHWH says: Israel is my firstborn son. . . . Let my son go, so he may worship me." Clearly, here the word *prototokos* (LXX) has nothing to do with precedence in time, but rather precedence in rank among the nations, as God views their relative importance.⁴ The same is true in Jeremiah 31:9 (38:9 LXX), where God calls Ephraim his

prototokos (even though Ephraim's brother, Manasseh, was the elder of the two). Again, it is precedence in rank, or importance, that is in view. The classic example of this usage is found in Psalm 89:27 (88:27 LXX), where God describes in glowing words the promised Davidic king, the Messiah: "I will also appoint him my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth." This foremost position as King of kings is a matter of appointment, not time of birth!⁵ These facts and this usage as to the word "firstborn" may well have much significance in helping us to understand how and why Christ can be called "the firstborn of all creation" in Colossians 1:15. "If *prototokos* is selected in Col. 1:15 and then again in 1:18 to express this supremacy, this is because of the great importance which the term 'firstborn' took on as a word for rank in the OT and then retained in later Judaism."⁶

Over All Creation

The NIV calls Christ "the firstborn over all creation," while NASB has "firstborn of all creation," reflecting a literal translation of the genitive case. KJV also translates the genitive literally: "the firstborn of every creature." The NASB and KJV renderings could be interpreted to imply that Christ was the first created being, just as the Arians believed. They understood "first" to refer to precedence in time. That is why Arius declared that "there was a time when he was not," i.e., before he was created. It was this that the Athanasians rejected so vehemently, insisting that he was eternal, "begotten in eternity, before all time."⁷ To them this meant he was "co-eternal" with the Father and therefore himself God.

It is necessary at this point to consider whether Paul uses the word "creation" here in reference to the original creation of Genesis 1, or whether he may have in mind what may be called the "new creation." Paul goes on to define this creation as comprising all things "in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him." Certainly, it was Christ himself who described the original creation as being God's work (Mark 13:19) — suggesting that Christ did not see himself as creator of the "all things" mentioned in Genesis 1:31.⁸ Paul, in fact, seems to give an exact description of what he means by the "all things" created — namely, "thrones, powers, rulers, authorities." If this is what he means, then we must ask in what sense Christ can be called the creator of such.

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Just before his ascension, Christ said that "all authority in heaven and on earth" had now been given to him (Matt. 28:18). With that authority he commissioned his apostles to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations and to teach them all his commands. Moses had foretold that Messiah would be a prophet like Moses himself, whose word would have the force of law, demanding obedience (Deut. 18:15,18,19; Acts 3:22,23). But what about his authority "in heaven?" Paul says that when Christ was raised from the dead and was set at God's right hand in the "heavenlies," his new position brought him to a status "far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come" (Eph. 1:21). Not only that, but "God placed all things under his feet" (v.22). Colossians 1:17 echoes this, in saying that "in him all things hold together." Col. 2:10 describes him as "the head over every power and authority." God rewarded Jesus' "obedience unto death" by highly exalting him and giving him the name which is above every name. At the name of Jesus every knee is required to bow, "in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. 2:8-11).

These ascriptions of supreme authority to Christ, under God, suggest that when Christ came to be seated at the right hand of God, he, in turn, set up, or created, a new system of rulerships among the angelic beings as well as preparing a place of honor and service within his Father's household for all his faithful people, both in this age and in the age to come (John 14:2,3). All of this is then part of "the new creation." It is this new creation that the present writer understands to be the subject of Colossians 1:15-17. If this view is correct, the personal preexistence of Christ is not at all the subject of our text, contrary to popular interpretation!

Before All Things

Verse 17 declares that Christ is "before all things" — *pro panton*. This phrase has been seized upon as proof of his personal preexistence. But care must be taken to notice that the verb here is in the present tense — "is" — not "was"! Paul does not tell us that Christ "was" before all things, evidence for preexistence. But what does "before" mean? The Greek word used here (*pro*) has three common uses: before, in the sense of place = "in front of"; before, in the sense of time = "prior to"; and before, in the sense of preeminence, rank, advantage.⁹ The latter usage is seen in 1 Peter 4:8, *pro*

panton, "before all things" or "above all things" = "most important of all." Here, *pro* has nothing to do with time or place but rather stresses how Christian love is preeminent above all other virtues. James 5:12 provides another example of the same usage and of the phrase *pro panton*.

To say, therefore, that Christ is *pro panton* is to say that he is, under God, the preeminent one, the most important one! This is underscored by the last statement of the next verse, describing him as having, in everything, "the preeminence" (KJV), "the supremacy" (NIV), "the first place" (NASB). To emphasize this preeminence even more, Paul adds the personal pronoun *autos* to the verb *proteuo*, meaning that he, Christ himself, is being given first place in all God's universe! This reminds the writer of Pharaoh's exalting Joseph to first place in Egypt. He told him, "You shall be in charge of my palace, and all my people are to submit to your orders. Only with respect to the throne will I be greater than you. . . . I hereby put you in charge of the whole land of Egypt. . . . I am Pharaoh, but without your word no one will lift hand or foot in all Egypt" (Gen. 41:40,41,44). This is the kind of preeminence and rulership that God has granted to his Son — to be over all other beings — typified only dimly by the history of Joseph's own exaltation!

Paul piles on superlatives to declare that in Christ "all things hold together." The Greek verb translated "hold together" (*sunistemai*) is given various definitions by the lexicographers. One suggestive definition is "cohere." All things cohere in Christ and provide a coherent meaning to the universe. He is the reason for it all, because he is God's only begotten Son, the perfect image of the Father himself! Another definition is "to have one's proper place." All things in the universe have their own proper place, designed by the Creator, YHWH, to be in perfect relationship and harmony with "the Son whom God loves" (v.13).

Christ's headship over the church is a frequent theme in Paul's writings. Verse 18 declares that headship, and goes on to call him *arche*, "beginning" (KJV, NIV, NASB). This word also means "ruler, authority."¹⁰ It gives further emphasis to Paul's theme of Christ's preeminence and supreme authority under God. In that now conferred authority, all things begin and end in Christ. As the beginning of the new creation, he is the "firstborn from among the dead," the first human being to rise immortal from the grave and to become thereby a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). As *pro-*

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totokos he is also "chief born" from among the dead, because he in turn is the "life giver," the Prince of Life whose voice will awaken and call forth the sleeping dead from their graves (John 5:21-29; Acts 3:15).

The Fullness of God

"God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him" (v.19). The past tense here, combined with the immediate mention of Christ's reconciling work in his death on the cross (v.20), seems to indicate that Paul has in mind the period of Christ's mortal lifetime. It was then that Christ was already filled with God's fullness, just as believers are called upon to seek that fullness for their own lives today (Eph. 3:19).¹¹ In Christ's case, however, there was no limit to the Spirit working in him. He was totally filled with God's Spirit and power throughout his earthly ministry.¹² His initial preeminence is seen in his walking the earth as though he were God himself.¹³

Later, in Colossians 2:9, Paul speaks of God's "fullness" again but describes it in a special way and in the present tense. "In Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form." Since his resurrection to bodily immortality and his being granted "all authority in heaven and earth," Christ is exalted by his Father to the highest place in the universe, next to God himself, and is given the highest name (Phil. 2:9). He can be described, therefore, as possessing the fullness of the Deity. How could his preeminence be emphasized more powerfully than this? But all of this is short-circuited and spoiled by trinitarian notions and the teaching of Christ's personal preexistence! If those ideas were true, he already possessed, in person, total preeminence long before he was born, before he had been obedient unto death. But, as Paul insists, it was this very obedience, and the humility from which it sprang, that was the reason for, and the cause of, that exaltation and that preeminence!

NOTES

¹ See, for example, *The Living Bible* on 2 Cor. 4:4.

² This word may be transliterated as "character," but the modern English word has come a rather long way from its original Greek meaning.

³ "Majesty" is probably used here as an equivalent for the divine name, YHWH.

⁴ "When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for the

peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance" (Deut. 32:8,9 NIV).

⁵ See the excellent discussion of *prototokos* in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, VI, 871-881.

⁶ *Ibid.*, VI, 879.

⁷ Stated in the Nicene Creed as "begotten of the Father before all the ages." My translation from the Greek text found in Schaff's *Creeds of Christendom*, II, 57. Also see "Eternal generation," p. 194, in Baker's *Dictionary of Theology*.

⁸ "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good."

⁹ Arndt and Gingrich's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, article *pro*.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, article *arche*.

¹¹ "To know this love that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."

¹² "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God; to him God gives the Spirit without limit" (John 3:34).

¹³ Philippians 2:6, speaking of the historical person Christ Jesus, tells us that, as a man, he was in the *morphe* of God. This word, usually translated "form," in this context has the other Koiné Greek meaning of "status, position, rank." This is proved by the use of the same word in verse 7, where Christ is shown to have taken the "status" or "position" of a servant. Cf. *morphe* in Moulton and Milligan, *The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*; and Kenneth S. Wuest, *The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament*, p. 84.

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Seven Last Words from the Cross

By Scott Ross (NE)

The Gospels record seven times that Jesus spoke while on the cross. Although spoken nearly 2,000 years ago, their message still resonates with us today.

*Father, forgive them,
for they do not know what they are doing.*
Luke 23:34

Incredible, isn't it? Jesus did no wrong, harmed no one, never sinned, yet was himself scourged, ridiculed, mocked, beaten, and finally crucified. And incredibly, the first words he uttered from the cross were "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Yes. It is incredible!

When someone speaks an unkind word to us, yells at us, criticizes us, or even cuts us off in traffic, we feel anger swelling up within us and a desire to lash back. Yet, the one we claim as Lord and role model for our lives responded to hurt and harm more severe than we ever experienced with those words of forgiveness: *Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.* The Scripture tells us, "Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did" (1 John 2:6). When Jesus taught us to pray, "Forgive us as we forgive others," he spoke words he himself followed.

Let us remember Jesus' example. God help us to be forgiving of one another. Help us to be more kind, more patient, more understanding of our family, of our friends, even of those with whom we disagree. Help us to forgive those who have wronged us. As we pause before the cross, God rid our hearts of anger, bitterness, and resentment. As we have been forgiven, so help us to be forgiving.

Truly, I tell you today, you will be with me in paradise.
Luke 23:43

As Jesus hung on the cross, there were two others on either side of him, criminals being executed for crimes they had committed. One mocked Jesus, but the other recognized that Jesus did not deserve to die. He seemed to know that Jesus was someone special. Perhaps he had heard Jesus teach sometime. This man knew he deserved death and seemed to regret the life choices he had made. In his anguish, he cried out: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

"Truly I tell you today," Jesus said, "you will be with me in paradise." From the very beginning of his ministry, Jesus preached the good news of the kingdom of God

and called for people to repent. This life is not the last word. Jesus spoke of an age to come when there would be no more sorrow, no more sickness, no more death. Weapons of war would be changed to implements of peace. In this age to come, the blind will see, the lame will walk, the deaf will hear, and the dumb will speak. The prophets tell us the earth will be covered with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Today, there are many challenges. We see sickness, war, sadness, and death. But a better day is coming. Even on the cross, Jesus looked beyond the present to the dawning of that new day. Just as that day Jesus promised the thief paradise in the perfect kingdom of God, so he offers every one of us this same hope. Even so, come, Lord Jesus!

Woman, here is your son...Here is your mother.
John 19:26

These are intensely personal words as Jesus looked down from the cross and saw the anguish of his mother as she looked up at him. Did she remember the words Simeon had said when they dedicated baby Jesus at the temple? "*A sword will pierce your own soul too.*" (Lk 2:35). Every parent knows the anguish of seeing his or her child hurt, whether it is a skinned knee, a bruised ego, or a broken heart. Some have even felt the nearly unbearable anguish of a child's death. And Jesus knew that his mother Mary hurt that day.

Near Mary was John, the disciple Jesus loved. Jesus knew John's compassion, and he commissioned John to look after his mother, Mary. He asked his mother to view John as her son. Jesus trusted that they could and would comfort one another in the midst of the overwhelming sorrow of the next few days. And also that they would be there for one another as they navigated the years that lay ahead.

Jesus saw the complete picture of a coming Kingdom in the age to come, but he also knew we live in the here and now. We need one another. We need to lift up one another, to weep together when needed, and to rejoice together when blessed. Scripture urges us to "consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, but encouraging one another - all the more as you see the Day approaching." Jesus said we are to love one another. This is the mark of discipleship. Who is there this month, this week, this night that needs to feel someone cares?

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Seven Last Words (cont.)

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*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?
My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'*
Matthew 27:46

It was about three o'clock, and Jesus had hung on the cross for three hours in intense pain when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" But these words were not spoken in anger or bitterness. Jesus was quoting King David's words from the 22nd Psalm. We will understand these words of Jesus as we hear more of this Psalm from which they come.

- ¹ My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
so far from my cries of anguish?
- ² My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer,
by night, but I find no rest.
- ³ Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One;
you are the one Israel praises.
- ⁴ In you our ancestors put their trust;
they trusted and you delivered them...
- ⁶ But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by everyone, despised by the people.
- ⁷ All who see me mock me;
they hurl insults, shaking their heads.
- ⁸ "He trusts in the LORD," they say,
"let the LORD rescue him...."
- ¹¹ Do not be far from me,
for trouble is near
and there is no one to help....
- ¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint.
My heart has turned to wax;
it has melted within me.
- ¹⁵ My mouth is dried up like a potsherd,...
they pierce my hands and my feet.
- ¹⁷ All my bones are on display;
people stare and gloat over me.
- ¹⁸ They divide my clothes among them
and cast lots for my garment.
- ¹⁹ But you, LORD, do not be far from me.
You are my strength; come quickly to help me....
- ²² I will declare your name to my people;
in the assembly I will praise you.
- ²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him...
- ²⁴ For he has not despised or scorned
the suffering of the afflicted one;
he has not hidden his face from him
but has listened to his cry for help....
- ³⁰ Posterity will serve him;
future generations will be told about the Lord.
- ³¹ They will proclaim his righteousness,
declaring to a people yet unborn:
He has done it!

Jesus knew and understood that at that very moment, he was fulfilling that prophecy written in Psalm 22. He knew he felt forsaken, but he also knew the promise that God would deliver him and that God hears and listens to our cries for help. Let us remember that no matter how intense the pain, no matter how bitter the circumstances, no matter what feelings we might have, even feelings of abandonment. We are not forsaken and nothing, absolutely nothing, can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

I thirst.
John 19:28

Two very simple words: "I thirst." Yet these words remind us that Jesus was not some superhero being who could not feel. He knows what it is to thirst, to hurt, to be rejected, to feel forsaken. There is nothing that we are going through that Jesus does not understand. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus has faced every test, trial, and temptation that we have faced. So he is able to empathize with our weaknesses. He understands our struggles. That is what makes Jesus the perfect "go-between" between God and us. The Apostle Paul reminds us: "There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus," the man Christ Jesus, one who knows what it is to thirst, one who understands our struggles. That is why the writer of Hebrews goes on to say, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Let us hold firmly to the faith we profess." Jesus understands. Jesus cares.

It is finished.
John 19:30

Jesus has just said, "I thirst," and Scripture tells us a sponge with sour wine was lifted up to his lips on the stalk of a hyssop plant. Hyssop was an unlikely plant to use for this task since it was only a stalk, not much thicker than grass. But to the Jews, hyssop had special significance, for when God instituted the Passover, when they were redeemed from their slavery in Egypt, they were told to take the blood of the Passover lamb and sprinkle it on the doorposts of their houses with a hyssop branch. So after the hyssop branch is raised, Jesus speaks the words, "It is finished." John alone records the words, but Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record that Jesus gave a loud shout. "It is finished" in the Greek is all one word, so it is likely that this one word is what Jesus shouted. So "It is finished" was not said in a sad resignation of defeat, but rather as a triumphant

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Seven Last Words (cont.)

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affirmation of mission accomplished. The perfect Passover lamb, Jesus himself, shed his blood to cover our sins. Just as the Passover lamb redeemed the Jews from their slavery, so the blood of Jesus redeems us from our sins. The Apostle Peter wrote: *“For you know that ... you were redeemed ... with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect”* (1 Peter 1:18-19). And now Jesus could shout, “It is finished!” Mission accomplished! I did it! God had called Jesus to sacrifice himself, to be pierced for our transgressions. The LORD has laid on Jesus the iniquity of us all. As a result, we are redeemed from our sins. We are forgiven. The work, the mission, has been accomplished. The victory has been won. Jesus can shout with the voice of triumph, of a job well done, and proclaim, “It is finished!”

Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

Luke 23:46

Knowing he had completed his mission, Jesus bowed his head and said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.” Once again, Jesus is quoting a Psalm, this time Psalm 31, when David wrote: *“Into your hands I commit my spirit; deliver me, LORD, my faithful God.”* The words John used to describe this are words used when one lies his or her head back on a pillow to sleep. With the sense of satisfaction from having accomplished this agonizing task, Jesus can now shut his eyes in death, confident that God will indeed deliver him as promised in this psalm that Jesus was quoting. All of us also, if the Lord does not first return, will reach a point where we too will close our eyes and die. But we can face death with the same quiet confidence, knowing that death is not the last word, with the confidence that deliverance is coming. Good Friday ended with Jesus’ death on the cross, his body removed and laid in a grave. But it is not the end of the story. It’s Friday, but Easter is coming.

About the Author: *Scott Ross graduated from Oregon Bible College in 1968 and has been a pastor in the Church of God for over 50 years. He served the General Conference in various roles, including as the Pastor’s Pastor and chair of the Board of Directors. He and his wife, Gayle (Pryor) Ross, live in Omaha, NE, and they have three adult children. You can reach out to him at ruhnross@aol.com.*



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THEY STILL SPEAK

By faith Abel brought God a better offering than Cain did. By faith he was commended as righteous, when God spoke well of his offerings. And by faith Abel still speaks, even though he is dead." Hebrews 11:4

The Resurrection of Christ and Its Importance

By James A. Patrick (1926)

Now, if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead? ... And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. ... For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: and if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." 1 Cor. 15:12-18.

If Christ be not raised, our faith is vain; we are yet in our sins, and the sleeping ones in Christ are perished. Our faith, forgiveness of sins, our eternal future—everything hinges on the one great fact of the resurrection of Christ.

It seems to me to be clearly taught that the man that believes in the immortality of the soul makes God a liar. 1 John 5:9-12. How? By claiming that he has life in himself. He lays claim to eternal life because of his immortal soul. God tells us our life is in Christ, not in ourselves.

On the other hand, if the real man is the immortal part, that which dwells in the body, then Christ never rose from the dead, for it is claimed that he went to Paradise the day he was crucified. But Peter tells us that God had sworn with an oath to David that "according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne" Acts 2:30. So again, it is made to appear that God has not told the truth. All this dovetails in with what the father of lies said in the beginning.

There is another class who claim to believe in the natural mortality of man who claim that Christ was not raised according to the flesh. Since God's oath is involved, let us study the question carefully.

Peter argues in the second chapter of Acts that David's flesh would rest in hope because of the promise that Christ's flesh should see no corruption or "that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, He would raise up Christ to sit on his throne." He, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses."

What Jesus was raised up? The one whose flesh saw no corruption. Someone may ask: "Do you mean to say the same flesh that went into the tomb was raised up?" Yes, I mean to say just that. "Why lay so much stress on that point?" Because God's oath is involved. He had sworn to raise up Christ according to the flesh. If God says one thing and I say another, what am I doing? Just what John says in 1 John 5:9-12.

Let us look at another line of evidence. In Matt. 27:57-60, we are told that Joseph went to Pilate and begged for the body of Jesus. When it was given to him, he wrapped it in clean linen and laid it in his own new tomb. No one will question the fact that it was the fleshly body of Jesus that was laid in the tomb. Now, let us go to Matt. 28:1-6 and notice carefully what the angel said. When the women came to the tomb, they saw an angel sitting upon the stone which he had rolled from the mouth of the tomb. He said to them: "I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay." Notice what the angel said, "Ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen." The one that was crucified was the one that had risen.

Yes, the angel said, "Come, see the place where the Lord lay." What was it that had lain in the tomb? The body of flesh—no one will deny this. The angel said the body of flesh was the Lord. And he said the Lord had risen. And Peter said, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we are all witnesses." They were indeed witnesses, for they had seen him. Some people are not willing to take the evidence of reliable witnesses.

You remember that Thomas would not take the evidence of his associates until he had had evidence of both sight and feeling. But when the Lord told him to put his fingers in the nail-prints and thrust his hand into the spear-print in his side, he was thoroughly convinced. And yet there are people who are not willing to take the evidence of these witnesses. Paul confirms this view when he says (Eph. 4:9-10) that the Jesus that went into the earth was the same one that ascended to heaven. If Paul knew what he was talking

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The Resurrection of Christ (cont.)

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about, the same Jesus that was buried was the one that ascended to heaven.

Last, but not least, let us notice Christ's own words in Luke 24:36-46. These words alone ought to settle the question, but they do not for some. That is why I have given the other evidence.

Christ said to his wondering disciples: "Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have." It is very evident that he was not a spirit in the sense in which he used the term spirit in this verse.

I know some say that he assumed bodily form to prove his identity to his disciples, and that we should read the verse with the emphasis on the word "ye", "ye see me have"; as though they saw something that didn't really exist. I am sure Christ was not a deceiver, which he must have been, if he did not have flesh and bones as he said he had.

"But", someone will ask, "How did he appear in the room where they were when the doors were closed and locked? Flesh and bone cannot go through a keyhole or penetrate a door." No, and if Christ took any form or substance that could go through a keyhole or penetrate a door, He was not the same Christ that the disciples had known before. Then they were deceived and are not reliable witnesses. He is not the Christ at all. Our faith is vain, and we are yet in our sins.

Why didn't the disciples know him when he appeared to them... on the way to Emmaus? "Their eyes were holden that they should not know him."

Don't you suppose he had the power to go in when they did, or to open the door afterward and go in without them seeing him? Of course, he did. And this is much more reasonable than to suppose he went through the keyhole or penetrated the door.

There is another point I wish to notice on this subject. Christ was to be raised up according to the flesh to sit on David's throne. David's throne was on the earth. I have a tract in which the author tries to prove that David's throne is in heaven and that Christ is upon it now. But Daniel saw the kingdom under the whole heaven given to the people of the saints of the Most High. I realize that this particular prophecy refers to Israel, but when Christ comes in his glory and sits upon the throne of his glory, his bride will be with him.

Surely, this will be on the earth. The nations are to be gathered before him, and he will make the division spoken of in the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew.

It is argued in this connection that Christ and the church will reign over the kingdom which is under the whole heaven of which Daniel speaks. And to rule over them, they must be above them somewhere in the heavens. It is argued that Rev. 5:10 should read "over the earth" instead of "on the earth" as it does read. Well, suppose it should be "over" instead of "on", what of it? In Heb. 3:6 it is said that Christ is "over his own house." Will he have to be above them in order that that text may be fulfilled?

In Daniel 2:48, it is said of Daniel: "Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon." Of course, he had to get on top of the government buildings in order to rule over them.

In Ezra 4:20, we read: "There have been mighty kings also over Jerusalem, which have ruled over all the countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute, and custom, was paid unto them." If over means to be above in order to rule, I wonder how these kings managed it. There were no flying machines in those days.

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About the Author: *James A. Patrick (1870-1948) was a good Bible student and published many articles. He served churches in Minnesota for more than 20 years and edited The Day Dawn and Harvest Messenger for most of its publication. He was on the Committee of Ten, which designed and organized the Church of God General Conference and presented the plan to the delegates at the 1921 summer conference in Waterloo, IA. He was included on the first list of certified ministers of the Church of God in 1921 and also served as the first president of the Church of God General Conference Board of Directors. He later served churches in MI, OH, IN, and Canada.*

CHURCH OF GOD ARCHIVES PROJECT

As we are scanning our collection, we are seeking other material to add. If you have books, tracts, articles, sermons, writing, or publications, related to the Church of God, please email us.

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Proposed Constitution and By-Laws Amendments

For Consideration of the Delegates at Summer Conference

Proposal 1

The Bethel Church of God (Pelzer, SC) proposes adding the following sections 9-11 to Article IV of the Church of God General Conference constitution. (Existing sections 1-8 deal with the election of officers for the board, qualifications of directors, how nominations and voting are handled, the length of term, and how to handle vacancies).

ARTICLE IV Officers of the Conference

Additional Sections

Section 9. No candidate for director or elected director shall have a close relative (spouse, child, parent, sibling) as a paid employee of the college/conference.

Section 10. No candidate for director shall have a close relative (spouse, child, parent, sibling) already on the Board of Directors.

Section 11. No candidate for director shall have a person from their home congregation already on the Board of Directors.

Explanation: The purpose of the proposed new section 9 is to avoid the appearance of impropriety between the Board of Directors and the paid employees of the college/conference. If the Board of Directors found it necessary to review an employee's conduct and needed to consider the dismissal of the employee, a close relative may not be able to make an unbiased decision.

The purpose of the proposed new Section 10 is to avoid the appearance of impropriety among the members of the Board of Directors. Members of the Board of Directors who are close relatives may be perceived as a voting bloc that could pressure the decisions of the other members.

The purpose of the proposed new section 11 is to avoid the appearance of impropriety among the members of the Board of Directors. Members of the Board of Directors from the same congregation may be perceived as a voting bloc that could pressure the decisions of other members.

Proposal 2

After consideration and recommendation by the Church of God Ministerial Association at its March meeting, the Board of Directors proposes the following changes to the Statement of Faith.

BY-LAWS, ARTICLE I Statement of Faith

Proposed revision to point A. GOD

Current: We believe that only one person is God, and that He is a literal corporeal being—almighty, eternal, immortal, and the Creator of all things.

Proposed: We believe that there is only one God, the Father alone, who is almighty, eternal, immortal, and the creator of all things.

Explanation: Remove the phrase, "a literal corporeal being," because of the confusion caused by the word "corporeal." Some believe the word "corporeal" recognizes God's physical appearance in Scriptures and also allows for Him to exist as spirit. Others believe the word inhibits God's ability to appear as spirit and contradicts the Scriptures' assertion that God is also spirit. The inclusion of "corporeal" is unnecessarily divisive and does not add anything to the Statement of Faith that is fundamentally consequential.

Proposal 3

Proposed revision to point B. JESUS CHRIST

Current: "We believe that Jesus Christ, born of the virgin Mary, is the sinless and only begotten Son of God. He existed only from his birth."

Proposed: "We believe that Jesus Christ is the sinless and only begotten Son of God, who came into existence at his conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin Mary."

Explanation: Including "existed only from his birth" denies his existence as a person within the womb of Mary. Recognizing his existence from conception is consistent with our understanding of human life both scientifically and scripturally, since God knows us in the womb.

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Proposed Constitution and By-Laws Amendments (cont.)

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Proposal 4

Proposed revision to point **G. THE CHURCH OF GOD**

Current: “**G. THE CHURCH OF GOD.** We believe that the Church of God is the Scriptural name for that body of people who have been called out from among all nations through obedience to the gospel plan of salvation. Christ is the Head of the Church, and the nature, work, and government of the Church are set forth in the New Testament.

Proposed Change: “**G. THE CHURCH.** We believe that the Church is the body of people who have been called out by God from among all the nations through obedience to the gospel plan of salvation. Christ is the head of the Church, and the nature, work, and government of the Church are set forth in the New Testament.

Explanation: This change broadens the reference to the church so that it is not limited to our organization, the Church of God. It acknowledges that God is working through the church established by Jesus, rather than identifying that work exclusively with our denomination.

These proposed amendments are being published in multiple conference publications prior to the 2026 summer conference and will be voted on by the delegates August 5-7 at Cornerstone Bible Church, 180 Nail Dr., McDonough, GA.

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Why Are Constitutional Proposals Appearing in the RESTITUTION HERALD?

The Church of God General Conference Constitution and By-Laws includes the following section regarding proposed amendments. In order for an amendment to be voted on by delegates at summer conference, it must meet some requirements for publishing. This is being printed in accordance with those constitutional requirements.

ARTICLE V

Amendment of the Constitution and By-Laws

Section 1. The constitution and by-laws of the College/Conference may be amended, altered, or revised by a two-thirds majority vote of delegates present at any General Conference meeting, notice having been given of the proposed amendment or revision in at least three consecutive issues of THE RESTITUTION HERALD and/or the Progress Journal, the first appearance thereof to be at least thirty days prior to the convening of the conference by which it is to be considered. Said notice shall plainly state the nature and purpose of the amendment or revision. Publication in THE RESTITUTION HERALD and/or the Progress Journal shall be deemed sufficient notice.

Section 2. Proposed amendments to the Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the Secretary of the Board of Directors by a member church, a member conference, or the Board of Directors, in sufficient time to be properly published.

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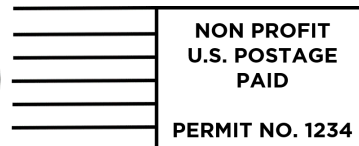
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articles@restitutionherald.com

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THE RESTITUTION HERALD Advocates:

- the oneness of God (1 Cor. 8:6)
- the Holy Spirit is God's power (Acts 1:8)
- Jesus Christ is God's only begotten Son (Matt. 16:16) and is our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5)
- the Bible is the inspired Word of God (2 Tim. 3:16)
- the mortality of man (Job 4:17; Psa. 146:4)
- the near return of Christ (Acts 1:11) and life only through him (Col. 3:3)
- the literal resurrection of the dead (John 5:28)
- the immortalization of those in Christ (1 Cor. 15:53-54)
- the destruction of the wicked (Rev. 21:8)
- the final restoration of Israel as the kingdom of God under the kingship of Christ (Luke 1:32)
- the church to be joint heirs with him (Rom. 8:17)
- the "restitution [restoration] of all things" (Acts 3:21).

It also firmly advocates repentance and immersion in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), and a consecrated life as essential to salvation.