

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 25 No. 6

Anthony Buzzard, editor

March, 2023

Church of Cowards: A Wake-Up Call to Complacent Christians

by Matt Walsh

Book Review and Comments by Barbara Buzzard

Please don't credit (or blame) me for this title.¹ Perhaps you won't appreciate it, and please note that I do not imply that I am writing to complacent Christians. But we all have the tendency to think, "Not my church, not me," and there is much to challenge us here. To my great regret, I realized that I behaved cowardly only last week when I was involved in a conversation and the word "gospel" came up. I very much regret not asking what the speaker meant by the word "gospel." I do plan to revisit that conversation and make a plea for understanding the Gospel as Jesus did.

There is danger in the fact that Christianity has become widened, stretched, and broadened. True Christianity is endangered because our world is filled with "Christians" like this: "A modern Christian believes that believing he is a Christian is enough to make him a Christian."² This *reduction* in requirements has created a false identity, making "Christians" but not according to biblical terms and definitions. And this leads on naturally to "What if I believe that He *is*, but I do not believe what He *says*?" We should remember that this leaves us lower than an unbeliever, and in all honesty, in the same category as the demons (James 2:19).

Walsh points out that "faith is a thing we *do*,"³ that it requires action to be valid; that being spiritually sedentary is not an option. He makes the most interesting point that all of the disputes (even violent!) over faith or works are like trying to decide whether love or fidelity is the most important thing in a marriage. Of course they are inseparable, as are faith and works. Genuine faith *must* produce works (Heb. 5:9).

"I think our real objective, when we settle for belief rather than faith and intellectual assent rather than self-surrender, is simply to avoid the challenges of obedience. These days we sneer at the very notion of obedience and treat a Christian who strives for

obedience as a primitive relic of a less enlightened spiritual age."⁴

Obedience to Jesus' instructions has disappeared behind the saving grace of Jesus' sacrifice. Rather than being an inseparable part of faith, obedience has taken a back seat, even an *optional* back seat, to what some consider the blank check of forgiveness.

"The de-emphasis of obedience is a terrible thing because it is a de-emphasis of Christ's very life. We tend to focus almost exclusively on the Crucifixion and Resurrection, forgetting that a whole life was lived before that point, *and a whole religion worth of teachings was imparted to us during that time.*"⁵ This last sentence is what *Focus on the Kingdom* has for years repeatedly stressed. It is one of our major points. To believe in Jesus is to believe in his teaching. In fact, it is his teaching, but not his death for our sins, which has to a large degree been lost, which is to say not taught and not understood.

Walsh puts it well when he asks why Jesus would tell us how to live if it were not necessary to live that way. And "Why would Jesus leave us holy scripture if everything it contains is now effectively moot? *Why would he preach and teach for three years before his sacrifice if those teachings were then made useless by the sacrifice itself?*"⁶ Again the comparison with faith and works is striking. One without the other just doesn't work, nor is it valid. Have Jesus' commandments been made moot or invalid by his death? May it never be so!

Effortless Christianity

We are sometimes presented with an effortless Christianity, i.e. just "accept Jesus" or just "pray the sinner's prayer." Jesus obviously deems this false as he advises us to *strive* to enter the Kingdom (Luke 13:24).

To be forgiven and to be saved⁷ are *parts* of a Christian life, which *equally* includes the active living out of faith in obedience to Jesus' teaching. It doesn't *end* with being forgiven and saved — it *begins* there, as in part one (incomplete). Walsh makes the point that although salvation is free and that Jesus has paid the price for us, this is not a blank check nor is it an eternal excuse to "just believe." Didn't Jesus say "pick up your cross and follow me"? That is the exact opposite of

¹ Matt Walsh, *Church of Cowards: A Wake-up Call to Complacent Christians*, 2022.

² Ibid., p. 17

³ Ibid., p. 34

⁴ Ibid., p. 37

⁵ Ibid., p. 37, emphasis mine.

⁶ Ibid., p. 38, emphasis mine.

⁷ More accurately, we are *being* saved.

what is being sold to us as effortless Christianity. Effortless Christianity, no matter what guise it comes in — “just believe,” just “accept Jesus” — is contrary to Jesus’ teaching. Consider these words: “My faith demands that I do whatever I can, wherever I can, whenever I can for as long as I can with whatever I have — to try to make a difference.”⁸

Walsh brings us a reality check here: “The sex scandal in the Catholic Church is a giant, blinking neon sign announcing to all the world: ‘The Devil Exists.’ It is simply not possible that men could be so evil on their own. An infamous grand jury report in 2017 detailed some of the alleged behavior of priests in Pennsylvania. The only word you can use to describe the content of that report is ‘demonic.’” Walsh concludes that “It is hard enough to fight an enemy you cannot see. It is impossible to fight an enemy you don’t think exists.”

Nothing We Do Is Morally Neutral

Walsh takes a brave position (which is a great credit to him in today’s world) on homosexuality. He points out that it is on this subject that many Christians want to find harmony between a Christian view and a worldly view. No such harmony exists. *No blessing of both sides exists*. He uses the example of standing on earth at the same time as standing on the moon — it is impossible. In agreeing with society’s morality one automatically leaves the Christian view behind, because the two are in direct opposition to each other. Attempts to appease, harmonize, soften, or to make the unbiblical excuse that we are not to judge on such matters opens us to the charge of cowardice. Again we must consider the demands of our faith to which we have a *moral obligation*. Nothing we do is morally neutral. We are not to be one with the world, to be appendages of it, to be indistinguishable from it.

Cowardice in Scripture is a big deal, a very big deal. Cowards are listed first in the line of unbelievers, murderers, immoral, idolaters, etc. who will not inherit the Kingdom (Rev. 21:8). The mark of our age is acquiescence, disguised as a virtue. The mark of a Christian is that he stand up for Truth in order to be saved (2 Thess. 2:10). Silence is not an option. Let us proceed with courage and be ready to do battle with any temptation to be silent about the things that matter.

Will the church have the integrity to say what a woman is, or will the manipulation of language and the delusion promoting it be too strong? The gravitational pull of the crowd is stronger than we would like to think. On the question of whether a person’s sex might be different from his/her sex at birth, the statistics

among Christians and non-Christians are not radically different. Walsh has come up with a rather brilliant comparison: *Do we get our own preferred prepositions?* If I am standing *on* a platform, can I say that I am standing *off* it? Can I require everyone to *affirm* that I am *off* the platform (when I am actually *on* it) just because *off* is my favorite preposition? Walsh writes, “If I intentionally call a man ‘she,’ I have lied. I have conveyed something that isn’t true. Despite my polite intentions, all I’ve done is contribute to the confusion, dishonesty, and intellectual chaos rampant in our culture...I am not morally or ethically required to speak nonsense or tell lies for anyone’s sake. On the contrary, my moral duty is to do exactly the opposite. I’m supposed to tell the truth, regardless of how the truth makes anyone feel. That is what both scripture and common sense dictate.”⁹

Living a Lie

Not only telling the truth but living in truth — what would that look like? Let’s look at the opposite first. Author Solzhenitsyn tells us that accepting without protest lies and propaganda, and affirming them or at least not opposing them: that is living a lie. “Everybody says that they have no choice but to conform, says Solzhenitsyn, and to accept powerlessness. *But that is the lie that gives all the other lies their malign force. The ordinary man may not be able to overturn the kingdom of lies, but he can at least say that he is not going to be its loyal subject.*”¹⁰

Acceptance and tolerance are treated by today’s culture as interchangeable — part of being welcoming.¹¹ Wrong of course, says Walsh. Tolerance is a false virtue. “Our culture demands acceptance — more than that, celebration — of all lifestyles and life choices.” To “accept” according to the dictionary is to give approval and to regard as proper. The culture is attempting to dictate that the church must do more than tolerate; it must accept, as in acquiesce to what Scripture defines as sin.

Faux Compassion?

Compassion has taken on a new meaning as in “Shut up and go with the flow.” It has been tainted and corrupted to mean tolerance and acceptance. Genuine compassion never enables sin. “The faux compassion we are called to these days is just indifference by another name.” Our acceptance or tolerance of sin is mistakenly seen as courage, but in fact it is actively hurting the sinner who we fail to confront. Where is the moral obligation of the Christian who does not attempt to show a sinner his sin and to help him to conquer it.

⁸ Author unknown.

⁹ *Church of Cowards*, p. 104

¹⁰ Rod Dreher, *Live Not by Lies*, p. 17 (emphasis mine)

¹¹ And yet the Bible never mentions the word tolerance except to warn that it will be more “tolerable” for one category of person than another (Luke 10:14).

And where is his *courage*? “Compassion that ignores sin, or nods approvingly at it, is not compassion at all. It is not love. It may be tolerance and acceptance, but it tolerates and accepts the destruction and damnation of human life.”¹² This would be especially true with reference to abortion, where a church’s silence is seen as approval of a heinous and hideous procedure which takes the life of an innocent.

Walsh’s primary stress is that indifference is a very great and grave danger for Christians, cleverly hidden from us and covered up by false virtues. However, we are not to be deceived. There are many false gospels. True Christianity has not only been reduced, but added to. Much wisdom is needed in detecting where we have deviated from Scripture. Walsh makes the point that there is a reason why “repent and believe” was Jesus’ first message, and he then points out that John the Baptist, Paul and Peter all emphasized this repentance command. But when it comes to the “believe” portion Walsh is silent about what Jesus actually said: “believe in the gospel of the Kingdom” (Mark 1:15).¹³ That gospel of the Kingdom is basically unheard of, even in Christian circles. We have, inadvertently perhaps, reduced the Gospel to Jesus’ death and resurrection but ignored what he specifically taught us to believe. How could one half of the command be less important than the other half? It seems to be hidden in plain sight, but unless alerted to its absence, it goes unseen and unsearched for. You can’t take one half and make it the whole. In doing so, you cancel, eliminate, lose out, disempower the importance of the whole and how the two parts work together. The only safe way to proceed is with Jesus’ own definition of the Gospel; he lays it out beautifully in Luke 4:43: “I must preach the Gospel about the Kingdom of God to other cities also, because I was commissioned for this purpose.”

If Walsh is looking to church leaders rather than individuals to do the right thing, I must agree with my astute friend who says, “I see no reason to believe they will.” Indeed, why would they? The same forces, influences, pressures, and payroll issues threaten them. These decisions rest squarely on *our* shoulders because we will be judged as individuals. It is as individuals that we need to measure up and not rely on any organization. This is the obedience of faith. “The idea that friendship with the world ruined the church, in fact that it utterly gutted the church, should seriously be considered.”¹⁴ My only hope is that as believers we will be awakened and conscience-stricken as to the sin of silence, the sin of not standing up. ✧

¹² *Church of Cowards*, p. 125

¹³ While there are many points with which I disagree with Walsh theologically, e.g. “Heaven for everyone,” I do very much appreciate his insight into Christian culture.

Spacesuit Christology

by Carlos Xavier

Dr. Mike Licona, a Baptist scholar, historian and apologist, wrote an online article called “The Early Church Fathers on Jesus.” He wrote against the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ teaching of a “**created** pre-human Jesus.” Dr. Licona accuses the Watchtower of “misleading its own followers and readers” by misquoting the so-called “church fathers” in support of their Jesus. In response Dr. Licona quotes early “church fathers” like Hippolytus, one of the most important figures from the 2nd to 3rd century:

“Let us believe then, dear brethren, according to the tradition of the apostles, that **God the Word came down from heaven (and entered) into the holy Virgin Mary**, in order that, taking the flesh from her...was manifested **as God in a body**, coming forth too **as a perfect man**. For it was not in mere appearance or by conversion, but in truth, that He **became man**.”

The noted Anglican Bishop Richard Hanson described this doctrine as “**Spacesuit Christology**.” Dr. Hanson explained: “Just as the astronaut, in order to operate in a part of the universe where there is no air and where he has to experience weightlessness, **puts on** an elaborate spacesuit which enables him to live and act in this new, unfamiliar environment, so **the Logos put on a body** which enabled him to behave **as a human being** among human beings. But his relation to **this body is no closer than that of an astronaut to his spacesuit**.” Wow!

While Trinitarians and some non-Trinitarians (like the JW’s) fundamentally disagree on whether or not Jesus was **created**, both nonetheless vehemently teach a so-called “**pre-existent**” Jesus. But is this what the NT actually says?

Matthew 1:1 and 18 describe “the record of the **origin** of Jesus” and how this “**origin...came about**,” i.e., when God **procreated** (begat) His Son in the womb of Mary (Matt. 1:20). It’s crucial to note that Matthew uses the Greek word *genesis* (with 1 *n*) meaning “**origin**,” as opposed to *gennesis* (with 2 *n*’s), which in Greek simply means “birth.”

In other words, Matthew is describing not just the “birth” of Jesus but **the coming into existence of the Son of God**, i.e., his **origin**. The public is not helped, however, by most translations that do not properly render the Greek text at this point.

Luke 1:35 describes this very same miracle, this time by the words of no less than the angel of the Lord to the virgin Mary: “Holy spirit will come upon you,

¹⁴ David Bercot, *Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up?* p. 124-5.

and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. **For that reason** the one **to be procreated** will be holy and **will be called the Son of God.**" To "be called" equals "to be": see Matthew 5:9 and Luke 6:35.

You could even argue that the virgin birth is alluded to by John when he says in 1 John 5:18 "the **one begotten** (i.e., **procreated**) by God" protects the believer! And of course there are John's *repeated* references to Jesus as "the **uniquely begotten** Son (*monogenes huios*)."

These Greek words *monogenes* and *genesis*, are related to another Greek word *gennao*, which means "to generate, produce" or "to **procreate**." We might dispense with the antiquated KJV word "begotten" and adopt "procreation" language. Nevertheless the dictionary meaning of the word "beget" is: "To **cause something to come into existence**, *primarily* through **procreation**" (Rahlf's).

So it's clear the NT teaches that the human Son **originated inside** (and not *outside*) the womb of the virgin Mary. My point is that both a Trinitarian Jesus and a created "pre-human" Jesus are false. A Jesus who is said to have "noiselessly and gently **entered into** the Virgin's womb" (John Chrysostom); or whom Mary "**received...into her** virginal and fragrant bridal chamber" (St. Theodosius) is simply "another Jesus" (as Paul warns).

The noted German historian Adolf Harnack rightly asked if this doctrine was "**another remnant of the old Gnostic** leaven." He wrote:

"We must describe it as the **strenuous effort** of **Stoic Platonism** to obtain supremacy in the theology of the Church;...the history of the **displacement of the historical** [Jesus] by the **pre-existent Christ**, of the Christ of **reality** by the Christ of **imagination**...as the victorious attempt to substitute the **mystery** of the person of Christ for the person Himself..."

"When the *Logos* Christology [of a 'preexistent' Jesus] obtained a **complete victory**, the traditional view of **the Supreme deity as one person**, and, along with this, every thought of **the real and complete human personality** of [Jesus] was in fact **condemned as being intolerable in the Church**. Its **place was taken** by 'the nature,' (of Christ), which without 'the person' [that is, of the Son of God] is simply a cipher [or a complete zero, i.e., a nothing Jesus]." ¹⁵ ✧

Clarifying a Prophecy of the End Time: Daniel 9:26-27

A remarkable prophecy and vision was given to Daniel in Daniel 9:26-27:

"After the sixty-two 'sevens' the Messiah will be cut off, so that he does not have the Kingdom which belongs to him; and the city, together with the sanctuary, will be destroyed by the people of a prince who will come, who shall come to his end in the flood. War will continue to the end [of the seventieth 'seven'], since desolation is irrevocably decreed.

"And he [the prince] will impose a covenant on the many for one 'seven,' and during half of the 'seven' he will cause the service of sacrifice to stop and, borne on the wings of idol abominations, he will carry on a desolating rule; and this will go on until the end when the firmly decreed judgment will be poured out on him as one desolated."¹⁶

The purpose of this prophecy is to throw light on the extraordinary struggle between good and evil destined to convulse the world before the return of the Messiah to rule in his Kingdom. Daniel 9:26 speaks of the Messiah being "cut off" — a reference which has been generally taken to mean Jesus' death for the sins of the world. Isaiah 53:8 likewise speaks of the suffering Messiah being "cut off" from the land of life. The meaning is apparently that Jesus was put to death and thus deprived of life in the land of promise — Israel. By being cut off Jesus did not then receive his Kingdom, the inheritance of the Messiah. The prophecy reads that he will "have nothing" (NASB). Keil understands this to mean that as a result of Jesus' death he did not immediately possess what belonged to the Messiah — the Kingdom (*Commentary*, p. 362).

An Evil Prince Who Is to Come

There is a change of subject in the second statement made in Daniel 9:26. "A prince who is to come" is introduced in connection with the overthrow (cp. the same Hebrew word used of the destruction of Sodom, Gen. 19:13ff.) of the city and the sanctuary. The order of the words in Hebrew is important: "The city and the sanctuary will be destroyed by the prince who is to come."

Keil points out that the word "coming" is associated in Daniel with a hostile invasion (p. 362). In Daniel 1:1 Nebuchadnezzar comes to besiege Jerusalem. In 11:10, 13, 15, forces of the king of the North "will keep on coming" (NASB) and "will come, pile up an assault ramp, and capture a well-fortified

¹⁵ *History of Dogma*, Vol. 3, p. 9-10.

¹⁶ Translation based on the Hebrew and on Keil and Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Vol. 9, reprinted 1989.

city” (NASB). In the case of the “prince who is to *come*,” however, the idea is that he is a person whose arrival to destroy the city is well known. Such a hostile invader has already appeared in Daniel, chapters 7 and 8. As Keil says, it is natural that we should think of the Antichrist.

“His” End Will Come

The NASB translates the next phrase in verse 26: “Its end will come with a flood.” The sense would be that the city and sanctuary will be overwhelmed. A more correct translation, however, is supplied by the NASB margin note and persuasively argued by Keil: “In the following clause, ‘and his end [will come] with the flood,’ the suffix [his] refers simply to the hostile prince, whose end is here emphatically placed over against [in contrast to] his coming” (p. 362-363).

Why is this an important point of interpretation? Those who find here a reference to Titus destroying Jerusalem in AD 70 cannot apply the suffix “his” to the hostile invader. The fact is that Titus did not come to his end in the war on Jerusalem. There are compelling reasons to agree with Keil’s translation. The word order of the preceding sentence (“the city and the sanctuary will be destroyed by the prince who is destined to come”) leaves “the prince” as the last idea. In the words immediately following, “his” or “its” end refers most naturally to the prince just mentioned. The evil prince in this prophecy comes to “his end” (cp. 11:45 where the Antichrist, the king of the North, “comes to his end”).

The prince’s end is in “the flood.” What events are described here? Not the invasion by Titus in AD 70, because Titus did not come to his end at the time of that invasion. Since interpreters have wished to find Titus and the events of AD 70 here, they have avoided the translation “**his** end.” As Keil says, “preconceived views as to the historical interpretation of the prophecy lie at the foundation of all other [translations than ‘his end’]” (p. 363). A reference to the end of the city or the sanctuary is forced because the word “city” is grammatically feminine in Hebrew, and a different ending would be needed for the word “end.” A reference to the sanctuary only is awkward because city and sanctuary are mentioned together. Keil concludes: “There thus remains nothing else than to apply the suffix [‘his’] to the prince. ‘End’ can accordingly only denote the destruction of the prince” (p. 363). Titus, in AD 70, therefore cannot be meant.

The “Flood” in Which He Comes to His End

What is “the flood” in which the invader comes to his end? The definite article indicates that a well-known “overflowing” of destruction is in mind. “Flood” is elsewhere used as the symbol of an

overwhelming divine judgment. For example, in Isaiah 8:8 the invasion of Judah by the king of Assyria “will sweep on into Judah; it will overflow and pass through.” In Nahum 1:8, the Lord “with an overflowing flood will make a complete end” of Nineveh’s site and “pursue His enemies into darkness.” Daniel informs us that Antichrist’s end will come in “the flood” of God’s end-time judgment. We are presented in this prophecy with a “prince who is to come who will find his destruction in the flood.” Daniel 11:45 describes the destruction of the final king of the North who will “come to his end” just before the resurrection of Daniel 12:2.

Verse 26 contains yet another piece of information: “And until the end there will be war.” The “end” referred to here is simply “the end of the period in progress” (p. 364). The meaning is that war will continue to the end of the seventieth “seven.” Trouble is to be expected until the completion of the final “seven,” which is the end of the 70 “sevens,” or 490 years.

Desolation Is Decreed

Our verse ends with an additional comment on the nature of the judgment. “Desolation is divinely decreed” as punishment. A comparison with three other passages is illuminating.

1. In **Daniel 11:36** the end of the career of the final king of the North is inevitable: “What is decreed will take place.”

2. Further light on the decreed punishment of the invader of Israel at the end of the age is supplied by **Isaiah 10:23**. “For a **complete destruction, one that is decreed**, the Lord God of armies will execute in the midst of the whole land.” For this reason Israel should not fear “the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod” (Isa. 10:24). “In a very little while, My indignation against you [Israel] will be spent, and My anger will be directed to their [Assyria’s] destruction” (Isa. 10:25).

3. There is another reference to the decreed punishment of God’s (and Israel’s) enemy in the end-time. In **Isaiah 28:17-18** and following, “hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters [cp. flood] will overthrow the secret place, and your [Israel’s] covenant with death will be canceled.” Then in verses 21 and 22, “the Lord will rise up...to do His task, His unusual task and to work His work, His extraordinary work...For I have heard from the Lord God of armies of a **decisive destruction** on all the earth.”

Again the words are reminiscent of Daniel 9:26. There is coming a decisive annihilation of Satan’s final tool to destroy Israel. The city and sanctuary will indeed be overthrown by the coming invader. War will be a feature of the last “seven.” Yet the peace of God’s

Kingdom will follow when Jesus returns to destroy the Antichrist, resurrect the dead, and grant the Kingdom to the faithful (Luke 22:28-30; Matt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6). Just before that time, “desolations are irrevocably determined by God” (p. 365).

Summary of Daniel 9:26

We can summarize the announcement provided by Daniel 9:26 with the following translation in conjunction with Keil’s exegesis:

“After the sixty-two ‘sevens’ the Messiah will be cut off, so that he does not have the Kingdom which belongs to him, and the city, together with the sanctuary, will be destroyed by the people of a prince who will come, who will come to his end in the flood. War will continue to the end [of the seventieth ‘seven’], since destruction is irrevocably decreed” (see p. 373).

Daniel 9:27

We proceed to verse 27, which completes the prophecy, supplying further detail about the events of the seventieth “seven.” Verse 27 opens with a statement about the prince just mentioned. He will confirm a covenant with the many. The compelling reason for making the prince of verse 26 the subject of the sentence is given by Keil: “The connection...indicates that the prince is the subject of ‘will confirm,’ since the prince who was to come is named last, and is also the subject in the suffix of ‘his end,’ the last clause of verse 26 having only the significance of an explanatory subordinate clause” (p. 366).

Keil makes three other points: 1) “The taking away of the daily sacrifice combines itself in a natural way with the destruction (v. 26) of the city and the temple brought about by the coming prince.” 2) The one “represented as ‘causing the sacrifice and oblation to cease’ is obviously identical with him who changes (7:25) the times and usages of worship.” 3) “The reference of ‘he will confirm’ to the ungodly leader of an army is therefore according to the context and the parallel passages of this book which have been mentioned, as well as in harmony with the natural grammatical arrangement of the passage...although by ‘prince’ [v. 26], Titus cannot naturally be understood” (p. 366).

The prince imposes a covenant on “the many,” the great mass of the people, in contrast with the few who remain faithful. The contract forced on the majority by the evil prince reminds us of Matthew 24:12: “The love of the many will grow cold.”

Stopping the Sacrifices

The next clause gives us information about the second half of the final “seven.” Keil argues that the proper translation is: “He will cause the sacrifice and

grain offering (bloody and unbloody sacrifice) to cease for half of the seven.” Associated with this interruption of the temple service, the prince “comes desolating on the wings of abomination.” Just as the true God “bowed the heavens and came down with thick darkness under His feet, and He rode on a cherub and flew on the wings of the wind” (Ps. 18:9), so here the wicked prince is seen “desolating, borne upon the wings of abominable things.” Keil cites the interpretation of another German commentator: “The powerful heathen enemy of God is here conceived of as carried upon the wings of the idol abomination, just as the God of the Theocracy is borne on the wings of the clouds and on cherubim, who are His servants (cp. Psalm 18:9, 10; 104:3).”

The picture suggests a counterfeit Parousia (i.e., coming) staged by the power of Satan. Paul reflects the same idea in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, where Antichrist’s Parousia is in accordance with the energy of Satan. The final sentence of Daniel’s prophecy tells us that this desolating rule of the wicked prince will continue “until the end, and the **decreed judgment** of God will pour down on the desolator.” The verb “pour down” once again suggests the “flood” of verse 26, in which the wicked prince comes to his end. Since no flood of judgment fell on Titus in AD 70, the reference of this whole passage is to the future Antichrist and his temporary reign at the end of this age.

Jesus’ Interest in This Prophecy

Jesus was most interested in this prophecy of Daniel. He referred to the “abomination of desolation” as a key feature of the time just prior to his return. In Matthew 24:15 the appearance of the abomination of desolation in the Temple is the cue for believers in Judea to flee to the mountains. (Jesus did not expect them to be removed from the earth.)

The expression used by Jesus corresponds to Daniel’s references to the Abomination of Desolation in 9:27, 11:31 and 12:11. The final passage tells us that the final king of the North will send forces against the sanctuary fortress, do away with the regular sacrifice and set up the desolating abomination. The connection with Daniel 9:27 is clear. There the evil prince comes desolating on the wings of an idol-abomination. And in Daniel 11:31 a desolating abomination is placed in the Temple. This could be the Antichrist himself. Mark uses a masculine participle to describe the abomination in Mark 13:14: “standing where **he** should not,” suggesting a human person in the Temple.

The Abomination of Desolation will trigger the time of suffering which Jesus calls the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:15, 21). *Immediately after* that tribulation Jesus will appear in glory (Matt. 24:29; Mark 13:24). It is important to note that these are not

events already past. Jesus obviously did not reappear immediately after the tribulation of AD 70.

1290 Days (3 1/2 Years)

Daniel 12:11 completes the network of prophetic information about the abomination. From the moment when the Abomination of Desolation is set up in the Temple, a period of 1290 days will elapse. This appears to be slightly longer than the 3 ½ years, “time, times and half a time,” of chapter seven. This period takes us to the end of these “amazing wonders” (12:6). All the prophetic events will be complete 1290 days after the appearance of the abomination and the cessation of sacrifice. The time for the resurrection and the Kingdom of God on earth will have arrived. ✧

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Comments

• “I’ve noticed a few psychological quirks during religious, political and other ideological debates:

1) When backed into a corner, one will often appeal to majority opinions. People may reason that the position that receives the most votes is always the correct position.

2) Appeals to popular authorities (even self in some cases) are often made by those cornered, rather than the use of well-grounded logic and reasoning. The cornered one quotes those popularly recognized as ‘authorities,’ while at the same time ignoring the fact that well-studied authorities differ among themselves on any given topic.

3) The cornered person may outright state or clearly imply that his or her opponent is unlearned or ‘will come around after more studying.’

4) Information overloading or using vocabulary that is unfamiliar to the opponent will dizzy the opponent so that, even if he is correct, it will take him some time to gain his bearing. By that time, others may have lost interest in the debate and the other will be declared the loser due to his apparent bafflement.

5) The cornered person may resort to vehement denial or affirmation, as if denying or affirming with great emotion makes his or her denial or affirmation true. If all else fails, appeal to ancestral or family beliefs or beautiful sounding emotional songs. When the cornered person appeals to the emotions of the heart, the intellect may be thwarted and by-passed. This sets aside any need for well-grounded reasoning to bring others to your side.” — *Arkansas*

• “Thank you for all that you’re doing. My wife and I thought we were alone.” — *Alabama*

• “You predicted that the time would come when I could no longer in good conscience continue to attend churches that believe God is three. It is disappointing for me to discover how unmovable people are in the handed-down belief of a Trinitarian God. I am fed up with hearing local pastors preach about ‘God the Son’ instead of ‘the Son of God.’ The Bible is so intelligible and spiritually fulfilling when its words are accepted, instead of being ignored or revised because the doctrines of men are superimposed upon its words.” — *California*

• “I feel as if I’ve been taught only the tip of the iceberg my entire life.” — *Email*

• “I am a retired Anglican Church of Canada Priest and in my retirement I have had ample time for a comprehensive discernment. I have long had questions regarding the Trinity and I was impressed when I watched a lecture by you on the subject. Previously I have read works by Dr. James D.G. Dunn, Bishop N.T. Wright, Bishop John Shelby Spong who did not come out against the doctrine of the Trinity, but through their comments raised questions in my mind as to the validity of the Church’s present teaching. I obtained a copy of *The Doctrine of the Trinity: The Church’s Self-Inflicted Wound* which you co-authored with Charles F. Hunting and again I was impressed with your directness in outlining your objections to the Trinity and the scholarly manner in which you defended your position. Like you I am a cradle Anglican and I am concerned about the future of Christianity.” — *Canada*

• “A few years ago I found a book entitled *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound*. Despite the fact that I have been totally opposed to this Trinitarian doctrine since I believed the Word of God nearly 40 years ago, I cannot help but admit that this book radically changed any other opinion that I could harbor in my head. This is an extraordinary, clear, concise and very enlightening book about a doctrine that has negatively permeated all the foundations of true Christianity today. I am very grateful to God for you and for the clarity and wisdom that God has given you to address this sensitive issue that affects Christianity today.” — *Venezuela*

• “Once again thank you for the ‘Heavy Lifting’ in terms of your scholarship and writing. It is certainly a life-long effort on your part! I have recently re-read the booklet *What Happens When We Die?* What a contrast to most of the teaching I’ve received and the funeral sermonettes I’ve heard! This and your other books and monthly publications have illuminated my ignorance of sound eschatology. I recognize I was raised in the dispensational theological model. (My first Bible was Dake’s whose charts I tried to make sense of as an impatient teenager/young adult.)” — *Missouri*