

*"... Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error"*

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2. SIGNIFICANT ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE  
3. SHOULD WE LOOK FOR MIRACLES TODAY?  
11. MODERN EVANGELISM ENHANCES  
ECUMENISM  
14. REPORT ON N.C.C. MEETING

CONTENTS

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## SIGNIFICANT ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE

*Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor*

I shall forego writing the usual editorial with a major discussion of some cult or present-day trend in order to give space to the three excellent articles included in this issue of *The Discerner*. The first one is on Miracles by Rev. George Darby of the Southwest Bible Church of Prairie Village, Kansas. This is a significant contribution on the subject of Miracles and other phenomena which are being widely promoted by those with a deficient knowledge on what the Scriptures teach on these matters. This well written article should be read carefully for enlightenment in these areas. The whole matter of miracles and other present-day phenomena have been distorted by a number of groups which have lost their balance, some of which have even plunged into fanaticism.

The second article is by Dr. Robert P. Lightner of Dallas Theological Seminary. He deals objectively with modern evangelism, and points out that it enhances ecumenism. In other words, it places participating groups in a category where separation is nearly impossible to maintain. This popular trend has swept a multitude of Christians into this massive type of evangel-

ism, most of whom are unaware of the dangerous implication in taking these steps. Too many are anxious to climb aboard the bandwagon of a popularized type of evangelism. The writer points out the consequences of this kind of evangelism with regard to separation and Scriptural methodology. The author is wholly committed to Biblical evangelism.

The third article is a Report of the December Meeting at Dallas, Texas of the National Council of Churches by Dr. Leslie Madison, pastor of the Northwest Bible Church of Fort Worth, Texas. He evaluates this apostate gathering by providing the unvarnished facts how it promoted various socialistic panaceas which are not relevant to the God-given responsibility of the Church. It seems inconceivable that such a major representation of denominations could have departed so completely from the Biblical blueprint, but that is the truth. This clear evaluation of the Dallas gathering merits the attention as well as the concern of the readers. Why not order additional copies for your friends, and especially to pastors and leaders of the churches?

# SHOULD WE LOOK FOR MIRACLES TODAY?

*by Rev. George Darby, pastor Southwest Bible Church  
Prairie Village, Kansas*

There are one or two things that we need to say at the beginning of an article like this in order to have our thinking clear.

First of all, what is a miracle? We use the term rather loosely today and describe any unusual happening or unusual combination of circumstances as "a miracle" or "miraculous", and within the framework of our thinking this may be a legitimate application of the term.

A great deal of what we call miraculous sometimes is simply an ordering of events by Divine Providence. You can call that miraculous if you want to—in a sense I suppose it is. We think, for example, of a book like the book of Esther and the deliverance that God wrought for His people in that day when enemies were about to overwhelm them and destroy them. There is a whole series of events in the book of Esther that were certainly the consequence of Divine Providence or Divine Superintendence. We would, perhaps, be inclined to say, "That was miraculous." Yet in another sense these things were not miraculous because they were clearly in the realm of the natural and the ordinary. For example, the king could not get to sleep one night. You do not consider it miraculous when you cannot get to sleep. You consider it rather unfortunate. It was not anything in itself miraculous but it was the fact that God in His superintending providence put that into the scheme of things so that the king's sleepless night became a factor in the working out of a deliverance for the people of Israel. Much of what we call mirac-

ulous is that sort of thing.

When, however, we speak of a miracle in the Biblical sense of the word, we mean something that happens within the framework of human experience that could not possibly be brought to pass by human power or by the operation of what we call natural law. This is a very limited definition of a miracle, but it is basic to our understanding of a miracle as something outside the reach and range of human power; although it is wrought within the realm of human experience and capable of human observation.

Now, the second thing to be said is that we are not about to question the ability of God to work miracles. We believe that God can work miracles. We believe that God did work miracles. We have no reservation in our minds concerning the miraculous incidents recorded in Scripture, in the Old Testament or in the New Testament. Name any of the miracles you like—the sun standing still, the swallowing of Jonah by the whale, the healings wrought by our Lord Jesus Christ, raisings from the dead, the opening of the prison for Peter and his being conducted forth into liberty by an angel. We do not shrink from any of these. We accept them without reservation. We believe that they happened, that God performed these things just exactly as they are written and recorded. We do not have any qualms, any misgivings about them at all. To postulate God is to find room for all kinds of miraculous things. Once you have a God equated with the God revealed in the Bible you do not need to

worry about miracles. Our God is capable of any of them. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? No, of course not.

That, of course, leads us to say this, that we believe that God is just as capable of working miracles today as He was in the day when these miracles to which we have referred were performed. There is no limitation to the power of God today. He is the same God as the God of Moses and the God of Elijah. He is able to do the very same things that He did then as far as His ability and power are concerned.

The other thing that I want to say is this: You will find as you read the Scriptures that God is very economical in this matter of performing miracles. He is very sparing, if I may so say, in His use of miracles. You will find that the miracles that were wrought by God or wrought by men who were the agents of God, were performed for a particular time and for a particular purpose. They were invariably the accompaniment of divine revelation. They were in themselves revelations of course, revelations of the power and the majesty of God. But they were the accompaniment of divine revelation and the purpose of them was to attest and accredit the revelation.

There is nothing that can be validly termed a miracle prior to the time of Moses, excepting of course the act of creation itself. Now, I know that some are going to put a question mark after that statement. But, I repeat it. I do not believe that prior to the time of Moses there is anything that can be validly called a miracle. With the inauguration of the Mosaic era however, and God's revelation of Himself to and through Moses in

the form of the law on Mount Sinai, followed by the deliverance of God's people from the land of Egypt, miracles suddenly become very manifest and very numerous. This, of course, was to accredit and to attest this new revelation, if you will—this divine revelation that God was giving to His people through Moses and through the Mosaic economy.

Then miracles drop out of sight again for a time. They reappear in the time of Elijah. Here we have the era of the prophets and the institution of the prophetic office, and God accompanies that, you see, with miracles in order to testify to the credibility and authority of the ministry of His prophets.

Then, of course, the next great outbreak of miracles is associated with the greatest of all epochs in religious history, the first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And again these miracles were to attest His Deity and His divine mission. John says so in his gospel, "Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples which are not written in this book." "But", he added, "these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that believing ye might have life in His name." (John 20:30-31)

It was all the more important that these signs be given because of the lowliness and the humility of the estate to which Jesus descended when He Who was "in the form of God thought it not a thing to be held tightly to, to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, emptied Himself, took upon Him the form of a servant, was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, humbled Himself." (Phil. 2:6-8).

Of course, that accreditation con-

tinued throughout the apostolic age and the apostles were given the ability and the power to perform miracles. Paul calls them in II Cor. 12:12 "signs of an apostle. "Truly," he says, "the signs of an apostle were wrought by me," that is, signs that accredited Paul and the other apostles as being indeed divine messengers, communicating a divine message for the establishment of Christianity in the world. But at the close of the apostolic age miracles begin to disappear.

The age in which you and I live is not an age of miracles. It is not an age in which we walk by sight. It is an age in which we walk by faith. (II Cor. 5:7) It is that I have in mind when I address myself to the question, Should we look for miracles today? Do we have a right, do we have any encouragement in the Scriptures to expect God to work in miraculous fashion in the realm of the observable and the physical, if you will.

To begin with the craving for or the looking for the miraculous, is itself the indication of an unhealthy spiritual condition. In the 12th chapter of Matthew at v. 38 Jesus was asked for a sign by the Pharisees who said, "Master, we would see a sign." He answered them by saying unto them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas." There are those who say it is lack of faith or unbelief that robs us of the manifestations of divine power in human experience and in human events around us. But the Lord Jesus would seem to turn it the other way and suggest that it is lack of faith, that it is an unhealthy spiritual condition that asks for that kind of thing—an evil and adul-

terous generation seeketh after a sign. (Significantly, the word "sign" is almost invariably used in connection with the word "miracle". You find the two things generally going together, for a miracle is not just a wonderful thing, an event of wonder to create surprise and astonishment. It is that. But it is also a sign that points to something beyond itself. God never worked miracles (signs) just for the sake of entertaining people or satisfying their curiosity. God wrought miracles for the purpose of pointing them to something beyond the miracle itself. This is the significance of that term "sign.") But here the Lord Jesus said, it is not a healthy thing, it is not an indication of spiritual maturity or spiritual advancement to be looking for manifest signs or supernatural exhibitions of divine power. "It is an evil and an adulterous generation," He said, "that seeketh after a sign."

Furthermore, the Lord Jesus Christ taught us that there is no infallible proof of the genuineness of any religious teaching or any religious system to be found in the fact that it can produce signs or miracles. In a day when we see so much appetite for that kind of thing, it is needful for us to be admonished by the Scripture and to recognize that simply because there are supernatural accompaniments to any religious teaching or any religious program, this in itself is not a guarantee of the truthfulness or the Scripturalness of that program. For example, the Lord Jesus Christ said in Matt. 7:21, "Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

22: Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out demons? and in thy name done many wonderful works?

23: And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity."

So the performance of miracles is not in itself an indication of the truthfulness of the religious system or the religious program that effects those miracles.

I noticed recently in one of our better known Christian periodicals, the advertisement of a book by one who is described as one of the world's foremost evangelists. This book deals with the activities of Satan and the operation of demonic power. The author of it a few years ago conducted a campaign in Denver and the announcement in the Denver newspaper concerning his meeting went like this. It gave his name and then it said, "Deeper Life Healing Crusade, Spirit-filled Evangelist. Bring the sick. Healing prayers nightly for all people, of all faiths." The reporter who attended that particular campaign or series of meetings said that the evangelist promoted his book which was entitled, *Portrait Of A Prophet*, and in doing so claimed that his prophecies always came true. He went on to talk about the healing power that always sweeps across his audience in waves and flows through the multitude like a river. He asked the audience how many had felt "it" come in as they were listening. Many waved their hands. He asked them to come to the platform and interviewed them and so on. He eventually asked for a show of hands of all who wanted to be healed of any sickness. Then he ministered his healing prayer

to the group. He cast out demons whom he addressed as the "demon of deafness", "the foul spirit causing arthritis" and so on. He cast out demons in Jesus' Name. In an extremely loud voice he commanded and said repeatedly, "In Jesus' name be gone, be gone you foul spirits." This was for the healing of both body and soul. He said that when one's body is healed, his soul is healed also.

Now, without sitting in judgment upon this particular evangelist, it is interesting to notice that he did, or claimed to do, the very three things the Lord Jesus Christ speaks about in Matt. 7. He prophesied, and his prophecies always come true. He cast out demons or professed to cast out demons and he did many wonderful works of miracles in the way of accomplishing healing.

The point to be made here is this, that these things in themselves are no guarantee of the truthfulness of the message of the evangelist in this particular instance. They do not guarantee that he is a messenger from God or that his message is divinely authenticated. All kinds of people work miracles today or profess to work miracles today.

We were in Mexico City recently where they have the great Cathedral erected there to the memory of the virgin of Guadalupe. She is supposed to have miraculously appeared at that place and commissioned her servants to erect a Cathedral there to her honor and in her memory. All kinds of organizations and religious systems today work miracles or claim to work miracles, but Jesus said that is not a guarantee of their genuineness. "Many", He said, "will say to me in that day, have we not prophesied

and cast out demons and in thy name done many wonderful works. And I will say to them, I never knew you." So let us put that down and note it carefully in our thinking that this is not a proof, not a guarantee of the genuineness of any religious system.

Then, another thing that we need to remember very definitely, very emphatically is that we can be deceived by signs and wonders and by the performance of miracles. Do you remember that Jesus said in Matthew 24 that there would be so much of this kind of thing that if it were possible it would deceive the very elect. Now I believe that the very elect there are not the elect of this age, but rather the elect of the tribulation period, the elect from among the nation of Israel. Nevertheless, the principle holds true as stated in Matt. 24:24 "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." If we are going to be convinced by signs and wonders, by miraculous accomplishments, then we are in a fair way to being led into deceptive doctrines and into false teachings.

This is why the Lord Jesus said, as recorded in John 4:48, in response to the nobleman who sought for the healing of his son, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe.

49: The nobleman saith unto Him, Sir, come down ere my child die.

50: Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth, And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him."

Now notice, the contrast here of a faith that is a product merely of signs and wonders and the faith, on the other hand, that rests on the

naked Word of God. "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him and went his way," without any evidence, without any outward demonstration, without any visible manifestation of divine power—simply the word. Jesus said unto him, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." And the man believed the word and went his way. Surely the Lord Jesus is teaching us in that miracle and in His contact with that man, that what He wants is a faith not resting upon signs and wonders, but a faith that rests securely and exclusively, if you will, upon the Word of God itself.

Earlier in that same Gospel by John you get this at the close of the 2nd chapter, John 2:23 "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in His name when they saw the miracles which He did. 24—But Jesus did not believe in them." The word is exactly the same word in verse 24 as in verse 23, "they believed in Him when they saw the miracles which He did, But Jesus did not believe in them." He did not have any faith in their faith, because He saw that it was not a faith in His person, in Himself as the Son of God, but a faith that was resting merely on outward exhibitions of power, and He would not put any confidence, if you will, in that faith. He would not make any response to that faith. "He did not commit Himself to them because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man; for He knew what was in man."

You see, we can be deceived by the miraculous and by the apparently supernatural into believing something that is not true. The great characteristic of the culmination of this age and the manifesta-

tion of the anti-Christ will be a demonstration of the supernatural, a manifestation of miraculous powers, if you will. I believe that the next group of miracles that will be wrought before the minds and the eyes of men will be miracles performed by the anti-Christ, not by God. I do not find any encouragement to believe that before the Rapture of the church God will again visit men in the manifestation of the miraculous.

About six years ago now, there was the sweeping of a revival through Indonesia that produced many sensational reports of what had taken place there, not only in the way of conversions (and undoubtedly there were many who were genuinely born again during that time when there were such manifest movings of the Spirit of God) but there were other things that were said to accompany the spiritual activity of the Spirit of God, which Christian people, in some cases took at their face value and believed.

One who was involved, a man named Carey, wrote a book entitled, "A Mighty Wind", about 200,000 copies of which were sold back in 1971. In it he mentioned miraculous healings, the resurrection of 10-20 persons, including one man who had been dead for two days and whose resurrection led to the conversion of 21,000, water turned into communion wine more than 50 times, Christians walking on water, food that mysteriously multiplied, ingested poison that did not poison, God speaking audibly, and light in the jungle at night. Carey returned to Indonesia last fall after speaking circuit in the United States and after becoming married to the daughter of the charismatic Presbyterian minister, John Ray, of

Wheaton, Illinois who helped him arrange his American tour.

Now, these reports, of course, awakened a good deal of interest. I suppose one might say a good deal of skepticism. Anyway, there were a number of missionaries, anthropologists, mission professors, and others who made a journey to Indonesia to check some of these things out. For example, anthropologist Pearl England of Mankato, Minnesota, State College, a Lutheran, visited Indonesia for two weeks last summer using a Christian Missionary Alliance missionary as interpreter. "There were healings," she said, "but no resurrections." Even Franz Ceylon, Carey's brother-in-law who is now a missionary in neighboring West Irian but who was one of the revival's early leaders, disputes some of Carey's accounts, according to the testimony of this professor. Carey speaks of tapioca cakes that multiplied to feed an evangelistic team with large amounts left over. "Not so," this professor quotes Ceylon as saying. "God made each of us satisfied with a little piece."

"Pastor Daniel", she reports, "has been hurt, bewildered, embarrassed, and humiliated by Carey's book." Daniel is pastor of the Dutch Reformed Affiliated Church where the revival originated following a visit from the team of the Indonesian Evangelistic Institute. Well, the report goes on. "There was no walking on water," Dr. England says. Daniel told her this. Instead, a light enabled a team to take a shallow river crossing. As for the woman responsible for turning water to wine she is an animist, alleged Daniel. Now, there is an instance of what was noted earlier. Even if you accept the credibility of this miracle of turning water in-



to wine, what are you going to establish by that, if this woman is an animist, a heathen, a pagan, who rejects the truth of Christianity altogether? Daniel says that he has been excluded from every purported water-changing session. Missions professor George Peters of Dallas Seminary said he discovered on a visit that the woman added syrup to the water.

Well, there is more of a like kind here in this report but this kind of thing, which seems to be multiplying and increasing in some areas, does not in any way establish the truth of the message of those who produce or profess to produce these so-called miracles. Satan will employ these very means in his final attempt to establish the religion of the anti-Christ in the world. I refer you again in this connection to the passage of scripture in II Thess. chapter 2:8 where we are told that the "Wicked one shall be revealed, Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." Now listen, "Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan, (not after the working of God, but after the working of Satan) with all power and signs and lying wonders," miracles, if you please. So that the next outbreak of miracles would seem to be not the product of divine power but the product of satanic power, not to credit and establish the faith and truth of Christianity but to accredit the anti-Christ and to give him acceptance in the minds of men and women the world over. When you come over into Revelation 13:12 "And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast,

whose deadly wound was healed.

13: And he doeth great wonders so that he maketh fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men,

14: And deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast which had the wound by a sword, and did live.

15: And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed."

The coming of the anti-Christ is to be accompanied by all manner of miraculous, wonderful activities and signs. This is not the kind of thing for which we should be looking. This is not the kind of thing that we should be seeking. The pattern, the principle for the Christian now, as always, throughout this age is to walk by faith and not by sight. Hebrews 12 gives the norm for us. We are to be "looking off unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith, that we may run with patience the race that is set before us." Looking away, literally, looking away, off unto Jesus. Not looking for signs or evidences, and tokens, and demonstrations but with our eyes fixed securely upon the Lord Jesus as He is revealed to us in the Word of God.

If somebody asks, "Do you believe that God can still work miracles?", I reply "I most certainly do." If somebody else asks, "Do you believe that God can heal?", I most emphatically do believe that that God can heal. I believe in divine healing. But I do not believe in faith healers. I do not believe

that God gives to men the powers that He gave to the apostles in the apostolic age to work healings, and to raise the dead, and to effect all sorts of miraculous things. I do not believe that God gives that power today. God can still heal—yes. But He does it sovereignly in His great mercy.

Paul speaks of his companion whom he left behind at Miletus sick. (II Tim. 4:20) That was toward the end of the apostolic age. I am not going to suggest that at that time Paul had lost the power to effect healing. But I am going to suggest to you, that here is an indication that at the close of the apostolic age that gift, that miraculous healing power would be withdrawn. The sign gifts that God gave would be withdrawn because the signs of the apostles were to accredit the establishment of Christianity in the world and that is no longer necessary after the completion of the scriptural canon and the full revelation of the Christian faith as it was given through the apostles.

Does God work miracles today? I think that one of the bad side effects of this business of looking for signs is to dim out in our minds the greatness of the miracle that God effects in the human soul when a man or woman, or boy or girl, trusts in Jesus Christ and is born again. That after all, is the greatest of all miracles. Men can do many wonderful things today, but there is one thing that they can not do; they can not improve human nature. Only God can make a man a new creature in Christ. Only God can effect the miracle of the new birth. This is the miracle that God is working today, particularly. This is the thing about which we should be concerned.

Jesus said, "I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." And He is doing that. He is building His church. Wherever the Spirit of God effects in a human soul the miracle of regeneration, you have the greatest of all miracles.

The early missionary to Iceland, Ansgar, was once asked the question, "If you had the power to work miracles, what miracle would you want to perform?" He replied, "The only miracle that I want to demonstrate before the world is the miracle of a holy life." That is the greatest of all miracles. When God works in the hearts of His people to produce holiness of character and righteousness of life, God is doing something greater than any physical miracle that might be performed.

Joseph Parker, the great minister of City Temple, was holding forth in the open air on one occasion and was challenged by a skeptic as Parker was describing the wonderful things that God will do for that person that trusts Him and yields his life to Him. This man stood up and said, "What did God do for Stephen when he was being stoned to death?" And Parker said, "I'll tell you what He did. He gave him grace to pray for the forgiveness of those who were stoning him." That was a bigger miracle than stopping the stones was it not? Surely it was. God is working miracles today in that sense of the word, miracles in the transformation of human lives, miracles in the administration of grace to His people in times of stress, and strain, and difficulty, and pain, and perplexity. God works miracles of grace and power in the hearts and lives of His people as they yield themselves to Him in Jesus Christ.

# MODERN EVANGELISM ENHANCES ECUMENISM

*by Robert P. Lightner, Th.D., Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology  
Dallas Theological Seminary*

What a paradox! Whoever would have imagined it? Just a few years ago it would have been unthinkable that efforts to win lost people to faith in Jesus Christ could possibly aid and abet the ecumenical cause. It would have been even more unthinkable that non-evangelicals would have been interested in evangelism in a Biblical sense. They did not even believe people were lost, so why bother to evangelize them?

It was the liberal who started ecumenism and the drive for "one church for one world." Long ago he discarded the idea of winning people to Christ. Basic to the liberal ecumenical philosophy is the denial of the authority of Scripture, the total lostness of man and the substitutionary death of Christ for sinners. These things and many more are denied by the leaders of the ecumenical movement, though not by all who are caught up in the ecumenical machinery. Are not these cardinal truths of the Christian faith also central issues in Biblical evangelism? Indeed they are. If they are not, we are not talking about Biblical evangelism.

How, then, are we to understand that ecumenists are interested in evangelism and that through evangelism the liberal ecumenical cause is now being enhanced? Have liberal ecumenists suddenly become evangelical in their theology? Are they now vitally interested in preaching that all men are lost and guilty before a holy God? Do they now believe Christ is God the Son and that there is no salvation apart from Him? Could it be that all non-evangelicals—Roman Catholics and Protestants alike—are now anxious

to sing from the heart and mean, "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus. What can make me whole again? Nothing but the blood of Jesus"?

If the above is not true of liberal ecumenists, if they have not been converted to the historic Christian faith presented in the Bible, then what has happened? If the unorthodox have not been converted to orthodoxy (and no one argues for this), then what has taken place? Have the evangelicals come of age? Are they now so desirous to become all things to all men that the distinctions between truth and error no longer exist? Have they decided that after all there is some good in all kinds of religions? And while Biblical Christianity is still to be preferred, Roman Catholicism, liberal Christianity and cultic expressions are simply watered down forms of it? Maybe J. Gresham Machen was wrong after all in insisting that "the enemy has not really been changed into a friend merely because he has been received into the camp." Or again, when he said, "Liberalism is totally different from Christianity for the foundation is different," was he wrong?

Up until very recently it was understood by all evangelicals that the Christ that liberal Protestantism preached was not the Christ of Scripture. Now suddenly our whole continent is being called upon to join hands in a program of evangelism which involves winning people to Christ.

The great theme of Key 73 is "calling our continent to Christ." And who, it may be asked among

those who call themselves Christians, could ever find fault with that? Is that not precisely what we are called upon to do? Indeed, it is, and there is everything right about calling our continent to the Christ of Scripture. But that is precisely the problem. The fact of the matter is that 130 or more denominations, churches, church bodies and para-ecclesiastical groups participating in Key 73 do not all believe in the Christ of Scripture.

The Christ preached by the Roman Catholic Church is not the Christ Who alone can and does save sinners. Neither is the Christ-language used by liberals descriptive of the Christ of Scripture. Long ago liberals discarded the Bible as God's infallible, unerring Word and at the same time made bold their denials of the Christ of Scripture. All who do not believe in the absolute deity of Christ and salvation through His shed blood alone do not believe and therefore cannot preach the gospel. Theirs is not the true Christ or the true gospel but is another Christ and another gospel. It is another of a different kind no matter how sincere the motive of the one preaching or how many good things it may include. If it does not embrace Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God and salvation through Him alone, it is a false gospel. The divine pronouncement on all who declare such false gospels is *anathema*, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:9). How then can man join together what God hath put asunder?

The early planners of Key 73 "called for a gigantic offensive in which every person in North America will be challenged with the claims of Christ." As a result of Carl Henry's editorial, "Somehow Let's Get Together" (*Christianity*

*Today*, June 1967), 42 interested church leaders met in September of the same year in the Key Bridge Motor Hotel in Arlington, Va. They were responding to Henry's plea for "dramatic new dimensions of fellowship across denominational lines." Three other similar consultations and the financial assistance of the Billy Graham Association resulted in the present program of Key 73.

The noble effort, begun because of concerned evangelicals, soon became so broad and inclusivistic that it now represents, in the opinion of this writer, the greatest boost ever given to the goal of the liberal ecumenists. My basis for saying this is because with the inclusion of Roman Catholics, evangelical and liberal Protestants, Pentecostals and charismatics in Key 73, the important theological distinctions between these groups, especially with respect to Christ and the gospel, have been forgotten if not obliterated.

Those involved in Key 73 are saying in effect to the world, "We are all going to do our own thing in our own way. We all embrace the same Christ and the same gospel." This is precisely the concept the ecumenists wish to communicate. Key 73 will serve to break down more barriers which have heretofore hindered the ecumenists than any other single factor. In an editorial of a liberal ecumenical magazine the ecumenical nature of Key 73 has been stated very plainly at least as far as liberal ecumenists are concerned. "One can no longer accuse Key 73 of being antiecumenical; it has become ecumenical, on terms that differ hardly at all from classical Protestant ecumenical grounds once opposed by the older evangelicals" (*Christian Century*,

"Key 73: A Group of Grace," January 3, 1973).

The writer of the above went on to say he liked Key 73 because it would serve as a "morale-boosting venture in the churches." Another in the same issue of the same journal admitted there was a new mood in ecumenical circles. Older ecumenists stressed organizational structure too much, it is said. The younger ecumenists are stressing spiritual fellowship among Christians. The writer of the article said in response to this: ". . . Key 73 fits in well with this new mood in ecumenical circles."

Donning the role of a prophet, I must say that Key 73 will turn out to be the most useful Key yet to unlock the door to full-bloom ecumenism—one church for one world. How paradoxical that evangelicals will be responsible for aiding and abetting the liberal ecumenical cause. That is indeed a tragedy. Before long students of history and of the ecumenical movement in particular will look back and be forced to admit that Key 73 was a monstrous milestone toward the one-church goal of ecumenists.

That all sorts of religious groups with a wide spectrum of theological beliefs are included in Key 73 is not just the opinion of its critics. Jitsou Morikawa, a liberal American Baptist leader, put it this way: "Key 73 appears to be a decisive event in the religious history of America. In unprecedented degree of scale, religious forces of the right and left are reaching out toward each other in a common cooperative evangelistic enterprise. . . . There is an amazing mixture of fundamentalists, conservatives, liberals and ecumenists spanning the whole religious spectrum of America."

The *Congregational Resource Book* is an official Key 73 publication. In it the ecumenical spirit is clearly revealed. "Part of the premise of Key 73 is that every denomination and organization shall be fully free to carry out evangelism exactly as it wishes during 1973. The resource material from Key 73 office may be adapted or rejected. There is no desire to pour others into any established mold or pattern. What makes this cooperative evangelism experience really great is the fact that beyond the legal and the organizational technicalities, we are discovering each other as real brothers in Christ" (pp. 184, 185).

Norman Christopherson, chairman of the Spiritual Resources Commission of Key 73, reemphasized this in his message in *The Congregationalist*. He said, "Each local church will decide for itself, and according to its own conscience, what the message is and what method will best proclaim it in that particular place" ("Key 73 and Thee,") *The Congregationalist*, January 1973).

To say the least, those involved in Key 73 represent a mixed multitude. More than denominational lines are crossed in this effort. Far more important lines are also crossed. Never in the history of the church has there been such a religious potpourri proposing to present Christ to a lost world.

Bible-believing Christians should not cooperate in the Key 73 program because: (1) it will help advance the liberal ecumenical cause; (2) it will encourage those who do not believe in the Christ of Scripture and His gospel to win more people to their persuasion; (3) it encourages all participants to do their own thing in their own way

and this contradicts the clear command of Scripture to preach the one gospel of Christ.

What should believers who accept the Biblical doctrine of separation from false doctrine but who are also deeply burdened about the lost do about Key 73? The program is so well publicized and includes so many groups and individuals that undoubtedly it will be thought that those who do not get on the bandwagon are not interested in evangelism and unfortunately for some that will indeed be the case. But for many others that will not be true. Some of God's people do not wish to be a party to a program which encourages Roman Catholics and liberal Protestants to preach their false messages and seek to win converts to their folds. Every child of God certainly ought to be vitally interested in winning all the lost to faith in Christ, but the way to do that is not by having everybody do his own thing in his own way in the name of evangelism.

There is only one Savior and one gospel and unless these are preached and embraced in truth, our continent will not be called or won to Christ.

Without participating or giving sanction to Key 73's program of evangelism, there is something we can do. Why not get more involved than ever in true evangelism, in evangelism which finds its basis and support in the Bible? If we are not careful, we will find ourselves so busy criticizing Key 73 that we will do less evangelizing than ever in 1973. This would be wrong, terribly wrong. Let us be convicted for our lack of interest in the lost and our feeble attempts to win them. May we as individuals and as churches feel something of the burden and fervor of the Apostle Paul when he said, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16). In short, may our opposition to Key 73 not be opposition to Biblical evangelism.

From the March 1973 issue of the *Baptist Bulletin*. Used with permission.

## REPORT ON N.C.C. MEETING

by *Leslie Madison, pastor of Northwest Bible Church  
Fort Worth, Texas*

After the recent landslide victory for President Nixon, several of the nation's leading newspapers and news commentators interpreted this event to be an indication that the people in the United States were swinging back to a more conservative position. Although this may be true of the average man on the street, it certainly is not the direction toward which the leadership of the National Council of Churches is moving. Eight hundred delegates of the NCC met for their ninth general assembly in Dallas, Texas, December 3-7. From the opening session until the election of their new

president this body gave every indication that they had no intention of reversing their direction toward the socialistic left.

The program for the first full day (Monday, December 4) was typical of the weeks meetings. The session was opened with a film on what was termed the plight of the migrating farm worker. Next the assembly was addressed by Roman Catholic Bishop, Patrick Flores of San Antonio. Flores wasted no time to begin his attack against the capitalist system which was keeping our society in bondage. He stated, "We must liberate ourselves from

the selfishness which brought us to Indochina." He also charged, "The Western-dominated education holds the poor in bondage, therefore it must be reformed." As his speech ended a line of young whites and browns tripped across the stage and out of the room bearing placards that read "Boycott Lettuce" and "Independence for Puerto Rico." Following this keynote address by the Roman Catholic Bishop there were two more films: one on the sins of the white rule in South Africa and the other on the iniquities of American jingoism.

The next speaker on the opening day was the well-known black revolutionary from Newark, New Jersey, Le Roi Jones. The Jewish agency known as the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith strongly protested to Jones being allowed on the program for they charged that he was "an anti-white, a racist, and a vicious anti-Semite" (see Dallas Times Herald, Dec. 5, 1972). Jones is a staunch advocate of black nationalism. He was convicted and sentenced to two and one-half years in state prison in 1968 for his participation in the riots in Newark, New Jersey in 1967. Jones did not disappoint the program committee. He delivered the lecture they anticipated. For one hour and a half he attacked the American way of life, the President of our country, and the church. Not once did he mention the name of God. He bitterly complained because the church this past election was not seen in the streets parading against Nixon or massing against the Vietnam war. His main theme was revolution and the destruction of the present society. He displayed anger because the church was not more reactionary. He insisted "racism, minority rule, capitalism, and im-

perialism must be destroyed."

Dr. R. H. Edwin Espy, the general secretary, defended the leftist, revolutionary Jones being on the program and stated that for the present the NCC must give its attention to accomplishing "a mission rather than striving for a unity." He admitted that there is present in society "an uncertainty, pessimism, and pain was widespread . . . a sense of powerlessness prevails." Yet he affirmed that there are still signs of hope. Since Espy was the main one responsible for the presence of the socialistic Catholic Bishop and the revolutionary Le Roi Jones on the program, it is to be assumed that these speakers presented the ray of hope to which he referred. According to the Dallas Times Herald (December 4, 1972) Jones was paid \$1,500 for "his ray of hope" revolutionary speech to the assembly out of NCC funds.

As the meetings progressed through the week it was obvious to the observer that there was more concern for the revolution in society than for the regeneration of the individual. This was especially the theme for Dr. Colin Williams dialogue with Dr. David Hubbard, professor from Fuller Seminary.

In addition to keynote addresses which clearly showed the direction that the NCC is taking there were significant actions taken by special task forces appointed by the convention: (1) Chairwoman, Claire Randall reported that the task force appointed to investigate abortion proposes that the NCC go on record as favoring abortion. Randall reported that her committee favored abortion by a count of 19 out of 22. The board did not act on the proposal in the Dallas meeting but will vote on it at the February

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board meeting in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; (2) the Policy Board set up to study the amnesty for deserters went on record that they favor amnesty for "both deserters and draft resisters who fled to other countries, those currently imprisoned or facing sentences or prosecution, those who have gone underground, and Vietnam veterans with less than honorable discharges," the vote in favor 91 to 16; (3) the Delegates gave a rousing approval to Dr. George Rupp's ecological gospel. Rupp outlined several steps that could be taken to avoid "environmental damnation." He stated "Christian congregations should construct no more church buildings. They waste natural resources, besides the money could be better spent to feed hungry children" (for documentation of Dr. Rupp's message, see Dallas Morning News, page 40, December 6, 1972).

At the concluding business session Rev. W. Sterling Cary was elected to the presidency of the NCC. Rev. Cary is the first Negro to attain to this post. He is 45 years of age, married, has four children, an executive of the United Church of Christ, and resides at Hollis, Long Island, New York. He is a graduate (B.D. degree) of Union

Theological Seminary. The convention re-elected Dr. R.H. Edwin Espy as the NCC General Secretary. Dr. Espy more than Rev. Cary will give the NCC direction as the organization seeks to carry out the theme of the Dallas Convention: "The demands of the Gospel in a World of Conflict." Through his leadership the NCC will continue to look to men such as Jones for direction and then give them loud and standing ovations as they foment rebellion and revolution. It is significant that he should defend the council's continued trend to the left and therefore the justification for calling upon revolutionaries such as Jones by stressing that for the next three years the NCC will give emphasis to accomplishing its "mission" rather than seeking for "unity" in the ecumenical organization. The writer of this article would alert all the members of the IFCA to keep abreast of the decisions and actions of the NCC. The large general assembly of the NCC may be having its financial problems and may never again have a triennial assembly, but the men in the places of leadership have definite goals before them and these goals are anti-Scriptural and anti-American. From Feb. 1973 issue of *Voice*.  
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## MAJOR CLEAVAGES AND STRANGE TRENDS OF OUR TIME

*Prof. John E. Dahlin, Editor*

We are no longer witnessing a smooth expansion of the ecumenical movement. In fact, we find the opposite is taking place these days throughout Christendom. Actually of late there has developed a polarization of positions with regard to both the conservatives and the liberals. Even our secular magazines are writing about the growing strength of the conservative wings within the major denominations. And, correctly they also point out that there is a great determination of the liberals in counter-acting the resourcefulness of those who accept the absolute authority of the Scriptures.

The most recent example of a major cleavage was the recently held convention of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at New Orleans. Both the liberals and the conservatives were determined that their respective positions prevail there. Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus, President of the 2,800,000 Lutheran body, was up for re-election. The liberals, and even the moderates, were committed to a plan of unseating him. For many months, however, Dr. Preus had prepared himself in meeting the issues that were pending, and he accepted the challenge of his oponents. Dr. John Tietjen, President of the Concordia

Seminary at St. Louis, who was one of the leaders of the liberals and moderates, rejected the authority of Dr. Preus in laying down certain binding guide-lines for the members of the faculty at the seminary in their teaching responsibilities. The position of Dr. Preus was one of no compromise on the authority and the inerrancy of the Bible. At the big conclave he told the delegates openly not to vote for him unless they also were ready to support his position all the way. Almost unexpectedly the conservatives, led by Dr. Preus, won decisively with a 60 per cent vote of the convention. This was more than what had been anticipated. The determined minority, representing 40 per cent of that Lutheran body, has not been reconciled to this defeat. Despite the big margin of the conservatives, some of the leaders of the minority faction are now talking about establishing a new Lutheran denomination. If a full house-cleaning takes place at Concordia Seminary, it seems likely that the polarization will be greater than ever with regard to the two wings within the LCMS. At present the two positions manifested appear to be irreconcilable. Dr. Preus, with a conservative administration elected with him at