

For centuries the meaning of Christianity has been obscured by the debris of theological doctrines. In an endeavour to remove some of this debris I addressed the people in the Forum on 11th February, 1962, and again the following Sunday. Some of the points which were made are summarised later in this pamphlet.

Those of liberal education shy away from religious disputes. The closed minds and narrow outlooks of religious disputants make no appeal to a liberal intelligence. And to those whose interests lie in the political and economic fields religious propositions are something impractical, unreal and unrelated to the world which confronts them daily.

I propose that the Kingdom of God will shortly be established on earth. I further propose – as a person who has had a liberal education and as a person who was a member of a political debating team which won its way to the Grand Finals of a debating competition for three consecutive years – that this question of the establishment of the Kingdom of God is every bit as liberal and every bit as practical and down-to-earth as any of the other questions being agitated anywhere else in the Public Forum. Matters of common sense and common decency are always practical and liberal and this is such a matter.

The points I have made in my address are as follows:

1. I affirmed positively: The man known as Jesus of Nazareth was a perfectly normal, naturally-born man, who was chosen by the Supreme Being as his instrument of intervention into man's affairs. This chosen instrument was 'anointed' (i.e., christ) with the full power of the Supreme Being.

The conclusion from such a situation is obvious. At any particular time the Supreme Being – purely as a matter of his choice – can appoint an instrument for the execution of his designs. Whether the present time, or the near future, is such a time is a question which should engage our attention.

2. I stated a principle of interpretation of the New Testament. The hope of Israel was the establishment on earth of the Kingdom of God under the kingship of an 'anointed' (messiah) at his ONE AND ONLY appearance. There was no thought on TWO comings just as there was no thought that the 'anointed' would be crucified–resurrected. The purpose of the New Testament is therefore two-fold in that it justifies a crucifixion-resurrection as

- (a) the fulfilment of specific prophecies, the meaning of which had been realised only by Jesus, and
- (b) the spiritual fulfilment of the Israelite hope.

The New Testament further proposes that there is to be a SECOND appearance of the 'anointed' at which the Kingdom will be established materially on the earth. It does not propose that all the Old Testament prophecies of the 'anointed' were fulfilled by the manner of his first appearance.

The interpretative principle of the New Testament is the way it reconciles the known, but totally-unexpected RESULT, with the Israelite EXPECTANCY.

3. I demonstrated that the significance of crucifixion-resurrection lies in its practical application. A man is 'born' into babyhood and he is 'born' into manhood. He is 'born' into regeneration by passing through a self-imposed crucifixion and resurrection. This involves the total personality but has nothing to do with pious 'mortification of the flesh'.

4. I denied that theology was correct in its interpretation

- (a) of the nature of the Supreme Being, and
- (b) of the character of Jesus.

From the time that the scriptures passed under the control of the Gentiles (about 100 AD onwards) until the present, organised Christendom – despite its many divisions of churches and sects – has been united on the one basic principle. And that principle is their pronouncement that Jesus was not just a normal man, born in a normal fashion.

It follows logically from my positive affirmation concerning Jesus as a perfectly normal, naturally-born man, that it is necessary for me to deny the correctness of church doctrines which say otherwise.

5. I invited your attention to those teachings of the churches which require specific and detailed denial. In particular I referred to the doctrine of 'virgin birth'. As the scriptural basis for this doctrine rests on only three references – Isaiah 7-14, Matthew chapter 1 and Luke chapter 1 – I dealt with these references exhaustively.

- (a) Isaiah 7-14: Authorities were quoted to show that about 150 BC the Greeks had mistranslated a Hebrew word as 'virgin' instead of 'young woman'. This mistranslation was perpetuated in all English versions until the finding of the Dead Sea scrolls (1947). I also referred to the ancient translations by Aquila, Symmachus and Theodotian which endeavoured to correct the error.
- (b) Matthew 1: Evidence was given, including that by Jerome (400 AD) to show that when Matthew made use of Isaiah 7-14 he used the Hebrew word and not the incorrect Greek translation. Matthew did not say a 'virgin' conceived. What he said was that Jesus was not the son of Joseph.
- (c) Luke 1: The audience was referred to Luke's chapter 2. Among other things it was shown that his use of the word 'before' in 2-21, when read in conjunction with the time-sequence given in chapter 1, showed conclusively that he was not saying a virgin conceived. Luke was making delicate reference to what, in another man's mouth, could have been an indelicate subject.

These disciples had a good reason for showing Jesus was not the son of Joseph. Theologians know the reason. It is that if Jesus had been the son of Joseph he was specifically debarred from the kingship of Israel. And if debarred from kingship – not by man but by the Supreme Being – then he could not possibly be the awaited 'anointed'.

6. I showed how doctrines arose out of disputations among the early Gentile church Fathers, and how these Fathers looked into the 'pool of Narcissus' – that is, the Bible – saw themselves imaged there, and then projected this, their own image upon the world through the medium of the decisions of ecclesiastical councils called by Roman Emperors from 325 AD onwards. Christendom bears the image, not of the mind of Jesus and the character of the Supreme Being, but of early Gentile theology.

The propositions stated above are those to which I address myself.

They are the propositions to which I invite your attention.

And let there be no mistake about it. They are the propositions by which I serve notice on the churches.

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