

# ***BACK TO THE BASICS; ON TO PERFECTION***

The term *sonship* has come to mean many things to many people. In years past, it had a general meaning, and was easily identifiable, for the most part, among those who were moving beyond the bounds of traditional religious ideologies. Mention it nowadays, however, and you're likely to receive any number of responses.

It's always been important to look back from time to time at the foundational teachings of the message, in order to see that we're headed in the right direction. But especially, now, at this time, is the need most necessary. As we've noted in other writings, the Feast of Tabernacles is the next great event in store for the saints of God. It symbolizes, in the form of types and shadows, that which we are about to experience in glorious reality. And yet, it is also, among other things, a feast of reminiscence. It's a time to look in retrospect, not only on experiences through which the Lord has brought us, but also upon the revelations which have accompanied those experiences. The Lord has established some wonderful landmarks along the Way, and we all would do well to bring them into remembrance!

Some time ago, a brother challenged us over a reference we'd made to "the pure and unadulterated message of sonship". He asked, "Where do I go to get this 'pure and unadulterated' message? Do I go to .....", and he named several prominent ministers of kingdom repute by name. Our response to him was, "If the message had originated with them, then we would say that you should go to them. And we would say that you had a good point. But since it didn't, then our advice would be to go to the writings of the New Testament, with special attention given to Paul's epistles. There you'll find the message in its pristine form, without the defilement of men."

We do realize that there are many facets to consider when approaching such an awesome subject. And it's not our intention to present this writing as an exhaustive treatment of the subject. The reason for this is because, a message too narrowly defined becomes a dogma; a message too loosely defined becomes insignificant, and devoid of any power it might wield. This is definitely something to keep in mind, as we bring the vision into focus. To say either too much or too little about it can have its own set of consequences! But there are a few things we'd like to bring to your attention, in order that we might rejoice together in what God has purposed!

Just so you'll know where we stand, however, and so you'll understand upon what we base our views, we'd like to establish one thing from the start. While it's true that we're seeing into greater and greater dimensions of His glory, and while we're witnessing the outworking of many of the principles found in God's Word in ways that our spiritual predecessors only saw in seed form, it's our solemn conviction that what we're basically doing is *recovering lost truth*. It's not so much new truth that we are receiving in these

days (even though it may be new to us), but, rather, truth which has been covered over the course of church history by the carnal teachings and traditions of men. This is important for us to note. Otherwise, *it would be futile for us to say that we are "earnestly contending for the faith which was once delivered to the saints," if the saints had never received it in the first place.* Do you see what we mean when we say that? To assume that truth is evolving, that it's been going through the process of dialectical development, or to say that we're receiving truth which the apostles never received, would be to make our insights superior to those expressed in scripture. And that would naturally encourage us, as it obviously has some, to "go beyond that which is written". Keep in mind that we're built upon the teachings of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the Chief Cornerstone. *Their* foundational teachings are *our* point of reference. Therefore, when we refer to the Scriptures as our chief authority, it's because we still consider them to be of the highest order of inspiration from which we can quote. And, as we've said, everything you'll ever need to know about sonship can be found in the pages of God's Word! Now, having said that, let's proceed with our message.

(Note: Even though it may seem somewhat tedious at times, we would encourage the reader to stay with this next part. It serves as a necessary precursor to the rest of the message.)

### **Gnostic sonship?**

During the first three centuries, there was a heresy which caused a great amount of contention within the early church, and one which sought to masquerade as the deeper truths of sonship. It was known as Gnosticism. The term comes from the Greek word, *gnosis*, which simply means *knowing*. The Gnostic position basically held that, over and above the common lot of men, there was an elite group of people in the earth who possessed a secret, higher knowledge concerning the mysteries of life and of the spirit world. That they had received this "knowledge" was sufficient to verify their unusual election. They viewed themselves as a special breed, chosen from among men, and divinely appointed to tap into that pool of knowledge which lay just beyond the realm of human comprehension. In order to effectively communicate what they knew to the spirits of ordinary men, however, and in order to enlighten the masses to their deeply spiritual information, they had to draw on sources alien to Christianity, and amalgamate them with elements of the Gospel. It was syncretistic religion at its worst!

Gnosticism wasted no time in its propagation. It found its way into the Church during the early stages of its development. Certain men crept in unaware, infiltrating the ranks of the believers with their pagan philosophies and perverted traditions of men. They primarily sought out the naive, the gullible, the weaker vessels in the congregation, and pushed their odd doctrines upon them. Because of its strong appeal to the pride of man, and because of its exclusive claims to esoteric knowledge, it rapidly grew to epidemic proportions.

Gnosticism is difficult to pin down, in terms of precise definition. The reason for this is because it incorporates so many thoughts, and so many contradictions, from so many

sources. It involved (among its list of otherwise unrelated things) a complex cosmology based on ancient Eastern ideas, certain Hellenistic patterns of speculative thought, and the acceptance of Christ as Savior (in accordance with the way they interpreted the terms, "Christ," and "savior," of course). All of this was mixed into the same "pot," and served up as "deeper truth"!

There are many areas of this teaching into which we could go, and several of them which will be linked to the following subjects in this message, but the three main points where Gnosticism departed from the faith were 1) concerning the origin of creation, 2) concerning the nature of the Creator, and 3) concerning the doctrine of Christ. Gnosticism taught a form of dualism, claiming that the material creation was not a direct emanation from the true God (since, according to their way of looking at things, the supreme Deity was entirely too exalted to have anything to do with base matter), but was the product of a lesser deity (one of the "Demiurge," as they called them, or faulty lower-class of deities). This lower-class god (who, throughout the Old Testament falsely revealed himself as the true and living God), did not possess the divine attributes of love, but was wholly hostile and vindictive. Therefore, because the material creation was originally made after the image of a flawed creator, and because that image was assumed to be in the image of the true, the idea itself served as a prison-house for the pure spirits of men. Not only were these spirits confined to a world which was evil by nature, but they were also trapped, as it were, in a mentality and worldview which held them captive. They'd forgotten that, as sons of the Most High, they shared a common genealogy with the spirits of all men (a "universal brotherhood," if you will), and that that genealogy was divine. Thus, the need for a savior was born. The "Christ" spirit came in response to that need, and possessed the body of Jesus of Nazareth as it's vehicle. He came as the representative of the true God, and to show the way of love to a world which was wholly devoid of it. He came to liberate men from the evil influences of the judgmental "god," and to enlighten them to their true divinity and origin. (The first time He came, they say, was in the garden of Eden, where He appeared in the form of the serpent. When His mission was thwarted, however, and His message was not fully received, He had to try it all over again).

According to the Gnostic mindset, the material world, and the entire time/space continuum, was wholly without significance. And being without significance, it was merely illusory. It was not real, in the truest sense of the term, but only appeared to be real. This doctrine became known as "docetism" (from the Greek word, *dokeo*, meaning *to appear or seem*). Early teaching was that, just prior to the crucifixion, "Christ" evacuated the temple of Jesus' body, and entered into that of a bystander, Simon Magus. But, eventually, they came to believe that Jesus was never really human in the first place, and that He never really died on the cross; it only appeared that He did).

In stark contradistinction to this, they also taught a form of monism. Monism presupposes that all reality is ultimately one. All things spiritual are derived from the true God. And the true God is conceived to be impersonal spiritual energy. Therefore, the apparent diversity of the world, the apparent conflicts between good and evil, the apparent existence of separate, individual personalities, all of these things are either illusory or

temporary manifestations that interfere with the ultimate return of all reality to the oneness from which it came. Can you see where all this confusion leads? According to this teaching, since God is the sum total of all things spiritual, since God has no personality of His own, and since man is the highest and most advanced form of life found on the planet, the highest concentration of spiritual consciousness ("Christ") can be found in YOU (you, as in you all; i.e. all mankind). Therefore, since everything around you is illusory, and YOU are the only reality there really is, then, Y-O-U spells GOD, and G-O-D spells YOU (which naturally leads to the conclusion, of course, that YOU are the only thing that really matters in life)! Talk about self-centeredness! Salvation is thus redefined as being that moment when you awaken to your true identity, and realize who you are! This, according to your average Gnostic, was the truth Christ came to bring. He came to "save" men through "gnosis," wholly apart from anything that was done in the material realm of time and space. It is cunningly crafted doctrine, which ignores the purpose and importance of the Incarnation altogether, and blurs the line between the creature and the Creator! In fact, it actually reduces Christ to a state of consciousness, making mere head-knowledge the thing to be grasped!

The Johannine and Pauline epistles were primarily written in response to Gnosticism. Of them, the letter to the Colossians is one of the most direct and confrontational of them all. In it, Paul penned some of the most definitive words concerning the truths of sonship, while at the same time, soundly rejecting the notions raised by the leading Gnostics of his day. What is interesting to note, however, is that the same passages which Paul used to refute Gnosticism in the first three centuries are the very words used by neo-Gnostics in the twentieth century to justify it! Brethren, this could not possibly be, were it not for the fact that so many in this generation are oblivious to history! As George Santianas so aptly put it, "Those who fail to remember the past are condemned to repeat it". How true this has proven to be!

Ah, beloved, that vile "black plague" called Gnosticism has broken out once more, seeking, if possible, to deceive the very elect. Though it's presented somewhat differently these days (we would more commonly call it "New Age" teachings), it's not difficult to trace it back to its original source. It's the same dread disease with which the apostles contended...and whose words still doth eat as a canker!

For instance, modern Gnostics promote the idea that every man is already in Christ, and Christ is in him, regardless if he is a professing Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, or atheist (working from the idea that Christ is the "divine spark" which lights every man that has ever come into the world). And they say that, because of His indwelling presence, sin doesn't exist; that it's merely an illusion. All men are, right now, at this moment, in right standing with God, fully complete, and fully perfected, possessing everything that Jesus (or any other religious "holy man," for that matter) ever had during the days of His flesh. Man's main problem, they say, is that he is simply not aware of this. Therefore, they teach that this is why Paul declared the message of "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1: 27). According to them, the apostle was describing the present state of all men, without distinction, and without qualification. He was merely informing them of their spiritual status.

To give support to that interpretation, they couple it with Paul's words, where he said, "...there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11). Now, it would be easy for us to see how someone might extrapolate that meaning from these verses, especially if they are extracted from the body of text wherein they are found. However, a careful examination of the scriptures surrounding them reveals that Paul had a targeted people in mind when he uttered those God-breathed words. He never meant to suggest that Christ is now in all men, equally, and without variation, and that all men are in Christ. And he never promoted the concept of the "universal brotherhood of man"! Far be it from the truth! (That may have been true "in Adam", when there was only one corporate man in the earth. And it will be true again, when I Cor. 15:22 is brought to fulfillment. But the moment the Second Man came into the world, bringing with Him the power by which men could be regenerated, out went "the universal brotherhood", until such a time that all men would be made alive). Nay, Paul very specifically directed his letter to those of the household of faith, in contrast with those who were not.

Before we advance any further in our studies, it would be good for us to take a moment here, and observe the first chapter of Colossians. This will give us a better understanding of the apostle's true intentions, as well as revealing where the twist is applied in Gnostic teaching.

In speaking to the saints in Colosse, Paul informed them that though they'd once been alienated and enemies in their minds by way of wicked works, they'd now been reconciled in the body of Jesus' flesh through His death on the cross. The reason that this had happened, Paul said, was that Christ might present them holy, without blame, and unreprouvable in His sight. But while the work was finished, as far as His sacrificial death was concerned, our brother didn't leave his readers with the false impression that this was their fixed and final state. He placed an all-important condition on his declaration. Yes, they would be presented holy, faultless, and irreproachable in the Father's presence (as the Amplified Bible words it)...but only IF they continued in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and were not moved away from the hope of the gospel which they'd heard (verse 23). Did you catch that? You see, that little word "IF" qualifies the entire passage. In other words, if they did not continue in the faith, then they would not be presented holy, and unblamable, and unreprouvable in God's sight. It was as simple as that. And, as we've said, it's important that we take note to whom he was speaking, and why. These were folks who had already professed the name of Jesus, who had believed in their hearts that God had raised Him from the dead for their justification, but who were also in danger of being corrupted by Gnostic heresies. Therefore, beloved, the question boils down to this: if Paul didn't see all believers as being unconditionally complete and perfected in Christ, then how can anyone justifiably twist his words to make them say that all of mankind was meant to be seen in this state? That would certainly fall under the category of handling the Word of God deceitfully, now, wouldn't it?

Paul did go on to say that he'd been commissioned to make known the riches of the glory of the mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. He said that it's Christ Who we preach, "*warning every man, and teaching every man in all*

wisdom..." . Why? "...[in order] *that we may present every man perfect in Christ*" (verse 28). Ah! Herein is found the necessary balance! According to Paul, the ultimate goal IS to see all men in Christ, and Christ in them. But until that becomes reality, the warning of every man is just as important in the presentation of the message of "Christ in you" as is the teaching of every man in all wisdom. For, you see, unless men continue in the faith, *"well grounded and settled and steadfast, not shifting or moving away from the hope which rests upon and is inspired by the glad tidings"* (Amplified), they cannot possibly be presented as perfect in Christ! Could it have possibly been said any plainer?

It's a simple fact that ideas are not isolated, and concepts are not confined to themselves. Thoughts are linked to other thoughts, which lead to logical (or illogical) conclusions. If someone says that the problem with mankind today is simply a case of mistaken identity, they are, by implication, saying much more than that. They're saying that, since this is true (according to their perspective), the opposite of that statement cannot also be true at the same time. Therefore, they're saying that when Jesus identified the condition of mankind as being the result of man's sin, and, being sinful in nature, all men were in need of an atoning sacrifice to reconcile them back to God, He was wrong in that assumption. He incorrectly diagnosed the situation; and, therefore, was unable to accurately provide the answer.

The same is true concerning the increasingly popular notions that there are many ways which lead to the Kingdom of God within, or that regeneration can occur outside of the Christian faith, and without an individual first receiving the exclusive saving knowledge of Jesus the Messiah. Believe it or not, there are some who would even dare teach such things as Kingdom truths!

We know that few these days would openly promote the idea that creation is the product of a god of judgment, separate from the God Who is Love. That does sound a bit bizarre, even in comparison with some of the other wild things being taught nowadays, doesn't it! But whenever folks attempt to define the love of God apart from the judgment of God, or make statements such as, "God's eyes are too holy to behold evil" (as if to say that God overlooks the unholy thoughts and deeds of mankind), what they are basically doing is creating two Gods. They are distorting the divinely revealed definition of love, which requires righteous judgment to properly define it, and are offering a humanly conceived love in it's place. It simply does not work that way!

We don't need to write a new gospel for our times; and we don't need to "reinvent" the plan of salvation, in order to accommodate our more "advanced" beliefs. For the past two thousand years, the plan Jesus gave us has worked just fine! But this is exactly what Gnostic teaching does. It changes the truth of God into a lie, and attempts to create a "backdoor" into the Most Holy Place! It attempts to bypass the Outer Court (which typifies Passover, or the "born again" experience) where the Brazen Altar and the Brazen Laver are found (where justification and sanctification are procured). And it attempts to ignore the relative importance of the Holy Place (which symbolically represents the Pentecostal experience, the Baptism of the Holy Spirit), by calling it "old order, an experience that is embarrassingly behind the times". It tries to usher men in by another

way, rather than through the Door (Jn. 10:7). In fact, it goes so far as to suggest that all men have been in the Most Holy Place all along, but were simply unaware of it! What utter foolishness this is!

Beloved, we realize that God can move upon anyone He chooses. It's an established fact that throughout the course of history, He's used a great number of subjects to accomplish His will. Some of them had never heard the mention of His name, let alone believed on Him. However, we should not confuse the moving of His Spirit upon all flesh with all men being sons of God, members of His royal family, and having the indwelling of His Spirit. The fact remains, and we are emphatic about it, that YE MUST BE BORN AGAIN!

There's no getting around it, no bypassing this foundational stone of truth. This experience is absolutely necessary, if we are to become the children of the living God (and you must become a child of God before you can become His son, you know). Of course, some might take the argument to an extreme, and say that since God is the source of all life (plant, animal, as well as human), then He is already in all living things. But this is only true in the abstract. It would be absurd to think that the way God inhabits a tree or a dog is exactly the same way He inhabits a human being! And yet, we've even heard it taught that all animate things are "members of the mystical body of Christ"!

Enough of such nonsense! There are many other things we could bring up at this point, but there's one thing of which we can definitely be assured. Anytime you attempt to remove the "face" of God, and put yours (or anyone else's) in it's place, that's not sonship, brother...that's HUMANISM! (And humanism is but another form of idolatry! Think on that for awhile)!

### **Nicolaitanistic sonship?**

As we've said, sonship is not an elite company of "super-sons," who think that their "higher revelation" makes them in some way superior to others. Neither is it what we would call, "ultra-Orthodox sonship" (an oxymoronic phrase, if ever there was one). It has nothing to do with the adornment of titles, special "liturgical garments," or the creation of any kind of class distinction whatsoever between so-called "priesthood" and "laity". This is but another contribution from our old "friends," the Gnostics, and one which is more commonly referred to in Scripture as Nicolaitanism.

The word *Nicolaitane* is a compound word. It comes from the Greek words, *nikao*, meaning *to conquer*, and *laos*, which means, *the people, or laity*. Put these definitions together, and what do we get? An oppressive, domineering ruling class, whose main agenda is to conquer and subdue those who they consider "less gifted" than themselves!

It's largely agreed that the sect of the Nicolaitanes can be traced back to a certain charismatic proselyte mentioned in Acts 6:5 (who also happened to be a Gnostic), by the name of Nicolas of Antioch. Not only did Nicolas promote the idea that the saints should return to the kind of heteronomous form of church government which Jesus came to

abolish (not so much through the abolition of the priesthood, but, rather, through the abolition of the laity, thereby elevating all believers to priestly status), but he also furthered another Gnostic heresy, which taught (among other things) that one must indulge in sin in order to understand it (we'll deal with that one later). No wonder Jesus said that both the deeds and the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes were hated of Him (Rev. 2:6,15)!

There is a growing movement in the land today, which advertises itself as being built upon the sound principles of sonship. It's referred to simply as "the network". This network is headed up by a group of bishops, as well as certain "ministry affiliates," several of whom have had strong ties in the past to some of the early pioneers of the sonship message. To be sure, some of them are very capable ministers, who are able to articulate certain kingdom concepts with great charisma and clarity. Be that as it may, the message these brethren primarily emphasize is the message of authority and submission. It's interwoven into almost every message they deliver!

Now, unless I'm mistaken, this is the way "the network" works. Building upon the idea that everyone needs to be under a "covering" ministry, they teach that everyone should appoint themselves a "father" in the Lord. "The network" performs this vital service for the body of Christ, by recognizing and showcasing those who it deems qualified to "father" children (somewhat like a "parental screening" service, or an adoption agency). Once a ministry has been accepted into "the network," and once it has received public endorsement from it, it is then able to acquire a larger support base under it. This, in turn, broadens the support base of the "father ministry" which is immediately above that one, and so forth (The first time Tykie heard about it, she said that it sounded to her like the old telemarketing "pyramid" scheme. I think that's a pretty good description!) All this is done in such a way that each bishop might benefit from the acquisition of "new" churches by their fellow bishops, and give incentive for mutual support among "the brethren". (and this is supposed to be the "new look" of sonship?)

Having gotten a first-hand look at this movement for ourselves (and on more than one occasion, I might add), we now have absolutely no hesitation in saying that this "religious machine" is but another politically driven effort to reinstate "Saul" to his kingdom. It's another of the many carnally sponsored campaigns to enthrone a king who can captivate an audience, who can impress the crowd, who is "head and shoulders above the people". My, how the flesh loves this type of thing! After only a brief exposure to the patronizing, the promotion, the proud and pompous parading across the stage in their religious "costumes," and their condescending speech, it should be apparent what is going on here. Someone's obviously been down to Babylon, and borrowed a few ideas!

I suppose one of the reasons why Tykie and I have such a great aversion to this, and why we are so quick to pick up on this kind of man-centered rather than Christ-centered ministry, is because we know where it leads. You see, when we first came into acquaintance with sonship writings, we were at that time on our way out of "the house of bondage". We'd previously been involved with a ministry which had great "signs and wonders" following, and which had some beautiful revelational truths to offer, but which

also placed a great distinction between "the prophet" and "the people" (and the prophet always had the preeminence). It had it's special "man of God," and it's special platform and podium (from whence no one else could speak). It had it's special "holy oil," it's special "oil cruise," and it's special "holy anointed handkerchiefs". And for special seasons of prayer and fasting, the man of God even had his special three-piece, tailor-made "sackcloth suit" (you read that right), complete with its very own "clerical collar" sewn right in. Ah, but the stories we could tell! (It's almost embarrassing now for me to say that we were ever involved with such a ministry. But two good things did come out of it, for which I am eternally grateful to the Lord. First, Tykie and I both received an education in discernment through it; and secondly, that's where the two of us met! That alone made it worth it!)

Anyway, for quite some time, the Lord had been speaking the message of sonship to my heart. I didn't know it as such, and was totally unfamiliar with the term, but the Spirit was unveiling things in my private Bible studies which I'd never heard before. In fact, they were so different from that with which I had previously been taught, I asked the Lord for some sort of confirmation. It was not long thereafter, that someone gave me two little booklets. One was called *Sons of God, Awake*, and the other was entitled *Feast of Tabernacles*. How I thank God for those booklets. They were just what I needed!

There were many things in those small writings which the Lord used to confirm what He had been showing me. And many things which had been but impressions in my heart were beautifully expressed in words. But one of the things which especially stood out was the genuine humility in which they'd been written. Unlike that to which I'd previously been exposed, the emphasis was truly upon Jesus (not just in pretense). And, rather than drawing attention to themselves, or taking the opportunity to make disciples unto themselves, the writers laid stress on the corporate Man, Christ, who is comprised of many members. They weren't the least bit concerned whether they received recognition for their words, or not...and they weren't promoting their office, either. They just wanted to get the word out to as many as the Lord our God had called! From that brief encounter, I learned that it was entirely possible for men to be in leading roles in ministry, and to move in great revelational truth, and yet, not allow their position, or the possession of those truths to exalt them above measure, or to make them "lords over God's heritage". Praise God for it! The Lord had introduced me to the essential spirit of the Son...and it profoundly changed my outlook on life and ministry!

Bill Britton once said that if you ever catch the true vision of sonship, rather than puffing you up in pride, it will cause you to fall on your face in absolute humility. We believe that this captures the heart of the message. And it explains (in part) why we find the Bishopric movement, and others like it, so disturbing. While much is said of "Kingdom Order," and how important it is to "show respect to yo' daddy," the thing that's sadly lacking is humility. Never mind that certain aspects of the message of sonship may be heard therein; the spirit of it is no different than that from which we'd come out. It is "proud flesh," using the word of the Kingdom to advance it's real agenda (personal and political gain); and it is the ghost of "Uzzah," riding once more upon his "new cart," desperately attempting to bring the move of God under it's control (II Sam. 6:6)!

Considering the outcome of that little story, dare anyone question the validity of our concern?

Another who has been alarmed by all of this is Bob Torango. Bob recently wrote an excellent piece on the Bishopric movement, from which we would like to quote.

"This message of Bishopry is being ministered by some very able, and sincere ministers, most of which I am friends with, but I must state that I think this is a great mistake to go back to a second day administration for the sake of unity among the brethren...I feel a great caution in my spirit when we see those that have already come through those waters return to those forms of tradition, instead of going on into the newness of the Kingdom.

"Let me say once and for all, I have a covering, I have a Father, I have a Bishop, I have an Elder, and His name is Jesus. I see no reason for me to seek another one. He is my 'Set Man', my Head, my Government, and to give myself over to some man to be those same things would be a gross error on my part. I have been blessed by Him, and I fully expect to continue to be blessed by Him in the future. No man is going to be able to give me any more blessing, peace, prosperity, health, anointing, etc., than Jesus has already provided me. It astounds me, and absolutely confounds me how anyone that has been enlightened to the kingdom truths can return back to such a soulish, carnal state of thinking...

"I am not a rocket scientist, but I am smart enough to know that none of [God's] promises are put forth with the admonition that I must have a set man over me. They are all given because of one thing, and one thing only. A set man gave His life for me two thousand years ago, and promised that He would bring me to where He is, and I will trust in Him to fulfill that promise with my last breath. Can you say that about any of these men?

"...God has been extremely gracious to us to deliver us out of these systems of tyranny and man worship. The people of this word of the kingdom have been hewed out of the masses of the fearful and unbelieving by the hand of God, having been called out by Him in order to attain to something that could not be given while we were sucking at the breast of some man covering. Many of us have gone through hell and high water to stay true to this election, and the cries of the martyrs haunt us day and night, refusing to let us give in to the siren call of Babylon, as she tries to draw our ships into the rocks of man's system of religious thinking. How easy it would be to go along with the crowd and start to dress up this beautiful word of God with the clothes of a harlot system...all of this would be so easy to do, and yet, I don't know how any minister that was once enlightened to the narrow path that leads to glory could live with their self if they were to go back to the broad way. I know I couldn't.

"In parting, I would rather be a son of God and be a little lonely, and tested but true, than to be the son of a Bishop with the whole world at my feet. It all depends on which world you are out to get" ---end of quote.

While there is much upon which we could comment here, we find the phrase *the son of a Bishop* to be especially challenging. And it really raises an important question. Is the role

of fatherhood among the ministry even a biblical one? To this, we would have to answer yes...but only with a qualifier. Paul did refer to himself as being a father in the faith to Timothy (Phil. 2:22); and he said, "*ye have not many fathers*" (I Cor. 4:15). But he never carried the analogy too far. You see, it is always to be remembered that from the broader perspective, and in the proper order of things, the minister of God is meant to be seen as a servant to the Body, who has only done what was commanded of him to do (Lk. 17: 7-10). He deserves no special accolades, no personal praise. After all, this is the very reason God has equipped him as He has. He may be used to aid in the preparation of sons (Eph. 4:11-16), and he may serve as an instructor in God's great "vocational school". But he was never intended to replace the Father! God forbid!

Have we become so blind, that we cannot see this as the same great error which caused many of the saints to stumble in the third century? Can we not see this as the ancient curse of Constantine? When Jesus said, "*I will not leave you **comfortless***" (Jn. 14:18), He used the word *orfanos* (from whence we get our English word *orphans*). What He was saying was that He would never abandon us, nor leave us without His Paternal Presence. There would never be a moment when we would be fatherless, and, therefore, need a vicar (substitute). Our Lord obviously must have seen the day coming, however, when men would usurp a papal position over others, and so He issued this warning, "*Call no man your father upon the earth; for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant*" (Matt. 23:9-11). Therefore, to those who feel they must look to some man as their spiritual father, we would simply say: **GOD HAS NO GRANDSONS!** This is one relationship that is completely foreign to the Kingdom of God!

We don't want to belabor the issue, but we would like to share something which graphically illustrates our point. Some time ago, we had a young man call and ask if he could stay overnight with us. He was passing through our area to conduct some meetings on this side of the country, and had been told by a friend of ours that we would provide some engaging fellowship. We were delighted to have him as our houseguest.

After a time of sharing, he began to speak freely, without reservation. He told us about the man of God in his life, and what a great man he was. He added, "One time I asked the Lord to show me how I might honor Him more. That was when He spoke to me about opening doors for my 'bishop'". He went on to say, "Bishop never has to touch a doorknob, or pull out his own chair at the table, whenever I'm around. It's such a blessing to me just to be able to do little things like that for him!"

After a moment of mixed reactions, and "flashbacks" to days gone by, I told him, "Brother, as you were speaking, the words of Jesus came to mind. 'Inasmuch as ye have done it to THE LEAST OF THESE MY BRETHREN, you've done it unto ME.' Seems like if it had been the Lord Who had spoken to you, He would have put it on your heart to minister to those who are considered the least in the Body, not those who are considered among men to be the greatest." (That was one of those moments when I wanted to rend both my heart AND my garments!)

The Amplified Bible renders Rom. 8:15 thus: "*For [the Spirit which] you have now received [is] not a spirit of slavery to put you once more in bondage to fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption [the Spirit producing sonship] in [the bliss of] which we cry, Abba (Father)! Father!*" This passage reveals something of the very nature of our message. The spirit of sonship is NOT a spirit of slavery to put you once more in bondage to fear. (Furthermore, in spite of how some might present it, it does NOT teach that "the promised land" is owned by a group of "plantation owners," either!) The real message of sonship is God's *emancipation proclamation*, you might say, the sounding of *the year of Jubilee*, His declaration of freedom, liberty, and justice for all! You need not serve men any longer!

Another passage which comes to mind is Col. 2:18-19. "*Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshiping of angels...and not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God*". Taking into consideration that the original word for angels, *angelos*, refers to messengers, in general, we see how this passage applies. Whenever folks are beguiled into willful "messenger" worship, whether those messengers are celestial or terrestrial; and whenever folks voluntarily humble themselves before them, bowing low in adoration; they fail to hold the Head in highest esteem. This negligence may not be intentional; in fact, they may only be doing what they sincerely believe God would have them to do. But, nevertheless, it still places the reward of their inheritance in jeopardy. Don't allow this to happen to you!

We know that not everyone has the same reason for being attracted to this type of system. No doubt, there are some sincere men and women to be found therein. Some are lonely, and, in an attempt to fill that void, have desired to become a part of something larger (this may explain why some are so willing to be used and abused as they are.) Others may feel as if there is no where else they can go to receive the kind of word they are hearing; and so, they have no alternative but to tolerate things which their spirits witness against (a common response from those in this group is, "I've just learned to spit out the bad, and keep the good"). But as far as leadership is concerned, we believe that in most cases it reveals an insecurity on their parts, a need to feel needed, and a lust for power. They've found a place where they can gratify their co-dependent needs, and a group which will gladly lend its support.

Oh, and one other thing, while we're on the subject. I don't mean to sound sarcastic (and this might be an insignificant thing to some), but could someone please explain to me why the majority of these bishops have resorted to the unscriptural adornment of *clerical collars*? No matter who I ask, I can't seem to get a straight answer on this one. The only thing I can figure is that either they're afraid they are not going to receive the recognition they believe they deserve, and so, they feel that they must do something to secure that; or else, they're trying, as an ecumenical gesture of good will, to embrace the Roman Catholic tradition. Since it is universally understood that the clerical collar originated solely from the Jesuit priesthood, and that no priesthood prior to them ever adorned such strange apparel, this would be a logical conclusion, wouldn't it?

Now, if this is the case, I have only one question to ask. Why would anyone want to identify with a system that has traditionally persecuted the saints, that has led bloody inquisitions against them, and that has been responsible for merciless massacres without number? Why would they willingly choose to affiliate themselves with an order which has historically oppressed its own, through scare tactics and threats of purgatory? What if you were to come to visit me, and the first thing that caught your attention was a Nazi swastika proudly displayed on my shirt sleeve. What if, when you entered my home, you noticed stockpiles of weapons and Nazi propaganda lying around the room? Whether you were a Jew or not, you would have every reason in the world to feel uncomfortable in my presence. And you might very well be offended. Why? Because of that with which I had chosen to associate myself! In like manner, what these brethren have chosen to affiliate themselves with is an offense to those who have come out from among it, some who have suffered greatly at its hands. It's totally insensitive of those among whom they minister, and a blatant act of defiance and rebellion against the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free (Gal. 5:1). In any event, it does seem like a clear and certain indication of the spirit of which they've partaken, and a sign with which they have voluntarily marked themselves. The only way they could make it plainer is if they started sporting *mitres* on their heads (I hardly think that priests "after the order of Melchisedek" will pattern themselves after the Jesuit priesthood, though!)

Let's be perfectly frank here. No one who has had even the slightest glimpse of sonship has any desire to appear on "Hollywood Squares". Nor will they desire to be placed on someone's box of "Wheaties"! Opportunities may abound for us to acquire a "fan club," or to take advantage of the admiring appreciation of those to whom we minister. And there may be those who would gladly "make us king," if only we would let them. But brethren, let's not deceive ourselves. The reason why some "allow" others to wait on them hand and foot, the reason why some "permit" others to patronize them as heroes, gods, and celebrities, is not "for the good of the people". It is not to help the people learn how to be submissive, so they can better serve the Lord. It's just another excuse for the flesh (and a flimsy one, at that), deceptively inspired by the man of sin who sits in the temple of God, who wants to be seen as God!

We have said it many times before, but it bears repeating here. We do believe in spiritual authority. And we do encourage folks to recognize those who are in positions of leadership to the Body, who conduct themselves in an attitude of true humility and holiness. Honor is comely, scriptural, and worthy of all acceptance. However, we are definitely against the twisting of scripture, and the general abuse of power we have witnessed among certain groups. God never intended for men to set themselves up as "popes," through whom the people must come in their approach to Him. He never intended for them to be seen as indispensable, irreplaceable, or that blessings and cursings should be determined by the amount of submission given them "in the house". He never ordained this intrusive involvement into family lives, which diminishes the authority of a father in his own home. He never meant for self-serving men to bear rule by their means, through hollywood-styled homiletics and psychological tactics of taboos and fear, in an effort to build their own little kingdoms and cult followings. And He never ever meant

for some saints to replace the leading of the Holy Spirit in the lives of others, by commanding obedience from them! We don't care who endorses it!

To quote from a couple of those old pioneers we'd mentioned earlier, "When you see someone with a proud spirit, boasting of what they are in God's Kingdom, then you know they have not had a true revelation of sonship. Their works may be great, and their miracles many, but if they are caught up in their own importance, they do not really know the message of the sons of God, even if they preach it from all the right texts". And, "We may with confidence affirm that every man and every woman who in any way is seeking to build up his own little kingdom does not possess the spirit of sonship. A man who seeks to be or willingly becomes the central figure is wrong and does not possess the spirit of sonship, for the true spirit of sonship points men away from self and toward Jesus Christ...those blessed sons of God who are to reign with Him in His kingdom will not be men who have made great names for themselves, but men and women who through contact with Christ Jesus our Lord have partaken fully of the sevenfold spirit of sonship"---end of quotes (Bill Britton, and George Hawtin, respectively).

Because of the unwavering stance we've taken against it, Tykie and I have been labeled "rebellious" by those who are still trapped inside "Babylon's birdcage". And, we won't deny it. After all, as one brave soul once put it, "rebellion against tyranny is obedience to God"! It is this very conviction that fanned the flame of the great Protestant movement in years gone by; and it is still what inspires the hearts of true protestants today! You can believe us when we say that our intention is not to make enemies; nor do we desire to offend. But the truth must be told, even if that means the loss of relationships with family and friends. Those who take advantage of others through manipulative words, through their oratory skills, through psychological maneuvering and cleverly devised schemes, should hang their heads in shame! It's an absolute disgrace to the dignity and honor of Christ! You may call it whatever you want..."the shepherding movement," "the bishopric revival," "step-fatherhood," or even "grandsonship;" but please...***DON'T*** call it sonship!

### **Sectarian sonship?**

On the flip side of that issue, sonship is not a severance from the mainstream of Christ's Body, either. Some feel they have become so "heavenly minded," so lofty in their spiritual understanding, they can no longer fellowship with anyone, or be edified by anything which they consider to be of a lower realm. To them, any mention of the principles of the doctrine of Christ is shallow, moving in the gifts of the Spirit is "old order," prayer for the sick is "minding the flesh," and Scripture reading is a soulish practice. They live under a dark cloud of pessimism, and are always critical of anything they consider to be beneath their experience.

Again, we would quote from the seasoned words of Bro. Britton: "True sons, who have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, will know that they are not alone in this Kingdom of God, but that God has many other chosen vessels in other realms of life and revelation. True sons do not sit around in their little exclusive cliques, laying hands on each other, and prophesying about how great they are. Nor do they withdraw into their own contests

of preaching and teaching wild and unheard of revelation, to the exclusion of solid foundational teaching.

"I realize that the true kingdom message will give birth to new truth and revelation that we have never heard in the fundamentalist and pentecostal movements. But true sons will have a balance, and will always be ready to bring forth good sound fundamentals to those who need them. For true sons, 'time shall be no more'. Whether they are speaking a word on salvation by faith, a word which shook the world in the sixteenth century, or preaching the message of holiness that John Wesley preached, they will have a fresh anointing that still shakes the world today. And they will be just as free to minister divine healing, work miracles, and preach the baptism of the Holy Spirit, as they are to bring forth divine revelation of the Kingdom of God." --- end of quote.

The Pattern Son was able to relate to folks on every level of spirituality. He knew where they were, and readily "condescended to men of low estate". And while He always encouraged growth and advancement among those with whom He spoke, ever beckoning them to come up higher, He never belittled or condemned anyone for not being where He was. Now, that, my friends, is one of the true marks of maturity. Our Lord demonstrated what it meant to have "long patience" with those with whom He had to do; and took the time, in fact, to mingle with those who had never even had a religious experience. He was a "three-dimensional" Man, you might say, Who transformed every moment into a teaching experience, no matter who He was with, or what they may have needed. Praise God, He even suffered the little children, and forbade them not, in spite of the fact that His disciples thought that He was much too busy to do so! This is the example He gave us, and one which we should follow!

Not only will maturing sons be apt to teach on any level, but they'll also have a teachable spirit, as well. And they'll not be limited to receiving from only one dimension of the Spirit, either. They'll be able to find a blessing in ANY word brought forth by the inspiration of the Spirit, and not just in those considered to be from the realm of "deeper truth". You see, this is the very thing that keeps them balanced. It'll not matter whether they're listening to a blisteringly hot word from the likes of David Wilkerson, or whether they're exposed to a challenging message by Leonard Ravenhill; whether they're reading from the instructional writings of, say, T. Austin Sparks, or whether they're reading a devotional by Oswald Chambers. It'll make no difference whether they are listening to the brilliant apologetic arguments of Ravi Zacharias, or whether they're hearing the testimony of Corrie Ten Boom. There will be a stirring in the spirit, a "leaping in the womb," an excitement which rises from deep within the inner man, each and every time they hear sound biblical truths expounded with passion and conviction.

Ah, we have much to learn, don't we! Perhaps, even more than we might realize. If sharing with another about the joy of our salvation has become boring to us; if testifying to the unsaved has lost its appeal; if praying with one who is in need seems like a foolish exercise; or if we feel that we can get nothing out of a "first" or "second day" message; it just might be possible that "we have a problem, Houston". It could very well be that we've gotten so "far out", we need to come back down to earth!

## Amoral sonship?

There are those who are following the lead of the world-spirit these days, who are teaching a spiritual form of "outcome based education". What do I mean by that?

The public school system here in the United States has introduced to their classrooms a new approach to teaching. They call it "creative learning". According to this method, there is no "right or wrong," no absolute standard used in the grading process. The child is applauded regardless of the way he or she answers. They can never be told that they are wrong, because, after all, that might damage their delicate self-esteem. "Make it up as you go," they're told. "Use your imagination!" The primary goal is to stimulate creativity in the child, even if that means that no two answers will turn out exactly the same.

This sounds very much like a period in Israel's history which pre-dated the monarchical era. *"In those days, there was no king in Israel. Every man did that which was right in his own eyes"*, says Judges 17:6. Because Israel would not receive the Lord as her Lawgiver and King (which was His intention for them all along; I Sam. 8:7), situational ethics ruled the day, leaving each individual to create his or her own set of morals and values on the issues facing them in life. What was right for one man might not have been right for the next. One can only imagine the chaos which followed!

You can believe us when we say that sonship is not liberalism, masquerading under the guise of liberty. Nor is it a lowering of the bar...so as to make it easier for everyone to "clear the hurdles," so to speak. It is not grace to sin willfully, or the abandoning of standards of decency and morality. Some would redefine sonship as the freedom to curse, dress immodestly, or to indulge any craving their flesh would have. To them, the way to overcome is simply to "legalize" whatever vice one might struggle with, and to ignore the guilt naturally associated with it. This is how they justify themselves, and those in whom they take pleasure (Rom. 1:32). According to them, if it is no longer considered wrong in their eyes, if there is no longer a conviction, then they have overcome the obstacle. But that, dear friend, is not the Spirit of the Son.

Of Jesus it was written that He was tempted in all points, YET WITHOUT SIN. That doesn't mean that He rejected the general standard set by the Law of the Spirit of Life, in order that He might do that which was right in His Own eyes. Nor does it mean that He simply redefined the meaning of sin, in order that He might get around the need for moral restraints. No, He faced temptation just as you and I do, yet without falling prey to it. And, as a result, He was declared to be *"the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness"* (Rom. 1:4)! Hallelujah! The wonderful thing about it is, the same Spirit which enabled Him to overcome all things now resides in us! We now have this treasure in earthen vessels, Paul said, that the excellency of the power (Gr. *"the power to throw beyond the usual mark"*) might be of God, and not of us! Ah, beloved, that makes it where there is no room for boasting; but it also leaves us without excuse! We CAN walk in victory over our various trials and temptations, by the power of His resurrection. The question is, WILL WE? The confession is ours, should we desire it...We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us! *"According as His divine power hath given unto*

*us all things which pertain to life and godliness, according to the knowledge of Him Who has called us unto glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (II Peter 1:3-4).* It's a past tense confession, with ongoing results! Believe it, and act upon it!

### **Envisioned Sonship?**

During the time of our sojourning, we've come across various individuals who've obviously grown weary of the waiting, and have therefore concluded that the long-awaited event has already transpired. As a result, they've gone about professing that they are already perfected, sealed, immortal sons of God, who are walking in all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, in spite of the mountain of evidence which testifies to the contrary.

This reminds me of a children's story written by Hans Christian Anderson. The story was named *The Emperor's New Clothes*. Perhaps you've heard of it. (If so, maybe you'll indulge us for a moment while we share it with those who have not!)

There once was an emperor who was well known for his love of apparel. He thought of his appearance all the day long! One day, two men of the baser sort learned of the emperor's obsession, and devised a scheme which would work to their profit. First, they rented a building in the center of town, where all the townsfolk could see. Then, they passed themselves off as master weavers, who were able to make the most beautiful garments in the world. These garments were so beautiful, in fact, that only those who were of a higher order could see them! Soon, word got around to the emperor of these two, who, as you might imagine, commissioned them to begin work immediately on his royal wardrobe.

Soon, production was under way, with the "weavers" spinning their imaginary threads on their spinning wheels, and stretching them onto their looms. Crowds gathered in front of the storefront, watching this show through the window. Curious as to how the project was coming along, the emperor sent his minister to inquire. "Aren't the garments exquisite?", the rogues asked him. After carefully studying the empty looms, and straining to see what was supposed to be there, he thought within himself, "I see nothing! Absolutely nothing! But if I were to admit that, I would be seen as unfit for my post." So he replied, "Exquisite...yes, quite exquisite! They are the most beautiful garments I have ever seen!" That was the report he took back to the emperor, who was delighted to receive it.

As time went on, the emperor sent more and more of his cabinet members to inquire of their progress. Each and every time, the report came back the same. "Beautiful"; "breathtaking"; "unlike any we've seen before"; they all said, none daring to speak the truth. Delighted with the news, the emperor announced that a parade would be held the moment his new clothes were finished. This way, all of his subjects would have the opportunity to see them.

The day came when the weavers called for the emperor. "Take off your clothes," they said, "so you can be fitted". Then they proceeded to go through the motions, carrying, as it were, his regal attire. The emperor squinted, and blinked, and rubbed his eyes; but, try as he may, he could still see nothing! Nevertheless, lest anyone should think of him as unworthy of his throne, he went along with the act.

Finally, with trumpets sounding, the emperor was paraded through the streets of the city, naked as the day he was born. Following him were his chamberlans, who pretended to carry his train. The people also, not wanting to be seen as inferior, acted awe-struck by the sight. "The emperor is so glorious in his apparel," they said. "Yes, yes! Isn't he wonderful!" Finally, a young child spoke up. "But the emperor is naked!" "What?", someone said. "THIS CHILD SAYS THE EMPEROR IS NAKED!" One by one, the line was repeated, until everyone was shouting it in unison.

The emperor winced, for he knew it was true. But, he said to himself, "it is too late now. The show must go on".

Like the emperor, there are those who go on pretending to have something that is very noticeably missing, even though inwardly, they are aware of their lack. It reminds me of what was written to the church in Laodicea. "*I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear...*" (Rev. 3:18)

There was a Voice which spoke from heaven, which first declared Jesus' Sonship. After that, the works which He did bore witness to the fact. These were the two witnesses which testified to the authenticity of His claims (Deut. 19:15; Rev. 11). But until the heavenly declaration at the Jordan, until such a time that the Spirit descended and remained upon Him, and until He went forth "in the power of the Spirit," scripture states that "*He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not*". He was virtually unknown to His Own, except those to whom His identity had been divinely revealed. So it is with us. "*Beloved, now are we the sons (Gr. teknon, meaning children, or adolescents) of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure*". For sure, we believe that the manifestation will speak for itself. But if we always have to go about announcing that we're manifested sons, it's a good indication that we're not!

There's a difference between *the legal* and *the vital side* of the promise. The *legal* side of it is that the work has been finished, and there is nothing else to be done. But the *vital* side is the experiential outworking of it's fulfillment, to which there is a time appointed by the Father. It is this side that requires patience on our parts, until the dispensation of the fullness of times is come. But I assure you, brethren, we will not be disappointed when it arrives! As Jesus said, WAIT for the promise of the Father, which, saith He, ye have heard of Me! It will come, just as surely as did the earnest of our inheritance...and will not tarry!

In brief,

Sonship is not a departure from the faith, nor from the unshakable principles of the doctrine of Christ. It can be reasonably proven from the canon of Scripture, and needs no additional books to validate it. Furthermore, it needs nothing removed from the canon, either. Being hermeneutically consistent and exegetically sound, it can withstand the most intense scrutiny by honest theologians, and has weathered the worst of critics over the years.

The true message of sonship is exclusive to the Christian faith. It is not an eclectic collection of ideas, borrowed from various sources around the globe, but, as was said earlier, is built upon the faith that was once delivered to the saints. Furthermore, it is not supported by any other religion, though there may seem to be certain "surface" similarities between them. The reason why we don't use quotes from foreign sources, or ideas borrowed from those outside of the Christian community to validate the profession of our faith, is because, while there may be phonetic resemblances in some of the terms that are used, the differences are found in the definitions. They are *definitely not* the same. For instance, a word spoken in an English speaking country might mean one thing, while in another country, it might bear an entirely different meaning. The pronunciation might sound the same, and we might think we are communicating the same thought, but the meaning might be just the opposite. Many a misunderstanding has resulted from this very thing! So, unless a person's understanding is based upon the Christian worldview to begin with, he cannot truly comprehend the message of sonship. It's a totally different language, spoken from a totally different "country"! (It's the native tongue of the new world!)

Beloved brethren, all these things we've mentioned would fit into the category of "psuedo-sonship," and all would be oxymorons. But none of them have anything to do with the real!

So, if the message of sonship is none of these things, what, pray tell, is it? Simply stated, the message of sonship is the call to maturity. It has to do with discernment, with discretion, with the development of His divine nature within us. It's the call to the higher life, to a life which is totally led of the Spirit. It's the call to become overcomers in all things...sin, sickness, even the last enemy, which is death, and to sit with Christ in His throne. It's the call upward, and onward, beyond that which is in part, and on to that which is perfect. It's the call to so completely conform to the image of Christ in every way, that we begin to mirror His movements in the earth today. It's not just a pie-in-the-sky promise of something in the "sweet by-and-by"; and yet, it's the assurance that more than what we currently have awaits us in heavenly places.

Let it be clearly stated that sonship is neither theonomous (as is Gnosticism, which seeks to erase the line between creature and Creator); nor is it heteronomous (as is Nicolaitanism, which draws a line between clergy and laity). It is autonomous in nature. That is to say, it teaches us that every man is free to know God for himself, to acknowledge Him in all of his ways, and to be directly led of His Spirit. (It removes the

need for "a middle man," save Jesus, so that we may all come boldly before the Throne of Grace for ourselves.)

Sonship is the declaration that, as members of His body, "bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh," we have the potential of growing up into Him in all things. The example left by our Lord immediately following His Jordan experience is precisely what He has intended for us to experience. He demonstrated for us what it was like, not only to be an heir of God, but to actually inherit the promises, for the benefit of all mankind.

Sonship points to Jesus as the Pattern Son. "*Measure the Pattern...*" (Ezek. 43:10). He is the measure (Eph. 4:13), not only for all sons, but also, for all sonship teachings. A good rule of thumb is this: if any interpretation or revelation cannot be found in the simple gospels, if it cannot be found in the life of Jesus, then that's a good indication that it's not the true message of sonship!

In actuality, the message of sonship should more accurately be termed a relationship, rather than a message. It describes the relationship between the Father and His sons. This was the state of oneness Jesus prayed that we might experience (Jn. 17:20-23); and this, for us, is what being one with God is all about. Beyond that, however, it also reveals the unique position to which Jesus has been raised. Not only is He our elder Brother, the firstborn among many brethren (Rom. 8:29), but He is also the Everlasting Father to the overcomer (Isa. 9:6; Rev. 21:7). The prophet Isaiah asked, "*Who shall declare His generation? For He was cut off out of the land of the living...*" (Isa. 53:8) Sonship answers that, by declaring that WE are His generation, yea, even that seed who would be counted unto Him for a generation (Psa. 22:30). It reveals the identity of the missing 42nd generation in Matthew's genealogical record, which would otherwise be seen by sceptics as a Biblical discrepancy. This same Jesus... hath God made both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36)!

The scope of sonship involves more than just the common salvation (Jude 1:3). It includes the fullness of salvation, which is "*ready to be revealed in the last time*" (I Pet. 1:5). This salvation is not limited in scope to the believer's spirit (which is saved), or to the soul (which is being saved), but extends even unto the body. He shall take these vile bodies of ours, these bodies of humiliation, and make them like unto His glorious body, in order that we might fully experience "*the adoption, yea, to wit, the redemption of our body*" (Phil. 3:21; Rom. 8:22-23)! This is that for which we earnestly desire, and that for which we also do groan, that mortality might be swallowed up of life (II Cor. 5:1-5)!

As we've said, sonship declares that God has a many-membered Man in the earth, Who is revealed in Scripture as Christ. "*For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ*" (I Cor. 12:12). George Hawtin has given us such an eloquent word-picture of this in one of his past writings, we would be remiss not to include it here...

"Let the reader visualize the form of a man, standing with his feet on the earth, so tall that his head reaches the heavens above and so broad that his form fills the universe all in all.

Then let him examine the scene more closely and his eyes will see that this gigantic man, God's anointed Christ, is a man of many members just as the human body is one body with many members. Look closer still and you will now see that each and every member in that mighty form is an individual man, a son of God. The Head is the Man Jesus of Nazareth. The arms, the fingers, the toes, the heart, the nerves, the blood vessels---every member of Him that filleth all in all is an individual man, and every man is a son of God. And, if you will look still more closely, you will see an even greater wonder, for every man, every member, every son in that whole gigantic form is in the exact image of Jesus Christ, the Head, the first begotten Son of God. O, how I hope you can grasp the picture!" ---end quote. Isn't that beautiful?

This corporate Man, with it's federal Head, is God's answer to a groaning creation. In fact, as the Philips translation words it, "*The whole creation is on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own*" (Rom. 8:19)! And while there is an acknowledgment of our identification with Christ as members of His body; and while there is an awareness that, as members of the same body, we are joint-heirs together with Him, Sonship is NOT the preaching of who we are. "*We preach not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord...*" (II Cor. 4:5). If there's one thing we'd like to convey in this short statement of our faith, it's this:

**Sonship declares that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father!**

Beloved, God has a people, who have heard a certain sound. While others have followed after curious noises in the wilderness, they have refused...and have not been willing to accept just anything anyone has had to say concerning sonship. Oh, yes, they, too, have heard those "other sounds". They have heard the notes which have, at first impression, sounded very attractive and appealing to the natural ear. But they've held out for the original message which they first received from the Lord, and will not accept a counterfeit. This unique company is counting all things but dung, that they might win Christ...and are steadily pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high call of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord! Hallelujah! Press on, O ye saints of the Most High! We've come too far to turn back now!

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