

Words of Faith

THE NEWSLETTER OF FAITH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Volume 4, Number 2
April – June 2004

Inside This Issue:

African Cross-Bearers, 4
Annual Meeting, 1
Biblical Truth, 5
DaVinci Code, 8
Legacy of Faith Update, 7
Lord's Supper, 2
Mission Work, 1
New Members, 6
Science and Faith, 3

Downstairs, Upstairs: Annual Meeting 2004

On a midwinter's eve these hardy travelers did commence their journey, descending to the regions of middle earth for the adventures that did await them there.

And they did come first to the Delectable Mountains, whose peaks did mark the entrance to this strange and wonderful land. Up, up they climbed, to the highest summits, where all manner of meats and cheeses their eyes did behold, spread abundantly upon rounded crusts, and in manner so enticing that they did observe signs urging them to limit their gathering so as to provide sustenance for those that were to follow.

And after traversing the heights they descended into a plain, upon which plants of various kinds did present themselves, all yellow and green and red in color, and all very healthy to behold. And these did beckon for the travelers to partake, although verily some of the younger pilgrims did willingly

forego, that they might save room for that which was to follow.

From whence the travelers went on yet further, and came upon abundance of delicacies most fair, and containing much sugar, and sweet to the taste, some round, some square in shape, but all most agreeable to the tongue, and many supplied with chocolate most generous.

Upon making their way thus far, the wayfarers came yet to another wondrous sight, and behold elixirs of various color, and in urns of transparent nature, some wrought with material most pliable, and many possessing an effervescence delightful to the nostrils, and tingling the innards with each swallow.

Having then traveled the length of this fair land, and having gathered to themselves foodstuffs in abundance, the pilgrims did remove themselves to nearby meadows, ▶ 7

A glimpse of mission work in Czechoslovakia

This winter has been beautiful with plenty of snow and mild temperatures (around 30 degrees F). We had a wonderful time with our children here at Christmas. What a gift to be able to celebrate together God's love in Christ! One evening before Christmas when we were shopping at the Christmas market in Old Town Square, the snow was falling heavily past the Christmas lights and with the silhouette of the Tyn Church spires in the background. It was a winter wonderland

... We have compiled a list of books that we would like to see translated in Czech. Our first choice is *Shepherding a Child's Heart* by Tedd Tripp, one of the best books on child rearing. I have a copy of this book to a Czech friend who understands English well. He cannot say enough about the benefit this book has been to him in parenting his two little children. The entire process of translating and publishing a book costs about \$5,000... Would you pray with us that funds might become avail-

able. There are so few Czech books available that approach life from a reformed and covenantal perspective. This is a crucial need.

We had our first actual communion service this past Sunday. What a special time! The Lord seems to be bringing about the birth of a little church. We are so thankful and humbled to be a part of this.

... Continue to pray for us as we study this language. The complexity can seem overwhelming at times. Let me share just one little example: The English phrase "the little woman, the little women" has one change (woman to women); in Czech there are 26 possible changes in that phrase, depending on how it's used in the sentence, and this only one of many different patterns... There's a joke that goes something like this: "What language will we speak in heaven?" The answer is "Czech, of course, because it will take an eternity to learn." ♦

*Excerpted from the
February 2004 prayer
letter of Hans and
Gretchen Deutschmann,
PCA missionaries working
in Prague (their letter is
known as "Deutschmann's
Prague-ress Report")*

Biblical Worship: A Continuing Series

The Lord's Supper

By the Rev. Rob Rayburn

“What makes this meal so unique is the presence of Jesus Christ at the head of the table.”

There have been many changes made to the Sunday worship of Faith Presbyterian Church over the last twenty-six years.

Early on, for example, we changed the hymnal. In 1986 we added kneelers to our pews so that some of our prayers could be taken on our knees. Since we returned to the sanctuary after the remodel in the Spring and Summer of 1991, the ministers have worn robes while leading worship.

But though these and other changes were of great consequence and, we believe, have wonderfully enriched our worship together on the Lord's Day, without question the greatest changes have come in our practice of the Lord's Supper.

Faith Presbyterian Church was, as most evangelical Presbyterian congregations, long used to infrequent communion, usually four times each year, generally the practice of the Presbyterian church since the later 16th century. Early in my ministry we began to observe the Supper twice a month and, after the remodel, began to observe the sacrament every Lord's Day, alternating between the morning and the evening services.

A few years ago we abandoned the Reformed church's long-standing custom of pew communion and introduced the practice that now prevails in our services. (The justification for those changes was given in a series of evening messages that can now be found on the church's website.) I am happy to say that all of these changes, with very few exceptions, have been greeted with enthusiasm by the congregation and that there continues to be the widespread conviction that our present practice of the Lord's Supper has been an improvement in many ways.

In all of these changes we have reconnected with the central tradition of Christian worship, becoming less specifically Reformed and more generally Christian in our *practice*, if not in our *doctrine* of the Lord's Supper. On the other hand, particularly in regard to the Lord's Supper, our worship now much more closely resembles the liturgy developed by John Calvin than it does the worship service of Scottish and English Puritanism from which the worship of American

Presbyterianism descended. For us now, as for Calvin then, the Lord's Supper occupies a much larger place in our Lord's Day worship than it has occupied for centuries in the worship of evangelical Presbyterianism. This reestablishment of the Lord's Supper as the central act of Christian worship on the Lord's Day is hardly peculiar to us. Many Reformed and Presbyterian churches have made some, if not all, of the changes that we have made, both in the frequency of observance and in the method of distributing the elements. The new emphasis upon the Lord's Supper has been the leading edge of a reformation in Reformed and Presbyterian worship, at least in some circles, that has been underway now for several decades.

A meal is several different things in our experience. It is, of course, the means of our bodies receiving the nourishment they require. But, as food is not only nutritious but tasty, not only a necessity but a pleasure, a meal is something that we enjoy. A meal is also, at least widely in our experience, the principal occasion of daily fellowship, especially with members of our own family. It is an occasion by which our family bond is signified and sealed. The Lord's Supper is all of those things and more. Of course, what makes this meal so unique is the presence of Jesus Christ at the head of the table. The Bible teaches us in many ways that the Lord's Supper is a means of God's grace to us. He works through it to sanctify and bless us. He is present to make the Supper not a natural but a supernatural event. This is beautifully expressed in the best of our communion hymns.

“Here, O my Lord, I see Thee face to face...”

“Amidst us our Belovèd stands...”

When Jesus says that the bread we eat is his body and the wine we drink is his blood, he is telling us that our faith is nourished at the Lord's Supper. The old writers used to remind us that we must come to the Supper with two mouths: the mouth of our body with which we receive the bread and wine and the mouth of our soul, that is our faith, by which we feed upon Christ and his benefits. Our faith is certainly nourished by

that recollection of holy things that takes place in the Supper, but the nourishment is more than that. Our faith is also nourished by the ministry of the Holy Spirit who works in and through the Supper to sanctify us in spirit, soul, and body. Only eternity will tell what a great difference the Lord's Supper, as the hearing of the Word and the offering of prayer, has made to each and every Christian life.

But, as the Scripture often says, the Supper is also a feast, a celebration. It was the chief defect of pew communion that it tended quite powerfully to obscure this dimension of the communion. If bread is ordinary nourishment, wine is the drink of feasts. A feast is a celebratory meal appointed to remember great events and to increase joy. The Supper, as a feast, serves both of those purposes. It celebrates the Savior's victory over sin and death and restores to us the joy of our salvation: "This do in remembrance of me." But feasts are also anticipations. A wedding feast, for example, is the celebration of what will be, not what has been. And so the Lord's Supper is an anticipation of the wedding supper of the Lamb and the consummation of salvation when Jesus comes again.

The Supper, Sunday by Sunday, centers us where we must always self-consciously stand, between the Lord's first coming and his second.

*"And thus that dark betrayal-night
With the last advent we unite,
By one blest chain of loving rite,
Until he come."*

And, finally, as the Apostle Paul made a great point of saying, the Supper is an enacted demonstration of our unity in the body of Christ. We gather at one table to eat the same food and drink the same drink. Many of us love the practice of communing at the front of the church precisely because it fosters such a visible display of this unity, this brotherhood, this family bond.

This sacred ritual, so often repeated, will be a crucial means of deepening our faith in Christ, of increasing our joy in his salvation, and of forging ever stronger bonds of love between us and him and between us and one another. Or so it will be if Christ by his Holy Spirit is working in and through it. And he will, as he promised, if we are careful to partake with faith, with hope, and with love. ♦

Book Review

Science and Faith: Friends or Foes?

Review by Dr. Robert Rogland

Book by C. John Collins (Crossway, 2003)

Jack Collins, professor of biblical languages at Covenant Theological Seminary, is a former member of this congregation known to many of us. He has written several articles and one earlier book (THE GOD OF MIRACLES) on Bible-science themes. In this, his most recent book, Collins deals comprehensively with the relationship between biblical faith and the natural world. He takes up such issues as the biblical doctrine of creation, the nature of the creation days, the age of the earth, human nature as it was created and as it is now after the fall, the effects of the fall on nature, divine providence in the rule of nature, natural revelation, the biblical view of the environment, cosmology and geology, biological evolution and Darwinism, Intelligent Design, the human and social sciences, and the culture wars between those with a biblical world view and a naturalistic one.

SCIENCE AND FAITH is a superb treatment of virtually all the Bible-science issues one could raise. Besides being comprehensive, it is written

by a theologian and Bible scholar who knows his science: a graduate of MIT, Collins was an engineer before studying for the ministry. In addition to being knowledgeable, he is an excellent communicator. The book does not talk down to the reader, nor is it pitched over the heads of non-scientists. Collins takes time to define and illustrate the terms and concepts he uses. Any adult in this congregation would understand this book, even the science-shy.

Perhaps the strongest point of the book is Collins' ability to deal authoritatively with the text of Genesis. He is one of the country's foremost Hebrew scholars, and his skill as an exegete of the Hebrew text is evident. This is not to say that all Hebraists will agree with all of his interpretations. For example, Collins views Genesis 1:1 as describing the initial creation event rather than as a summary of the whole account. He views Genesis 2:5-6 as a transition between the account of the whole creation given in chapter 1 and a close-up view of the creation of man ▶ 7

"The reader may come to this book disagreeing with one or more of Jack's conclusions, but his careful arguments require equally careful consideration."

The African Cross-Bearers

By John Ssebalugga
Kalimi

John Ssebalugg Kalimi, a priest of the Anglican Church of Uganda, is rector of St. George's Church in Dallas, Texas. Reproduced with permission from the October 2003 issue of Touchstone: a magazine of mere Christianity (www.touchstonemag.com).

Winston Churchill used to refer to the lush and fertile country of Uganda as “the pearl of Africa.” It is one of the very few African countries, if not the only one, whose political leadership took the bold step of inviting missionaries to come and teach their people the Christian faith. “I and my people are in total spiritual darkness. I invite missionaries to bring the light of the Gospel to my kingdom,” wrote King Muresa I of Buganda.

In 1877 Anglican missionaries from the Church Missionary Society (CMS) arrived in the country, followed two years later by Catholic missionaries from the society of the White Fathers. The arrival of the Catholic missionaries was not so pleasing to the CMS missionaries, and constant rivalry, politicking, and unnecessary bickering characterized the primary stages of church planting in Uganda, to the amazement of the king, who had invited the missionaries to bring light to his country.

Suspicious of their intentions, the king lost trust in the new religion, and although he blessed the missionaries’ evangelistic campaigns around the kingdom, he never totally committed himself. Mwanga, the very young son who succeeded his father as king of Buganda, was equally suspicious of the missionaries’ intentions.

Christianity took firm root nevertheless, and young converts serving at the court of the young king began to decline to participate in some of the cultural ceremonies, believing them unchristian. To do so was unheard of, and whoever was found guilty of such obedience could be condemned to death. The boys renounced any form of cultural practice that involved worshipping anything other than God the Father of Jesus Christ.

Since such disobedience was quite unheard of in the Buganda Kingdom, the king and his chiefs took it personally, assuming that the boys were deliberately despising the king for being relatively young compared to his late father. After a series of incidents of continued “disobedience,” the king summoned the young converts and told them to either renounce their Christian faith and live, or to continue professing their faith and be killed.

Despite various interventions by friends and parents to convince the boys to change their minds, 45 boys and men chose not to betray their newly found Friend. “You have the capacity to kill the body but not the soul,” they reminded the king. “We would rather betray the earthly king than the heavenly King of Kings.”

The climax of the martyrdom came on June 3, 1886, at a place called Namugongo. Over thirty young boys and men, both Roman Catholics and Anglicans, were burnt to death by being thrown, one after another, on the fire made out of the firewood they had been forced to collect from the nearby forest. These boys did not change their mind despite various attempts to make them think otherwise. As the fires consumed them, they sang

*O that I had wings of Angels
Here to spread and heavenward fly
I would seek the gates of Zion
Far beyond the starry sky*

The news of the martyrdom spread like wildfire. The king and his advisors were greatly amazed at the courage with which these boys gave away their lives as they unwaveringly sang to their death. Thus, that which was meant for evil was instead turned into a tool for evangelism, so that shortly thereafter, the majority of the chiefs converted to Christianity. The chiefs wanted to explore the mystery that had given such courage to the young boys. Conversions multiplied.

Today Namugongo is a popular symbol of the church triumphant. It is a place where Christians converge every June 3 as pilgrims, coming to celebrate a faith built on the blood of these young converts.

We may not be threatened by persecution in this country, but revisiting the issues of martyrdom forces us to examine the depth of our faith and assess how much we are willing to surrender for the sake of Christ. We are called upon to remember those other Christians in other parts of the world who suffer for their faith. We are called upon to pray for many people around the world who are being persecuted. Our prayer to God is that they may be faithful even unto death and receive the crown of eternal life. ♦

Is the Bible literally true?

Christians have often been criticized for interpreting biblical truth too literally.

This thinking may take the form of incredulity: “Do you mean to tell me that you believe that the Bible is *literally* true?” The insinuation is that no really intelligent person, in this day of scientific and rational thought, could possibly be expected to do so. A literal interpretation of the Bible is the province of uneducated yokels, sentimental women, gullible children, and others who cannot tell the difference between literal truth and figurative or other kinds of truth.

By literal truth, of course, critics do not generally mean the moral teachings of the Old and New Testaments, or the practical wisdom scattered throughout its pages, or the heart-felt prayers of the saints that have been recorded, or even most of the basic historical narratives that comprise a significant portion of the pages of Scripture.

They rather mean the claims of literal truth when the Bible speaks of things of a supernatural nature: The teaching that God was born as a human being in the person of Jesus Christ. The claim, made by Jesus Himself and then His followers, that he was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy stating that a Saviour would be sent into the world centuries later. The assertion that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, and that His death on the cross was the payment for the sins of the world. And above all else, the claim that Jesus Christ rose physically from the dead, demonstrating God’s power over death, and that He holds out the promise of eternal life to all who believe in Him.

This is the kind of “literal truth” that many people, including many professing Christians, have a lot of trouble with. This kind of truth cannot be literal—it must be merely figurative, or imaginative, or interpretive—a kind of truth that means something other than what it actually seems to say.

But in such things the Bible is indeed literal truth, and not just because it claims to be, or because other people claim that it is. The Bible is literally true because it addresses needs that are also literally true, in and of themselves, and it provides an answer for these needs. It provides literal answers to literal questions, and in so doing does something that no other religious system can do or ever hope to do.

Much of life is literal truth. We are literal people who live literal lives, and at the end of these lives we die literal deaths—not figurative or symbolic ones. We live in literal bodies that get literally hurt and literally sick, and which eventually cease to function—literally. And I would venture to say that most people would very much like to go to a literal heaven when they die—not a make-believe or imaginary or fairy-tale heaven, but an actual, tangible, and real one.

So yes, Christians take the supernatural claims of the Bible literally—because that’s the way they were meant to be taken. Jesus was born literally, He died literally, He rose again literally, and will someday raise our bodies literally—and believers will forever live literally with Him in heaven.

And that is the honest, literal, gospel truth. ♦

By Ron Boydston

“Christians take the supernatural claims of the Bible literally.”

The 50 oldest PCA churches

The PCA was organized as a denomination in 1973, but one-third of the congregations predate that year.

The 50 oldest churches in the PCA were all formed before 1827, and 18 of them were organized in the 1700s.

The oldest PCA church, however, Fairfield Presbyterian Church in Fairton, NJ, was formed in 1680, a full 50 years before church #2 (Faggs

Manor Presbyterian, Cochranville PA, 1730), or #s 3 and 4 (First Presbyterian, Waynesboro GA, 1760, and First Presbyterian, Schenectady NY, 1760).

Nine of these church buildings, and the parsonage of a tenth, are also on the National Register of Historic Places. ♦

—from PCA News

New Members

JEANNE CERNY is the mother of three, grandmother of five, and moved to Sumner four years ago from Seattle, where she attended University Presbyterian Church. She loves to sew, walk, take care of her grandchildren, is a quilter, and attends the Bible study led by Mary Meyerhoff. "I'm astonished at how much support I've been given," she says of her friends at Faith. "I've found it to be very uplifting and gratifying." She found her way to Faith in part because of the church's name, which was identical to the Faith Presbyterian Church that she once attended in Cheraw, South Carolina.

AIMEE ORSBORN is a senior at Central Washington University, majoring in English, with a particular interest in British literature. She regularly comes home on weekends (a two-hour drive from Ellensburg) so she can attend ser-

vices at Faith. She grew up in a charismatic church, but started studying the Reformed faith and found that "it made so much more sense." She is the oldest daughter of Alan and Barbara Orsborn.

Baptisms

JACKSON ORSBORN ♦ ROMAN NUTTBROCK, son of Brian and Katy Nuttbrock ♦ SAMUEL HANKS, son of Mike and Tammy Hanks ♦ CHARLOTTE JIMMINK, daughter of Craig and Christina Jimmink

Departures

Ailsa Hopper

Child Professions

DANIEL MATSUDA, son of Isaac and Wendy Matsuda ♦ PHOEBE ZODROW, daughter of Chris and Sonja Zodrow ♦



Aimee Orsborn

Recent Prayer Meeting Speakers

Dale & Tamara Woodard, on their ministry in Ukraine, April 21 ♦ Dr. Tim Hutchison, on medical missions in Kenya, May 5 ♦ Glenn Beckwith, MTW missionary in Thailand, May 26 ♦ Blake Purcell, on his ministry in Russia, June 16



Brian and Katy Nuttbrock were written up in the newsletter six months ago, and their photo was scheduled to run at that time. It didn't. We are finally able to show them, with their sons Jadon and recent arrival Roman.

All My Tears

By Julie Miller

*When I go don't cry for me
In my Father's arms I'll be
The wounds this world left on my soul
Will all be healed, and I'll be whole*

*Sun and moon will be replaced
With the light of Jesus' face
And I will not be ashamed
For my Savior knows my name*

*(chorus)
It don't matter where they bury me
I'll be home and I'll be free
It don't matter where I lay
All my tears be washed away*

*Gold and silver blind the eyes
Temporary riches lie
Come and eat from heaven's store
Come and drink and thirst no more*

*So weep not for me, my friend
When my time below does end
For my life belongs to Him
Who will raise the dead again*

From the album "Broken Things," by Julie Miller. Copyright 1999 Hightone Records. Lyrics reprinted with permission.

Annual Meeting

1 ◀ where they did take their rest, and supped, and recounted among themselves their wondrous adventures, ere they did ascend again to the world above.



In the annual meeting which followed the pizza dinner, church members and others in attendance looked back over the year 2003 and forward to plans for 2004, with reports both written and verbal from various outreaches of the church.

The report of the clerk of session, Steve Jack, showed that average morning worship attendance had continued its steady climb upwards, averaged 509 for the two Sunday morning services. Evening service attendance averaged 334, the fourth year that evening attendance has been over the 300 mark. Sunday school attendance in similar fashion averaged 319, for its fifth year above the 300 fig-

ure, with prayer meeting attendance hovering around the 60 mark, where it has been for the past several years. The voting membership of the congregation increased from the previous year, from 317 to 345, and the number of families increased from 172 to 181.

A report from the high school, now in its 12th year of operation, showed a student body of 116 students, with 36% of the students also attending Faith Presbyterian Church. The DeSoto Scholarship Endowment, now grown to \$100,000, was mentioned, with special thanks given to Harry and Eunice DeSoto, and funded through the post-retirement substitute teaching of Eunice in memory of her parents.

The report from the ministers and elders took note of the 50th anniversary of the church in May of 2003, the homegoing of Elder Emeritus Ken Anderson in January 2003, and various events and

functions that have come to mark the church year at Faith.

The building committee report reviewed the planning for the new church addition, which will hopefully break ground in June 2004. Women in the Church, led this year by Carolyn Sugimoto, reviewed the seven large group meetings scheduled and other outreaches. Sunday School Superintendent Carol Pribyl's report summarized the church's Christian education activities and listed the speakers and teachers that serve in that capacity. The diaconate reported that gifts to the Deacon's Fund in 2003 had totaled more than \$34,000, which is used to minister both to non-Christians in the community as well as assistance to families within the congregation.

The 2004 budget was reviewed and approved, and the meeting concluded with a singing of Psalm 133. ♦

The DaVinci Code

8 ◀ Jesus was the human and divine Savior.

Brown does two things which we have sought to counter in our book: (1) negatively, he seeks to undermine the Bible, using the "findings" of modern New Testament "science"; (2) positively, he proposes a "new" spiritual agenda.

On the Internet are many postings declaring that Dan Brown's novel "gives permission" to abandon biblical Christianity. One sixteen-year-old girl said to a woman who was attempting to share the gospel: "*The Da Vinci Code* shows the Bible is a fake. Besides, I feel very comfortable with the spirituality I have discovered there. It fits me fine." She dismisses the Bible as bogus history,

and she is a convert to this "new spirituality"—the sad result of a powerful double whammy!

In order to be ready to give a reason for the hope that is within us, it is my belief that Christians need to read this novel to become acquainted with what our neighbors are now believing. For when this novel and its movie version have finished with America, evangelism will never be the same. ♦

Peter Jones is founder and director of Christian Witness to a Pagan Planet. Reprinted with permission of PCANews (www.pcanews.com), the Web magazine of the Presbyterian Church in America.

Book Review

3 ◀ given in chapter 2; some others (non-evangelicals) view Genesis 1 and 2 as giving two separate creation accounts. And he views the days of creation as "anthropomorphic days": "God's days," not necessarily equivalent to our days. In this he is neither a 24-hour calendar day creationist, a day-age creationist, nor an advocate of the so-called framework hypothesis.

The reader may come to this book disagreeing with one or more of Jack's conclusions, but his careful arguments require equally careful consideration.

SCIENCE AND FAITH is written from a decidedly evangelical, Bible-believing perspective. It's not hyperbole to say that he writes in the tradition of Hodge and Warfield but with a mastery of modern scientific concepts and facts and an awareness of contemporary Bible-science issues. I would recommend this book with highest praise to anyone who wants to develop a biblical worldview on science. ♦

Legacy of Faith update

The first pledges for the new building were due at the end of April. Church officers have also been studying borrowing options for the addition, and a congregational meeting is scheduled for May 9 to hear their recommendations. ♦

Faith Presbyterian Church
620 South Shirley Street
Tacoma, Washington 98465

Phone: 253-752-7601
Fax: 253-752-5992
E-mail: fpc@faithtacoma.org
<http://www.faithtacoma.org>

Non-Profit Org.
U. S. Postage
PAID
Tacoma, WA
Permit No. 1497

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Church Calendar

April 30: Classical concert ♦
May 13: CHS Choir Concert ♦
May 21: CHS Art Show ♦ **May 28:**
CHS Commencement at Faith
Presbyterian Church ♦ **June 15-18:**
General Assembly, Pittsburgh ♦
June 18: Rayburn/Wyckoff wed-
ding ♦ **June 24-27:** Presbytery High
School Summer Conference,
Canby OR

The DaVinci Code and its impact on evangelism

By Peter Jones

Irenaeus, an elder of the Christian church of Lyons in Gaul (France), went to Rome in A.D. 177. He returned to discover that forty of his fellow church members, including the old pastor, Potinus, had been executed by the pagan Roman authorities. He became the pastor, and spent the rest of his life protecting the flock both from the pagan authorities on the outside, and denouncing the Gnostic "Christians" and their heretical writings on the inside.

In our day, the once "Christian" society of modern-day America now looks more and more like pagan Rome. Indeed, not since pagan Rome has homosexuality been accepted in history as normal behavior, but even in pagan Rome, there was no such thing as "gay marriage." In our liberated, secular (though actually religiously-pagan) society, Christianity

is silenced and pushed to the margins. That is on the outside. On the inside, we face serious apostasy. We face a form of Christianity that is nothing more than a new, virulent strain of the heresy Irenaeus labored to denounce.

Recently I was asked to co-author with Dr. Jim Garlow a response to the wildly-successful novel, *The DaVinci Code*. I have felt that in writing this book we were doing what Irenaeus was doing eighteen hundred years ago. He was facing the seductive power of the Gnostic texts when they first appeared. Those same texts have recently been discovered and translated into English. They are now being used by apostate biblical scholars, especially those associated with The Jesus Seminar, by radical feminist theologians and now by Dan Brown's clever yarn to undermine the very historicity of the New Testament.

In the past, our Christian witness was

much simpler. We could cite the Bible as the clincher of our arguments, and non-believers would accept or reject the Bible's affirmations as applicable or not to their lives. *The DaVinci Code* relativizes the biblical witness to Jesus. It claims as "fact" that the New Testament is a secondary and later account; that the true Jesus was a Gnostic; and that the earliest "Christian" writings were the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas and the hypothetical document Q.

Says one of the main characters in *The Da Vinci Code*: "Many scholars claim that the early Church literally stole Jesus from His original followers, hijacking His human message, shrouding it in an impenetrable cloak of divinity, and using it to expand their own power" (p.233).

In other words, the biblical witness to Jesus is an imposture, a later inaccurate imposition of a view composed by patriarchal males who falsely believed ▶ 7