

# WORD OF TRUTH

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## GOD MANIFEST IN THE FLESH?

BY CHARLES WOODRUFF

"God was manifest in the flesh". Is this the *correct* reading of 1 Timothy 3:16? Most of the modern translations in following Greek critics, including Westcott and Hort, have the verse "He who was manifest in the flesh", not showing directly that the "He" is God Almighty. But the Authorized King James Version reads "*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*"

English versions before the King James (such as the Geneva and Bishops Bibles), read "God". Of better known modern versions, only the NKJV, MKJB, 21st Century King James, Darby, Young's Literal Translation, New Millennium Bible and English Majority Text have "God". The rest including NIV, NASB, ESV, NRSV, RSV, ASV, Phillips, and *most* others go with "He". Scrivener's Greek New Testament (1894, Textus Receptus), has *θεος* (Theos = God).

This is not the only verse that has controversy regarding the proper translation. It is one of the most important, but there are many. My son, Mark, presently doing a verse by verse exposition on 1 John came across 1 John 5:7, which may be the most controversial verse of all. Most of the modern critics say it does not belong in the Bible. Yet both of these verses are so important regarding the deity of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of the Trinity. Another important controversy regards the last twelve verses of Mark. These are substantial verses on the resurrection of Christ, along with the Great Commission, as well as apostolic signs and confirmation. Then John 8:1-12 is questioned because (supposedly), Jesus was too easy with an adulterous woman. Yet His answer "*He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her*" (John 8 :7b) indicates clearly that Christ did not condone sin. After all, Christ is the *giver* of the law and it requires **both** man and woman caught in the act of adultery to be stoned.

Now my question and discussion on 1 Timothy 3:16 does not mean that I regard Christians who use versions that omit that verse as inferior or as unbelievers. No, I only believe they are the losers for letting the higher critics convince them that we can "throw out" a number of verses because of "older manuscripts". It is said that Constantin von Tischendorf found **Codex Sinaiticus** in 1844 in a waste basket in the Convent of St. Catherine on Mount Sinai. **Codex Vaticanus** was found in 1481 in the Vatican Library in Rome where it still is held. The following scholars have this to say regarding it: "The corrupt and unreliable nature of Codex B is best summed up by one who has thoroughly examined them, John W Burgon: '*The impurity of the text exhibited by these codices is not a question of opinion but fact...In the Gospels alone, Codex B(Vatican) leaves out words or whole clauses no less than 1,491 times. It bears traces of careless transcriptions on every page...*'"

According to The Westminster Dictionary of the Bible, "*It should be noted . . . that there is no*

*prominent Biblical (manuscripts) in which there occur such gross cases of misspelling, faulty grammar, and omission, as in (Codex) B."*

These two codexes were the basis of the most of 36,000 changes from the majority text. These admittedly old, and very rare manuscripts are the working basis of the changes against the thousands of copies of later manuscripts known as majority text. The theory is "older is better". It ain't necessarily so! Could it be that these obscure texts were obscure because they were corrupt texts meant to be discarded? I am no Greek scholar, *that is certain!* But, using common sense in light of the statements by John Burgon, and the *Westminster Dictionary*, not to mention statements by many others, including David Brown, one of the writers of the *Jamison, Faussett and Brown Commentary*. He says in this article regarding Vaticanus : "The entire manuscript has been mutilated...every letter has been run over with a pen, making exact identification of many of the characters impossible. Dr. David Brown observes: '*I question the 'great witness' value of any manuscript that has been overwritten, doctored, changed and added to for more than 10 centuries.*'" (The Great Unicals).

There is so much more information you can study on this subject, and if you are interested just email me for some site information. I don't know about you, but I have told some of my friends that I am too old to change versions now. Some of the language is difficult, although poetic, in the KJV, I know that. If I was going to "update", I would use the NKJV or the New Millennium Bible. I would not go to a Bible that did not use majority text as its basis. If you are not tired of reading, you may want to read the following on *God Manifest in the Flesh*.

#### **NOTES:JOHN CALVIN FROM HIS COMMENTARY ON 1 TIMOTHY 3:16.**

"'God manifested in the flesh.' The Vulgate's translator (i.e Jerome, ed.), by leaving out the name of God, refers what follows to 'the mystery,' but altogether unskillfully and inappropriately, as will clearly be seen on a bare perusal, though he has Erasmus on his side, who, however, destroys the authority of his own views, so that it is unnecessary for me to refute it. *All the Greek copies undoubtedly agree* in this rendering, 'God manifested in the flesh.' But granting that Paul did not express the name of God, still any one who shall carefully examine the whole matter, will acknowledge that the name of Christ ought to be supplied. For my own part, *I have no hesitation in following the reading which has been adopted in the Greek copies.* In calling the manifestation of Christ, such as he afterwards describes it, a 'great mystery,' the reason is obvious; for this is 'the height, depth, and breadth of wisdom,' which he has elsewhere mentioned, (Ephesians 3:18,) by which all our senses must unavoidably be overwhelmed."

"Let us now examine the various clauses in their order. He could not have spoken more appropriately about the person of Christ than in these words, "God manifested in the flesh." First, we have here an express testimony of both natures; for he declares at the same time that Christ is true God and true man. Secondly, he points out the distinction between the two natures, when, on the one hand, he calls him God, and, on the other, expresses his "manifestation, in the flesh." Thirdly, he asserts the unity of the person, when he declares, that it is one and the same who was God, and who has been manifested in the flesh."

"Thus, *by this single passage*, the true and orthodox faith is powerfully defended against Arius, Marcion, Nestorius, and Eutyches. There is also great emphasis in the contrast of the two words,

God in flesh. How wide is the difference between God and man! And yet in Christ we behold the infinite glory of God united to our polluted flesh in such a manner that they become one.”

“By the word flesh Paul declares that Christ was true man, and that he was clothed with our nature; but, at the same time, by the word manifested, he shows that there were two natures. We must not imagine a Jesus Christ who is God, and another Jesus Christ who is man; *but we must know that he alone is both God and man.* Let us distinguish his two natures, so as to know that this is the Son of God who is our brother. Now I have said that God permits the ancient heresies, with which the church was troubled, to be revived in our time, in order to excite us to greater activity. But, on the other hand, let us observe, that the devil is constrained to do his utmost to overthrow this article of faith, because he sees clearly that it is the foundation of our salvation. For if we have not that mystery of which Paul speaks, what will become of us? We are all children of Adam, and therefore we are accursed; we are in the pit of death; in short, we are deadly enemies of God, and thus there is nothing in us but condemnation and death, till we know that God came to seek us, and that, because we could not rise to him, he came down to us. Till we have known this, are we not more than wretched? For this reason the Devil wished, as far as he could, to destroy that knowledge, or rather to mix it with his lies, so as to be perverted.

On the other hand, when we see that there is such majesty in God, how shall we dare to approach unto Him, seeing that we are full of misery? *We must therefore come to this union of the majesty of God with human nature.* And thus, in every respect, till we have known the divine majesty that is in Jesus Christ, and our human weakness which he hath taken upon him, it is impossible for us to have any hope, or to be capable of having recourse to the goodness of God, or of having the boldness to call upon him, and return to him. In a word, we are entirely shut out from the heavenly kingdom, the gate is shut against us, and we cannot approach to it in any way whatever.” ( some emphasis mine(cw)

### **IT WILL TAKE YOUR BREATH AWAY- BY WYLIE FULTON**

A minister said a church member of his was looking forward to their completed multi-million-dollar building program. She stated, "When people cross the overhead bridge coming into town, they will see a church so beautiful it will take their breath away!" When we heard this statement, the thought came immediately: "*My soul!* We've already seen *that* church!" "And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Revelation 2 1:9-11; read the following verses).

That true church of God is not in a building or a "sanctuary" built by men, but it is beautifully arrayed in the righteousness of Christ, for it is all the redeemed sinners of Adam's fallen race, all of God's elect. And a sight of *that* beautiful church, clothed in the robes of His righteousness - *it will* "take your breath away" to see that beauty.

A large church in Charlotte NC built a "sanctuary" to the tune of about 30 million dollars, bank payments on which are about a quarter-million dollars per month. With a vast interior, audaciously decorated in pink, mostly glass exterior walls and yet that temple builder pastor claims to have been converted under a sound evangelical minister.

Another church in Charlotte, a so-called Baptist church, erected a gigantic Oneness Prayer Tower stretching high above the community - at a cost of more than four million. Other

Baptist churches in Greenville, in Spartanburg, and yes, in your city as well, *boast* that their steeples are the tallest metropolitan landmarks! It is significant that the old prophet cried, "Israel hath forgotten his Maker, and buildeth temples" (Hosea 8:14). They had counted the truth of God and His holy law as "a strange thing", and the Lord promised to send a fire to devour them. Whenever spiritual worship degenerates, the temple building sets in.

Today, theorizing that the building is a "sanctuary" for God, the competitors for giant structures continue on - never realizing that such things are utterly foreign to the New Testament concept of simple worship, mostly in homes; for the beauty of the Church is the people clothed in white raiment, in bloodwashed garments. These are the precious sheep of His pasture who seek to "follow the Good Shepherd" (John 10), not erect the largest structure in His name.

Glory to God? that church is called a "city", but it is *people*, God's own elect ones. They are a building of God, but not the result of a contractor's, a brick mason's or a carpenter's creative genius. Ah, *far better* than any building made by hands is that body of Christ. That church which He hath redeemed with His own blood is the bride, the Lamb's wife. You must come to this spiritual application in order to truly behold our Lord's church in all its "breath-taking" beauty. And by His grace which was not bestowed in vain, with each of the Lord's little ones in the kingdom, we have been blessed to behold the Lord's church.

Precious is this Old Testament picture of my Lord's church: "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge. . . . Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments. Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:2-3, 11-14).

And as a personal note, we cannot close without bowing in praise for that grace which effectually called me into the fold, even to the "House of our God," to the Saviour of poor sinners - yea, and "to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 12:23-24). You can have all of man's "building contests", for they are mere toys of the earth to us poor worms who have seen the King in His beauty, and been blessed to be made "beautiful" in His righteousness. Now here is a beauty that really will "take your breath away!"

**My friend Wylie Fulton has a blog:** <http://fountainsofgrace.blogspot.com>  
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