



Storming Fortresses

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh,
but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.

2 CORINTHIANS 10:4

Vol. 20; No. 6

©Copyright, 2001

June, 2001

The Incarnation:

Christ became what
we are that he might
make us what he is.

Athanasius

Christ took our flesh
upon him that he
might take our sins
upon him.

Thomas Watson

The Son of God be-
came the Son of Man
in order that the sons
of men might become
the sons of God.

John Blanchard

Remember, Christ
was not a deified man,
neither was he a hu-
manized God. He was
perfectly God and at
the same time perfect-
ly man.

C.H. Spurgeon

WWJD Rhymes with Heresy Part 1: The Incarnation

By

Murray McLeod-Boyle

Introduction

There is little doubt that we live in a very shallow age. Most things are distilled and reduced to the lowest common denominator. Take for example the craze of having mission statements. Many places of business proudly display these statements in which, in a nutshell, they try to convey the very essence and ideals of their activities. Many sound really good. Yet, we are left wondering, how many people have been left bewildered when the service they receive bears no resemblance to that which is written in the mission

statement? Certainly, we have experienced this and there is little doubt that others have too.

When confronted with these situations we feel defrauded because our expectations are not met. At this point we meet the problem of the cliché. In reducing anything, some elements are lost. Checks, balances and dividing lines are passed over. Whilst the cliché may posit the highest ideals, it will never reflect the truth.

This then leads us to consider the use of mission statements and, more particularly, clichés within the Church. Whilst these are not particularly evil in and

of themselves, we must be very wary of using them. Why? Because these have the potential to be misused. After all, the motor that drives this juggernaut is the same one that powered the old bumper-sticker theology.

To illustrate, let us first look at some of the old bumper-stickers. "Smile God loves you." Show us where this one finds any Biblical justification. Only universalists can claim this to be true. "God loves you whether you want him to or not." Now, how does that verse go? "Jacob I loved and Esau I hated" (Malachi 1:2-3; Romans 9:13). So much for that!

STORMING FORTRESSES is published monthly by REFORMATION MINISTRIES, a non-denominational organisation committed to maintaining and implementing Biblical truth as reasserted by the Reformers.

Subscriptions run from July 1 to June 30. Pro rata rates apply at other times. Current rates are as follows:

- \$40.00 Australia and New Zealand, (GST. Incl.)
- \$75.00 United States of America,
- \$ 60.00 All Other Countries.

Amounts payable in Australian currency. Cheques made payable to:

REFORMATION MINISTRIES,
PO Box 1656,
THURINGOWA CENTRAL,
QLD 4817

Donations gratefully accepted. Free 3 month trial subscription upon request. As a ministry, we also seek to make stock items available to those undergoing hardship. Enquiries most welcome.

©Copyright, 2010. All material published in STORMING FORTRESSES remains the property of its author.

Permission to reprint material from STORMING FORTRESSES in any format, apart from short quotations for review purposes, must be obtained from the copyright owner.

“Christians are not perfect just forgiven.” This one certainly has an element of truth to it. However, it is often used to justify the “carnal Christian” theory which is itself an error. Christians are not perfect, yet they are perfect. This leads to the question of the “now” and “not yet.” In Christ we have a perfect standing before our God and Father. In Christ nothing is lacking. Yet it is also true that we are being conformed to the image of Christ. The work of salvation is complete, fixed, unalterable. The work of salvation is sealed by the blood of Christ. However, the work of sanctification is a process. It is our growth from infant to man. It is the offering of our bodies to God as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). It is the working out of our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). Thus this bumper-sticker

needs serious qualification. Used to state a simple truth it may just be acceptable. Used to justify carnal Christianity, it is a falsehood. Used to deny sanctification, it is heresy.

The salient point in all this is that *errors are often disguised by very pious sounding terms or clichés.*

WWJD: The Next Generation

We have seen the likes of “Let go and let God.” We have heard faith described as “a leap into the arms of God.” Now we have WWJD. This movement, if it can be called that, probably uses the most pious language of all. For those who have not encountered WWJD before, the letters stand for “What Would Jesus Do?”

Now, as a Christian, is there any higher standard or more appropriate cliché than WWJD? After all, it simply asks us to pattern every action, emotion, and response on the life of Christ our redeemer. How can there be a down side to this? How can following Christ be detrimental? How can following in Christ’s footsteps lead us into error? Jesus is our example in everything, is He not?

That last question is an excellent one, one which deserves an answer. It is a question that every Christian should be able to answer as it drastically impacts upon our lives.

Is Jesus our example in everything? No, He is not. The WWJDites, following their predecessors, have once again bound a half truth into a whole truth to make

it a pious sounding non-truth.

Christology

Now, before the heresy trial is convened we would like to explain this position. To do this we must look at the topic of Christology, or the doctrine of Christ. Mistakes at this point lead to fundamental errors which will permeate to every facet of Christianity. Like poison these errors will be pumped around the body killing cells and wreaking havoc wherever they venture. Like poison the effects are often not realised until it is too late. Therefore, we must seek with every effort to produce right thought and doctrine at this point.

Christianity has held to the central doctrine of Jesus Christ as the Theanthropic¹ man for a millennium and a half.² In the early Church, councils worked hard at formulating Biblical doctrines so that the Sheep would be fed and the wolves identified and destroyed. Sadly, bumper-sticker creedism has destroyed much of their work. Their legacy is all but forgotten. Consequently, we stand upon the brink. Having forgotten the truth, we are bound to commit error. Enter the WWJDites.

In 451 AD the Council of Chalcedon formulated the definitive creed on Jesus the Theanthropos. Said they:

Therefore, following the holy Fathers, we all with one accord teach men to acknowledge one and the same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, at once complete in Godhead and com-

1. Theo = God + Anthropos = Man. Jesus is the God-man. This term is preferable to saying that Jesus is God and man in that it brings the union into greater intimacy. Using the term “God and man” can easily lead to the idea that Jesus is not a single person. The heresies of old viewed the Logos as taking on a phantasm in order to “appear” as a man. Others viewed the man as being partly or wholly consumed by the Logos. For a survey of some of these heretical positions see: Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology* (3 vols., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1989) 2:397 ff.
2. It is a millennium and a half since it was formalised in a creed. The truth of this doctrine is much older and attested to throughout Scripture.

plete in manhood, truly God and truly man, consisting also of a reasonable soul and body; of one substance with the Father as regards his Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards his manhood; like us in all respects, apart from sin; as regards his Godhead, begotten of the Father before the ages, but yet as regards his manhood begotten, for us men and our salvation, of Mary the Virgin, the God-bearer; one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, Only-begotten, recognized IN TWO NATURES, WITHOUT CONFUSION, WITHOUT CHANGE, WITHOUT DIVISION, WITHOUT SEPARATION; the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word, Lord Jesus Christ; even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of him, and our Lord Jesus himself taught us, and the creed of the Fathers has handed down to us.”³

The essential point that must be understood is this: **Jesus Christ is one man who partakes of two natures.**

Our Fathers went to great trouble to spell this out. Importantly, they added the phrase and qualifications, “in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation.” In this, our Fathers stressed the uniqueness of

Christ and laid to rest many of the heresies of the day. The eternal Logos did not consume the man, nor was Jesus a mere apparition. He was the Theanthropos.

Two Natures a Necessity

The importance of this cannot be understated. It was an absolute necessity for Jesus to partake of both natures if He were to be the saviour of the world—covenantally speaking. Berkhof understood this point well. With great clarity and signal purpose he writes:

It appears from the preceding that, in the present day, many do not recognize the necessity of assuming two natures in Christ. To them Jesus is but a man; yet at the same time they feel constrained to ascribe to Him the value of a God, or to claim divinity for Him in virtue of the immanence of God in Him, or of the indwelling Spirit.⁴ The necessity of the two natures in Christ follows from what is essential to the Scriptural doctrine of the atonement.... Since man sinned, it was necessary that the penalty should be borne by man. Moreover, the paying of the penalty involved suffering of body and soul, such as only man is capable of bearing. It was necessary that Christ should assume human nature, not only with all its essential properties, but also with all the infirmities to which it is liable after the fall, and should thus descend to the depths of degradation to which man had fallen. At the same time, He had to be a sin-

less man, for a man who was himself a sinner and who had forfeited his own life, certainly could not atone for others. Only such a truly human Mediator, who had experimental knowledge of the woes of mankind and rose superior to all temptations, could enter sympathetically into all the experiences, the trials, and the temptations of man, and be a perfect human example for His followers. [Similarly] ... it was absolutely essential that the Mediator should also be very God. This was necessary, in order that (1) He might bring a sacrifice of infinite value and render perfect obedience to the law of God; (2) He might bear the wrath of God redemptively, that is, so as to free others from the curse of the law; and (3) He might be able to apply the fruits of His accomplished work to those who accepted Him by faith. Man with his bankrupt life can neither pay the penalty of sin nor render perfect obedience to God. He can bear the wrath of God and, except for the redeeming grace of God, will have to bear it eternally, but he cannot bear it so as to open a way of escape.⁵

Let us drink deeply from this well so that we **do not miss its full import**. Jesus Christ is one man with two natures and it is so because it is a necessity for redemption. That is right, *a necessity for redemption*. In other words, it was not a consequence of redemption, it was a prerequisite to redemption.

3. Henry Bettenson, Documents of the Christian Church, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963; reprint, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988) 51-52.

4. Please note well Berkhof’s words. Here the presupposition is that Jesus is first and foremost a man. Something is then magically added. They either “ascribe” God to this man. Treat him as God on the basis of immanence or because they see him as indwelt by the Holy Spirit (a variation on point two). None of them ascribe Him as God the Son from eternity. We believe that this point needs to be noted for this trend is alive today. We have in our age a new liberalism, if you will. A doctrine that focuses primarily on the manliness of Jesus. People are writing about the emotions of Jesus; others are trying to psychoanalyse Jesus. This whole attempt is aimed at the manliness of a man and totally disregards the historic Christian position as declared by Chalcedon.

5. Louis Berkhof, Systematic Theology (1941; London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1966) 319. Headings and Bible references omitted.

Heresy 1: Not a Man

Allow me to illustrate this by referring to the heretical views. First, if Jesus the man had been totally, or even partly, consumed by the divine, then the salvific process would have stalled at turn one. If no man died, then the representative value intrinsic to the process is lost. Consider the teaching of Hebrews chapter 2:

¹⁴ Since then the children share in flesh and blood, *He Himself likewise also partook of the same*, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; ¹⁵ and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. ¹⁶ For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. ¹⁷ Therefore, *He had to be made like His brethren in all things*, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸ *For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*⁶

Jesus had to take to Himself the flesh and blood that clothed the children (v. 14). He had to be made like His brethren in all things (v. 17).⁷ As this text shows, there was no other way. A man had to die on behalf of man. There had to be true affinity and true representation so that Jesus could be a “merciful and faithful high priest.” If Jesus was not man, then we are still in our sin because there has been no substitutionary atonement.

The same thing can be said of the

heresy which claims that Jesus body was an apparition or phantasm.⁸ This position is so outrageous it hardly warrants discussion, but discuss it we shall so that no one will be left with any doubts. In order to highlight this stupidity, cast your mind back to the days of Jesus trial and crucifixion. Imagine these upstart soldiers. One comes to spit in Jesus face. Having worked up the appropriate substance in his mouth he takes aim and fires. Imagine his horror when the substance flies right through Jesus and hits his commanding officer in the eye. Another steps forward to beat Jesus. He takes an almighty swing, loses balance and falls over. Having expected to hit something solid he is utterly amazed to find that his fist connected with nothing. Later, the chief walks in and says, “What’s the hold up? We should be on our way to Golgotha by now?” Looking around he sees Jesus standing in a corner and the cross leaning against the wall. “What’s this!” he exclaims. “Get that cross on that man and get going.” Then sheepishly a junior officer walks forward. With a stutter in his voice he says, “Well, sir, there is a problem. Every time we put the cross on his shoulder it falls right through him. I have already sent three men to the sick bay with broken toes.”

This is what we would expect if Jesus was a mere phantasm. Moreover, it would have been a comical scene watching soldiers drive nails into nothing. Importantly, we ask, how was blood for an atonement shed by an apparition?

In contrast, the Scriptures show that Jesus was beaten, spat upon, and able to carry His cross. He was

nailed to the cursed tree and he did die. John declares:

What was from the beginning, *what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled*, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and *we have seen* and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—*what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also.*⁹

Thus, any view that carries an implicit or explicit denial of the true manhood of Jesus, robs man of having a true representative head who stood in our stead in order to purchase salvation.

Heresy 2: Not God

Second, if the divinity of Jesus is denied, then we are left with nothing more than a well intentioned man who tried to purchase salvation for his kind. He would, no doubt, go down in history as the greatest philanthropist that ever lived. Unfortunately, he and all his kind would burn in the fires of hell forever, receiving in their bodies the just penalty for their rebellion against God.

If Jesus be not divine, then he can no more save his own life than he can the lives of others. If Jesus be not God from all eternity, then he is sinful man alone and no sinful man can make propitiation for any sin. Why? Because he stands condemned by God just as the rest of mankind. If Jesus be not God, he cannot offer a sacrifice of such intrinsic value so as to make it acceptable to God on behalf of His people. If Jesus be not

⁶ *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977. All references from this source unless otherwise noted. Emphasis added.

⁷ The one exception being that Jesus was without sin. Cf. Romans 8:3 and 2 Corinthians 5:21

⁸ This belief is usually known as Doceticism.

⁹ 1 John 1:1-3.

God, then he has no place in the counsel and decrees regarding salvation and therefore spoke according to his imagination. If Jesus be not God, then how do we know there is a Father? This too would be the depraved rambling of a lunatic mind. If Jesus be not God, then he could not ascend to heaven, for he would have descended to hell. If Jesus be not God, he could not have sent the “Comforter” to work in the hearts of His people. If Jesus be not God, “we of all men are most to be pitied. Not only in this life, but in eternity.”

However, praise be to God, we know that Jesus is the eternal Son of God come in the flesh.¹⁰ In underscoring this point, Hodge affirms:

The Scriptures, with equal clearness, declare that Christ was truly God. This has been already proved at length [in the previous arguments]. All divine names are applied to Him. He is called God, the mighty God, the great God, God over all; Jehovah; Lord; the Lord of lords and the King of kings. All divine attributes are ascribed to Him. He is declared to be omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, and immutable, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He is set forth as the creator and upholder and ruler of the universe.

All things were created by Him and for Him; and by Him all things consist. He is the object of worship to all intelligent creatures, even the highest; all the angels (*i.e.*, all creatures between man and God) are commanded to prostrate themselves before Him. He is the object of all religious sentiments; of reverence, love, faith, and devotion. To Him men and angels are responsible for their character and conduct. He requires that men should honour Him as they honoured the Father; that they should exercise the same faith in Him that they do in God. He declares that He and the Father are one; that those who had seen Him had seen the Father also. He calls all men unto him; promises to forgive their sins; to send them the Holy Spirit; and to give them rest and peace; to raise them up at the last day; and to give them eternal life. God is not more, and cannot promise more, or do more than Christ is said to be, to promise, and to do. He has, therefore, been the Christian’s God from the beginning, in all ages and in all places.¹¹

So it is that the doctrine of salvation turns on this very point—*Jesus Christ is one man with two natures*. Each nature is essential to salvation and the unique make-up of Jesus

Christ the Theanthropos.

Conclusion

We have laboured this point so that the true concept of the incarnation may be understood. As stated earlier, we must view this doctrine correctly or face grave danger. Many today have little grasp of theology and the important role it plays. This lack of understanding, and in some cases deliberate spurning, leads to a desire to act, but not according to knowledge.

This leads us back to the WWJDites, who are the focus of these articles. It is our contention that this cliché is propagated without a proper understanding of the Biblical doctrine of the incarnation. Many are presented with the WWJD cliché and adopt it, even if implicitly, without stopping to critically assess the idea in light of the Scriptures.

It is for this reason that we have spent the first part of this article dealing with the correct view of the incarnation and its importance as a central tenet of Christianity. In part two, we will look at how the doctrine of the incarnation is ignored and misapplied.

^{10.} It is important to understand that Jesus was the Son of God from all eternity. He did not become the “Son” because of the incarnation.

^{11.} Hodge, *Systematics*, 2:382. In support of Hodge we would list such Scriptures as: John 1:1-5; 1 John 1:1-4; John 10:30; 2 Timothy 4:1, 8; Colossians 1:13-20; Acts 10:32; Acts 13:48; Revelation 19:16; Hebrews 1:1-4; 2 Peter 1:17 cf. Matthew 3:17 and 17:5; Acts 17:30-31; John 8:58; Isaiah 53:15 ff.

The Westminster Divines on Jesus Christ

1. It pleased God, in His eternal purpose, to choose and ordain the Lord Jesus, His only begotten Son, to be the Mediator between God and man, (Isa. 42:1, 1 Pet. 1:19–20, John 3:16, 1 Tim. 2:5) the Prophet, (Acts 3:22) Priest, (Heb. 5:5–6) and King (Ps. 2:6, Luke 1:33) the Head and Saviour of His Church, (Eph. 5:23) the Heir of all things, (Heb. 1:2) and Judge of the world: (Acts 17:31) unto whom He did from all eternity give a people, to be His seed, (John 17:6, Ps. 22:30, Isa. 53:10) and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified. (1 Tim. 2:6, Isa. 55:4–5, 1 Cor. 1:30)
2. The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, (John 1:1,14, 1 John 5:20, Phil. 2:6, Gal. 4:4) with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; (Heb. 2:14,16–17, Heb. 4:15) being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. (Luke 1:27,31,35, Gal. 4:4) So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. (Luke 1:35, Col. 2:9, Rom. 9:5, 1 Pet. 3:18, 1 Tim. 3:16) Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man. (Rom. 1:3–4, 1 Tim. 2:5)
3. The Lord Jesus, in His human nature thus united to the divine, was sanctified, and anointed with the Holy Spirit, above measure, (Ps. 45:7, John 3:34) having in Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; (Col. 2:3) in whom it pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell; (Col. 1:19) to the end that, being holy, harmless, undefiled, and full of grace and truth, (Heb. 7:26, John 1:14) He might be thoroughly furnished to execute the office of a Mediator and Surety. (Acts 10:38, Heb. 12:24, Heb. 7:22) Which office He took not unto Himself, but was thereunto called by His Father, (Heb. 5:4–5) who put all power and judgment into His hand, and gave Him commandment to execute the same. (John 5:22,27, Matt. 28:18, Acts 2:36)
4. This office the Lord Jesus did most willingly undertake; (Ps. 40:7–8, Heb. 10:5–10, John 10:18, Phil. 2:8) which that He might discharge, He was made under the law, (Ga. 4:4) and did perfectly fulfill it; (Matt. 3:15, Matt. 5:17) endured most grievous torments immediately in His soul, (Matt. 26:37–38, Luke 22:44, Matt. 27:46) and most painful sufferings in His body; (Matt. 26:27) was crucified, and died, (Phil. 2:8) was buried, and remained under the power of death, yet saw no corruption. (Acts 2:23–24,27, Act 13:37, Rom. 6:9) On the third day He arose from the dead, (1 Cor. 15:3–5) with the same body in which He suffered, (John 20:25,27) with which also He ascended into heaven, and there sitteth at the right hand of His Father, (Mark 16:19) making intercession, (Rom. 8:34, Heb. 9:24, Heb. 7:25) and shall return, to judge men and angels, at the end of the world. (Rom. 14:9–10, Acts 1:11, Acts 10:42, Matt. 13:40–42, Jude 6, 2 Pet. 2:4)
5. The Lord Jesus, by His perfect obedience, and sacrifice of Himself, which He through the eternal Spirit, once offered up unto God, hath fully satisfied the justice of His Father; (Rom. 5:19, Heb. 9:14,16, Heb. 10:14, Eph. 5:2, Rom. 3:25–26) and purchased, not only reconciliation, but an everlasting inheritance in the kingdom of heaven, for all those whom the Father hath given unto Him. (Dan. 9:24,26, Col. 1:19–20, Eph. 1:11,14, John 17:2, Heb. 9:12,15)
6. Although the work of redemption was not actually wrought by Christ till after His incarnation, yet the virtue, efficacy, and benefits thereof were communicated unto the elect, in all ages successively from the beginning of the world, in and by those promises, types, and sacrifices, wherein He was revealed, and signified to be the seed of the woman which should bruise the serpent's head; and the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world; being yesterday and today the same, and for ever. (Gal. 4:4–5, Gen. 3:15, Rev. 13:8, Heb. 13:8)
7. Christ, in the work of mediation, acts according to both natures, by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; (Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 3:18) yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature. (Acts 20:28, John 3:13, 1 John 3:16)
8. To all those for whom Christ hath purchased redemption, he doth certainly and effectually apply and communicate the same; (John 6:37,39, John 10:15–16) making intercession for them, (1 John 2:1–2, Rom. 8:34) and revealing unto them, in and by the word, the mysteries of salvation; (John 15:13,15, Eph. 1:7–10, John 17:6) effectively persuading them by his Spirit to believe and obey, and governing their hearts by his word and Spirit; (John 14:16, Heb. 12:2, 2 Cor. 4:13, Rom. 8:9,14, Rom. 15:18–19, John 17:17) overcoming all their enemies by his almighty power and wisdom, in such manner, and ways, as are most consonant to his wonderful and unsearchable dispensation. (Ps. 110:1, 1 Cor. 15:25–26, Mal. 4:2–3, Col. 2:15)