



Messenger Project Newsletter

The Messenger

messengerproject.com
714.537.8362

Volume 4, Issue 8

August 2006

A NONPROFIT CORPORATION PROMOTING THE BIBLE THROUGH THE ARTS

Messenger Project Members
Lionel De Leon, President-Founder,
Editor-Publisher of *The Messenger*
Raymond Genovese, Treasurer
Joie De Leon, Secretary

Messenger Notes

Lionel De Leon performed *These Words (1 Thessalonians 4:1)* with Huntington Beach's **Community Bible Church** worship team on July 30th. His next tentatively scheduled song is *Of the Lord (Psalm 19)* on August 27th.

The IRS will make a ruling in the near future whether to reclassify **Messenger Project** as a private corporation or to qualify us as a nonprofit corporation under Internal Revenue Code 509 (a) (2).

Early Church Heresies

Disputes of doctrine arose early in church history, forcing the church to organize and identify itself while weeding out heretics. Although heresies distorted the gospel, the church response of defining its doctrines (with the Nicene Creed) and canonizing the Bible was a blessing.

Simon Magnus, also known as **Simon the Sorcerer** (1st century A.D.), is considered to be the first heretic, a Samaritan who practiced magic and was converted to Christianity. He later tried to buy the power of transmitting the Holy Spirit from the apostles. This led to the word *simony*, the sin of paying for offices or positions in the church. The Gnostic sect of *Simonianism* believed that Simon was God in human form. It is said that Simon had the ability to levitate and fly at will. The legendary tale of his death claims Simon was performing magic in the forum and flew in the air to prove himself a god. The apostle Peter prayed to stop his flying and Simon broke his legs in the fall. The crowd then turned against Simon and stoned him to death.

Marcion of Sinope (?-c.160) was the son of the bishop of Sinope who challenged Christianity by proposing the existence of two Gods: the tyrannical, lawmaking creator-judge of the Old Testament and the God of love, mercy and forgiveness revealed in Jesus.

Montanus (2nd century A.D.) was a priest of the Oriental ecstatic cult of Cybele (mother fertility goddess) before converting to Christianity. He became the leader of a group of *illuminati* ("enlightened") that included two young women, prophetesses Priscilla and Maximilla. Montanus claimed to have the final revelation of the Holy Spirit (a greater authority than the teachings of Christ and the Apostles) and was excommunicated in 177.

Theodotus of Byzantium (2nd century A.D.) was the principle exponent in Rome of *Adoptionism*, the belief that God granted Jesus divine powers and adopted him as his son (the present-day belief of many *Unitarians*).

Arius of Alexandria (250-336 A.D.) was a priest in Egypt who developed *Arianism*, the belief that Jesus was created, not eternal.

Apollinaris the Younger (310-390 A.D.) was a bishop of Laodicea who developed *Apollinarianism*, the belief that Jesus' body was human but his mind was divine.

Donatus (?-355 A.D.) was a bishop of Casae Nigrae, North Africa who believed that a baptism performed by a sinful minister was invalid. *Donatism* was a result from Christian persecution in 303-4 A.D. Diocletian wanted all churches and sacred scriptures to be destroyed and for Roman citizens to burn incense to idols. Felix, bishop of Aptunga, had given copies of the Bible to the persecutors and was therefore deemed unfit by Donatists.

Pelagius (354- ? A.D.) was a monk who believed that God's grace is merely an aid to help individuals come to him and man is able to fulfill God's commandments with free will. He denied the original sin (sinful nature of man inherited through Adam). He was condemned and excommunicated in 417 A.D.

Nestorius (? – 451 A.D.) was consecrated bishop of Constantinople who believed in the independent divine and human natures of Jesus as being two persons that are loosely united by a moral code. Jesus was the Son of God (divine) and the son of Mary (human). *Nestorianism* does not accept Mary as being the *Mother of God* (Theotokos) but views her as the *Mother of Christ* (Christotokus).

Eutyches (378-452 A.D.) was a monastic superior of the Eastern Church in Constantinople who is regarded as the founder of *Monophysitism*, a belief in a single divine nature of Jesus (in reaction to the dual nature proposed by Nestorius).

Gnosticism traces its roots to the beginning of the Christian church and was a belief that salvation was gained through a special knowledge dealing with our relationship to God. *Gnosticism* was an independent development outside the church, believing in *dualism* (spirit is good, matter is evil).

Docetism developed from *Gnosticism*. It is the belief that Jesus only appeared to have a body (but was pure spirit). This belief also cropped up in the 12th century under the *Albigenses* ("people of Albi, France"), and included abstaining of flesh in all forms (including milk and cheese) because matter was believed to be evil. Some *Albigenses* even starved themselves to death to hasten the end of a material life.

Socinianism was derived from two brothers with the surname Sozinni who lived in Poland in the 1500s. They rejected the Trinity, believing that God is a single person, the Holy Spirit is the power of God and Jesus was only a man, neither pre-existent nor divine.

Other heresies that formed were *Kenosis* ("self-emptying") the belief that Jesus temporarily emptied his divinity when he became a man. *Modalism* believes in one God who manifested himself as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. *Tritheism* is the belief that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three separate Gods.

Besides the heresies that arose from Christianity, the world has *Judaism*, the eastern religions (*Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Taoism*), *Islam*, Pagan/New Age religions, Native American beliefs, indigenous superstitions, agnosticism and atheism.

It is no wonder that Jesus said "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."