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Man and His Immortality - The Purpose of the New Creation

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My purpose today is to suggest that the Bible's overarching theme is the creation of new persons "in Messiah," and that current accounts of how this is to be achieved suffer from a startling lack of attention to the words of Jesus himself. For many years I have found Richard Hiers' observations on the history of Christian thought most telling. Referring to the "quest for the historical Jesus" of the past century, Richard Hiers finds that "interpreters of Christian persuasion have ordinarily not been especially interested in what Jesus intended and did in his own lifetime." (An amazing situation!) I think this is what stimulated the formation of the group of questers who later called themselves Church of God of Abrahamic Faith from the 1850s, to whom we owe much.

Richard Hiers again: "A century ago a few biblical scholars began to realize that the historical Jesus proclaimed to his contemporaries as of first importance something quite unfamiliar to modern Christianity - the Kingdom of God. The significance of that recognition has not been grasped by many who have written about Jesus and his message in the intervening years...The eschatological Jesus depicted in the historical tradition of the Bible is *not* the Jesus of any modern school of theology" (*Jesus and the Future*, from the preface and ch. 1). At the beginning of this new millennium, theology still presents this perplexing approach: "We are searching for Jesus, but we have built into the search certain safeguards which will ensure that we will not find him." The real Jesus of history and faith remains largely alien to the public's and the professionals' understanding.

I suggest that the Jesus of the New Testament is scarcely recognized by tracts offering "Jesus," nor even by evangelistic gatherings promoting "salvation."

Let us introduce our theme with this comment on Isaiah 51:16 (*Word Biblical Commentary*):

"Yahweh introduces Himself again, but this time in terms of his control of the raging sea. He addresses the one he is using, putting his words in his mouth (cp. Deut. 18:15-18, Acts 3:22; 7:37) and protecting him very carefully. The purpose of this care is to allow him 'to plant heavens and earth.' That makes no sense if it refers to the original creation. A similar phrase in the Vision of Isaiah has become a standard way of describing Yahweh's work in [the original] creation. It uses *nata* ('stretch out') while here the verb is *nata* (ending with the letter ayin) 'to plant.' In the case of the original creation God acts *alone*, using no agent (Isa. 44:24) [- a verse with enormous implications for Christology, since God is unaccompanied and unaided at this Genesis creation]. 'Heavens and land'

must here in Isa. 51:16 refer to the totality of order in Palestine, 'heavens' meaning the broad overarching structure of the Empire, while 'land' (*aretz*) is the *political order in Palestine itself*. The assignment [given by the One God to his agent] is then focused more precisely: 'to say to Zion, you are my people.'"

We have here echoes of the constantly recurring theme of the land and the king. This motif goes back to Eden where man is put in charge of the royal Paradise Garden as vice-regent for God. The same theme is found in the grand Abrahamic Covenant/Contract (Gen. 12, 13, 15, 17) which promises the land and the seed - "the seed and the soil" - as the framework of God's future purpose for the world (Gen. 12; 13; 15; 17). We find the same motif in the renewal of the Abrahamic Covenant found in the Davidic Covenant (II Sam 7) where a place (cp. land) is promised to Israel for ever as well as a Davidic throne which is to last in perpetuity (again the "seed and the soil"). At the same time there recurs also this promise: "I will be God to that celebrated ruler and he will be my Son."

This grand theme of the ultimate establishment of the renewed earth/Garden of Eden/ Land of Promise/ Inheritance *plus* the renewed relationship of God with man in the Father-Son relationship provide a compelling and unifying theme for the whole of Scripture. This is the quintessential gospel. The Bible is in fact a commentary on this purposive theme in which the Seed and the Soil, the King and the land/Kingdom, are the constant objects of God's concern in the unfolding drama of world history. The fact is that the promise of the Land to Abraham in the OT remains only partially fulfilled (Joshua 21:43-45). The land came to Israel under Joshua but it did not come to Abraham personally, certainly not in perpetuity as guaranteed in the Promise. The land was guaranteed to Abraham as an *individual*, as well as to his offspring. Stephen noted that the promise of land to Abraham remained unfulfilled in about AD 33: Acts 7:5: "God gave Abraham no inheritance in this country, not even a foot of ground; yet even when he had no child He promised He would give it to him and to his offspring after him."

In our passage above (Isa. 51:16) we have a vision of a further, final renewal of the great Promise of peace on earth in the New Heavens and Land, a thrilling prospect dealt with directly by Peter (and all the NT writers) who promise at the Parousia the New Heavens and Land in which righteousness will dwell (II Peter 3:13). This cannot ever be said of the present evil age of human misrule (Gal 1:3). We note that in our passage in Isaiah there is *an agent* who is commissioned both as God's spokesman ("I will put My words in his mouth") and plenipotentiary and as the supervising creator of the coming new system on earth. He is to *plant* the New Heavens and Land.

This repeated promise of renewal is clear. Adam was to be fruitful and fill the earth. The earth is renewed again after a disaster, when the Noachic family are commanded to fill the earth. Abraham is the progenitor of the Descendant who will bring worldwide fruitfulness and blessing. And in Isa. 51 this Agent of God is to bring in an ultimate planting of a new society. Note that he will do it by "planting."

How does this all relate to our theme of immortality and the creative purpose of God? How does all this, in other words, relate to the Christian Gospel and the doctrine of salvation?

The *original* creation is constantly ascribed to Yahweh as "the only true God" and the agent is His *wisdom*: Jer. 10:11, 12: "The gods who did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and under the heavens. It is He who made the earth by His power, who established the world *by His wisdom* and by His understanding He stretched out the heavens... For the Maker of all is He"(v. 16). Jesus echoes this theme but does not ever claim for himself a part in that Genesis creation: "From the beginning of creation God made them male and female" (Mark 10:6). He was fully aware of the One God who unaided and unaccompanied "stretched forth the heavens and the earth by Myself. Who was with Me?" (Isa. 44:24). So John writes: "In the beginning was the word" (the equivalent of wisdom or creative activity, Ps 33:6). "All things were made through it," as we read in all English Bibles prior to the KJV and to this day in both German and French Bibles which do not treat the word as a Person.¹ Jesus, then, is what that wisdom/word *became* - the Son of God, who begins to exist as Son in Mary as a new creation - the Son of God being his title expressly because of God's begetting/creative act (Luke 1:35).² He is the expression of God, God's last word to the world.

I propose now to show that the New Creation, in which we as believers are involved, is being brought into existence also by wisdom, word, spirit - and all this under the supervision not only of the Father, but with cooperation of the Son of God, the historical and resurrected Messiah who, having passed through death and resurrection himself, pioneered the way for us and assists us on the same journey of faith towards immortality - an indestructible life. The objective of the Risen Son is to prepare by planting (Isa cp. 51:16) the New Society of the Coming Kingdom.

The Bible is a "high-stakes" book. It proposes that there are two possible destinies for human persons: "the barn or the bonfire." Thus John the Baptist, preaching the same Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus (Matt. 3:2; 4:23; 9:35; 24:14), confronts the public with the promise and the threat, the promise and the menace: "Repent because the Kingdom of God is approaching...The wheat he will gather into the barn of the Kingdom and the wicked he will burn up with unquenchable fire" (Matt. 3:2, 12). Therefore - so the exhortation of NT evangelists goes - choose the way of Christ and belief in his Gospel of the Kingdom to ensure a glorious outcome. Guarantee your own immortality by listening to and responding to the words of the Son.

In view of his task as engineer of the New Creation of his Father, Jesus sees himself as both "fishing for men," and *planting* the seed of immortality. This is the essence of Jesus' saving Gospel. Strangely, popular evangelism and evangelicalism appear to have rather little interest in Jesus' approach to salvation. Whereas God constantly intervenes in the narrative to declare "This is my Son: *Hear* him," evangelicals prefer to *watch* Jesus die and rise. They prefer this over the exhortation to "listen to him and his words." My point here is an echo of Richard Hiers' observation that "churches have generally not been much interested in the historical Jesus." This may sound odd, even outrageous, but

consider the slogan of a world-known evangelist: "Jesus came to do three days work, to die and be raised" or of James Kennedy, "Many people believe that the essence of Christianity is the teaching of Jesus, but this is not so...What is important is that God came to die for the sins of the world." These immensely influential dicta seem to dismiss the preaching ministry of Jesus and make salvation depend exclusively on what Jesus *did* and not what he *said*. Traditional creeds hurry over the preaching/teaching life of Jesus when they confess belief in the Son of God "who was born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate..." On the other hand in so-called liberal theology the words of Jesus play a much more prominent role, but only after the words of Jesus have been suitably modified to reflect *our* religious concerns. After being put through a wringer which demessianizes, de-judaizes, and de-eschatologizes them, Jesus' words can be reduced to timeless ethical truths, which render the Messiah very little different from any world-religious leader. This liberal Jesus is as Schweitzer pointed out often a mere reflection of our religious agenda. The result is, as someone has noted, that Jesus becomes the sort of Messiah you could safely invite to afternoon tea, rather than the disturbing lion of Judah.

But the New Testament Messiah, who is rooted and grounded in his Hebrew background, resists any mould but his own thoroughly particular and Jewish, Messianic and apocalyptic mould. "We Jews know whom we worship" - implying that Gentiles do not. "Salvation is of the Jews," "I am the Jewish Christ, and I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father other than through me." "The Scripture cannot be broken." Jesus constantly claims to be the *Jewish* agent of salvation. His is a Jewish version of salvation, but amazingly it is the version to which all the nations must bow. By modern standards nothing could be more glaringly "incorrect," politically and religiously. After all if the Baptists are severely reprimanded for campaigning to evangelize Jews, how well would Jesus fare with his outrageously exclusivist claims?

What then, is the process, what is the theory of salvation offered by Jesus? Its analogy is that of planting, sowing seed, creating anew, rebirth. All living things begin with seeds, and it is no different in the case of the creating of immortals. And so the seed of immortality must first be sown. This simple fact, however, is almost entirely overlooked in modern evangelism's theory and practice. This can be traced to a disregard of the Synoptic Gospels. That disparaging tradition goes back to Luther and Calvin who find little of value in the synoptics except some miracles, or deem John to be vastly superior.. That tradition was propagated by C. S Lewis when, astonishingly, he claims: "The Gospel is not found in the gospels." It would appear that commentary attempts to muzzle Jesus.

Jesus' disciples have a very different view. Peter delights in rehearsing the regeneration/conversion story: He begins with a joyful celebration of the great Adventure in which he has become a co-worker, the task of bringing men and women to indestructible life: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who according to His great mercy has *caused us to be born again* to a living Hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (I Peter 1:3). That hope, he goes on to say, is a hope directed towards "a [future] salvation ready to be revealed in the end-time." "Since you have in obedience to the Truth purified yourselves for a genuine love of the Christian

brotherhood, fervently love one another from the heart, for you have been *born again, not from perishable seed but indestructible seed*, through the living, permanent, word of God... and this is the word which was preached to you as the *gospel*. It is interesting that genuine Christian love is a product of the divine seed transmitted by the Gospel.

It is obvious that the Apostles share a common understanding about how salvation works. James writes: "In the exercise of His will, the Father gave us *new birth* through the word of Truth. So that we might become, so to speak, the firstfruits of his creatures.... In humility receive *the word implanted*, which is able to save you" (James 1;18, 21). John speaks the same language: "No one who has received rebirth from the Father, been born again, practices sin because God's *seed* remains within him. And he cannot sin because he is born of God" (I John 3:9). Such are constituted believers because they are "of the truth" (I John 3:19), a word which interchanges with "Gospel."

Paul does not speak often of rebirth, but he proclaims precisely the same truth in other words. Nevertheless, in Titus he does use the noun "regeneration": "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to his mercy, through the washing of *rebirth* and the renewing of the holy spirit" (Titus 3:5).

It is of the greatest significance that Paul deals with rebirth by the spirit in Galatians 4:29: "You, brothers, are children of the promise. But just as then the one born of the flesh persecuted the one born of the spirit, so it is now." This is precisely the language of John 3:3-5. We note that the cause of spiritual rebirth is according to Paul "the promise." For Jesus in John it was the spirit. Thus we learn that rebirth is by contact with the spirit/promise. That promise is the promise contained in the Gospel of the Kingdom as we shall see.

Elsewhere Paul often refers to the "immortality program" in terms of recreation and renewal. Since creation and rebirth/ begetting anew are synonymous (a fact which has enormous implications for Christology since Jesus himself was born/begotten of God (I John 5:18) and is thus His created Son (Luke 1:35)), it matters not whether we think of rebirth or of new creation. Paul likes to put it this way: "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" (Rom 12:2) "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind" (Eph. 4:23). Change the way you think. Think like God and this will make you like Christ. But the change of mind precedes the change of conduct. Ethics proceed from rebirth. And rebirth is traced back to and caused by the Gospel. What then is that life-changing Gospel which conveys the germ of immortality?

It is at this point that theology has been strangely slow to connect the Scriptural evidence. There is a circuit of ideas which when joined seem to illuminate the whole subject. But when the vital connections are not made the whole subject remains obscure.

From Peter, we learned of rebirth through "truth, word, Gospel and seed." From James we found rebirth through "truth, word, implant." From John in his epistle we gathered that "seed" and "word" must remain in the believer and that the problem with the enemies of Jesus is precisely that his "word" did not "abide in them" (John 5:38). From

Paul the renewal and regeneration are likewise effected by the "washing of the word" (Eph. 5:26) producing a "new self which has been created in righteousness in the likeness of God and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:24). All these passages clearly belong to exactly the same circle of ideas. Each apostle knows his trade well, and executes the salvation program with the same theological tools and with the same result - the germination of new life and the potential for immortality to be finally gained only at the resurrection and the Parousia.

Jesus the Master-teacher of Regeneration

But where does all this talk of "word, seed, rebirth and salvation" originate? It is traceable, not surprisingly, to the master-Teacher with whom the apostles had worked so closely. Jesus himself is the one who in his famous and fundamental parable (Mark 4:13 "Do you not understand this parable? How will you understand all the parables?") spoke precisely of "word" and "seed" and thus by implication of spirit, rebirth and new creation.

It is typical of evangelicalism to exalt the Gospel of John over the synoptics. The tradition, as I mentioned, goes back to Luther and Calvin. The result is that everyone who distributes a tract on salvation knows of Jesus' nocturnal conversation with the Rabbi Nicodemus. The Rabbi Jesus, knowing that there is only one topic of ultimate importance, goes directly to the point: "Unless you are *born from above*, you cannot enter the Kingdom" [i.e. be saved, become immortal]" (John 3:3-5).

Strangely, the question is not often asked: Why did not the synoptic gospels say a word about rebirth, if rebirth under the influence of the spirit is the indispensable prerequisite of salvation? Wasn't the Jesus of Matthew, Mark and Luke interested in salvation and immortality through rebirth? Why would the Jesus of John say that rebirth was essential for entrance into the Kingdom, when the Jesus of Matt., Mark and Luke said no such thing? Common sense alone requires that the Jesus of all the Gospels was indeed supremely interested in the creation of new human persons, and their investiture with immortality. Being born again and how it happens are certainly of prime concern to the Jesus of all the Gospels, but the Synoptics *choose to describe it under different terminology from John*: Recalling the task of the Messiah as that of planting new people in preparation for the Kingdom, they use the terminology of seed and word, the agricultural rather than the biological metaphor. After all, everyone should know that birth requires seed and the miracle of rebirth through *seed* is nothing less than the creative activity of God's *word*. And so the New Testament doctrine of salvation comes together with brilliant clarity when we trace the teaching of the epistles back to the recorded teaching of Jesus in Matthew, Mark and Luke. All three place the parable of the seed in a central position. All three define the seed as the preached word/ Gospel. Matthew defines the seed - and Mark and Luke imply the same -- as "the word *about the Kingdom*" (Matt. 13:19). Peter, recalling Jesus' teaching, puts "seed, word, Gospel" together as the essential elements of the saving process, just exactly as Jesus had. Matthew always defines the Gospel as the Gospel *about the Kingdom* (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14). Luke likewise records that the preaching of the Gospel *of the Kingdom* is the

whole point of Jesus' ministry (Luke 4:43 - a text which few but Abrahamic people seem to be much interested in).

For Jesus the critical issue is the progress and the reception of the seed, which is the Gospel as he preached it everywhere. And the seed as "the word" (Mark), "word of God" (Luke), "word of the Kingdom" (Matthew) contains the essential spark of life, the germ of immortality. The Gospel transmits the divine nature. And the Gospel is never anything other than the Gospel of the Kingdom. Kingdom here condenses, in brilliant shorthand, the entire Hebrew hope for the restoration of sound government in the land (cp. Matt. 5:5; Rev 5:10), and thus by extension in the world. Jesus' agenda, his Father's "business" is the preparation now in advance of the coming of the Kingdom, the personnel of the Kingdom, the royal family, now in training, about to emerge as incorruptible executives of the New Order. The *words* of Jesus, says John, "are spirit and life." They are divine words containing within them the divine nature and they communicate immortality. According to Jesus it is the germination of the creative teaching of the Kingdom in the mind of the receptive person, which initiates the conversion process. Repentance indeed according to the amazing statement of Jesus in Mark 4:11, 12 depends on an intelligent reception of his Gospel of the Kingdom. Plainly translated, Jesus says "Unless they grasp my Gospel, they cannot repent and be forgiven." This is salvation as taught by Jesus, and this very teaching is repeated by James (word, word of truth and implant, James 1:18-21), Peter (indestructible seed and word, 1 Pet. 1:23, 25), John (seed, 1 John 3:9, and rebirth, spirit, John 3:3-5), Paul (regeneration, Titus 3:5, and renewal, spirit). For each of these masters, the "mechanics" of immortality are clear. First there must be a saving seed/ word and this creative activity of God, via the Gospel of the Kingdom, infuses human personality with the indestructible life and energy of God Himself. Here truly is the "fount of eternal youth." That wellspring of life is tapped by intelligent reception and internalizing of the Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus preached it. To take in that Gospel is to take in the very vitality of God Himself. God has thus "caused us to be born again" (1 Peter 1:3), reborn with a view to immortality, the process beginning now with the downpayment and first installment of the spirit (I Cor. 1:21; II Cor. 5:5; Eph. 1:14), in view of a massive additional bestowal of spirit at the resurrection.

The simplicity of this teaching is immediately disrupted if one makes an artificial distinction between spirit and word. "The words I speak to you," Jesus said, "are spirit and life." All Scripture, words, are "inspired" (II Tim 3:15). "The spirit of the Lord spoke through me: his word was on my tongue," says the sweet Psalmist of Israel (II Sam. 23:2). Spirit in the Bible is not a third "person," but the creative life of God communicated to us by a word. The spirit is God in action, God in operation, the operational presence of God to recreate and further, where pliant human cooperation of man as "honest and good soil" permits, the progress of His desire to confer indestructible life. This process is the purpose of the original creation which forms the laboratory in which the production of the new race of immortals can now take place.

No wonder then that "the word" (about the Kingdom) is the standard technical term for the saving Gospel in the NT. "Word" has suffered a damaging redefinition when it is popularly used just as a synonym for the Bible (which the Bible calls "the Scriptures").

"Word of God" is not a vague phrase, but it is equal to the Gospel of the Kingdom, the message which must be communicated if the immortality program is to go forward. Just as the word brought the Genesis creation into being, so the word of the Gospel shines as light in the heart to create new life, the life of the age to come, indestructible life. Paul puts it beautifully: "Even if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving that they might not see the light of gospel of the glory of Christ.... For God who said [in Genesis]: 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the one who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (II Cor. 4:4, 6).

No wonder, also, that Paul is deeply upset when he contemplates the awful results of a distorted gospel. This would be a corrupted seed which would not produce the desired fruit (cp. Jesus' story of the tares). Paul is profoundly disturbed at the Galatian reception of a false Gospel (Gal 1). He boldly distances himself from the all-too-numerous purveyors of phony gospels: "We are not like the many corrupting the word of God" (II Cor. 2:17).... "We are not walking in craftiness, adulterating the word of God, but by manifestation of the truth we commend ourselves to every man's conscience" (II Cor. 4:2).

Has there been an eclipse of the Gospel since NT times? Our forefathers in this denomination felt certain that this had happened. On this basis they formed a new denomination. They objected to the half-gospel of evangelicalism. They protested a bogus method of defining the Gospel by reference to *isolated texts in Paul*, neglecting entirely the 25 chapters of Matthew, Mark and Luke in which Jesus, the twelve and the seventy had "preached the Gospel, i.e. of the Kingdom" without so much as a word, *at that stage*, of Jesus' death and resurrection. They then fastened on to Acts 8:12 in which Luke, giving us a sort of early creed, noted that salvation was no different than when Jesus had presented it: "When they believed Philip preaching the Gospel about the Kingdom of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, they were getting baptized, men and women alike." Thus Luke insists on precisely that which evangelicals seem to forget: a complete continuity between the Gospel pre and post-cross, allowing of course for the fact that the new facts about the death and resurrection of Jesus were *added to* the existing substratum of the Kingdom of God.

It is almost unheard of to find an evangelist today using the phrase "Gospel about the Kingdom," though Matthew always qualified the noun Gospel with the words "about the Kingdom" (4:23; 9:35; 24:14). It is almost unheard of to hear salvation explained as Jesus explained it in his parable of the seed and the soils. The public are not taught to connect the Bible coherently by learning that the same Truth is expressed by the different writers under different terminology. Imagine a reading public which did not know that USA might appear as "the US" or "the States." What does the average reader make of the fact that John in his gospel never used the word Gospel at all, never used the noun faith? Was not John's Jesus interested in the Gospel or faith? The fact is that Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom which in Matthew, Mark and Luke reappears as "the word," the "word of God" is presented constantly by John as "the word" and "the words," or "the testimony" of Jesus. In fact there is in the NT no preaching of the Gospel until the Kingdom is

preached. All preaching means preaching the Kingdom, and all the phrases describing the Gospel go back to the parent text "Gospel of the Kingdom."

I have yet to find a single gospel tract or book on the Gospel which makes anything at all of the Gospel of the Kingdom. The phrase seldom, if ever, appears and if it should occasionally show up, it is not defined. Yet Jesus considered his saving word as the essential seed of new birth and immortality. The fountain of eternal youth, which Ponce de Leon apparently did not find in Florida, is sitting here in the pages of Scripture and yet few seem to be interested in its potency as the vitality of God which He desires to communicate to his creatures. Indeed "writers of Christian persuasion have ordinarily not been much interested in Jesus' intentions."

Finally, the *Hastings Dictionary of the Bible* is the only source I have found, amongst scores of articles on "Regeneration," which actually connects rebirth with Jesus' teaching in the Synoptics. The whole article (Vol. 4, p. 214) is most instructive and includes the following statement "The parable of the Sower implies that the specific life of the Kingdom arises in the human heart by the sinking in of the Gospel [of the Kingdom], and its producing a new root of personality." The antidote to lifelessness and apathy must surely be related to how well the word of the Kingdom is creatively at work within us (I Thess. 2:13). "Word" then in the Bible is not just a printed cipher on a page, but the vitalizing energy of God through Jesus, creating and sustaining the new life which leads to the indestructible life of the coming Kingdom of God on a renewed earth (Matt. 5:5; Rev 5:10). Only when "word/spirit/wisdom/heart/mind/gospel/promise" are disconnected or left undefined does a shadow fall over the historical Jesus and His saving Gospel of the Kingdom.

If one may be permitted to advance a reason why the historical Jesus seems to be of so little interest to writers of Christian persuasion, it is this: Jesus warned that his teaching would be hard to come by, as precious as the priceless pearl, and the object of a relentless Satanic attack to get rid of it (Luke 8:12). At present the Gospel is popularly defined in tract after tract by a selective use of certain verses almost exclusively from Paul. The disturbing fact is that by far the most extensive treatment of Regeneration appears in the teaching of Jesus himself. All discussion of the Gospel, regeneration, immortality and salvation ought to begin with Jesus. That is only reasonable since he is the originator of the Gospel (Heb 2:3). Signs of revival will appear when appeal is made to the opening command of Jesus: "Repent and believe the Gospel about the Kingdom" (Mark 1:14, 15). As of today, this summary of the faith as Jesus defined it is almost entirely ignored.

Endnotes:

1 In other words the German *Wort* (word) and the French *parole* retain their neuter and feminine pronouns. Thus the reader is led correctly to think of the word, not as a person, but as God's creative power.

2 Note Luke's careful *dio kai* "precisely for that reason, the virginal conception, Jesus is entitled to be called the Son of God." Raymond Brown is candid enough to say that Luke here is an embarrassment to orthodoxy which does not link the Sonship of Jesus to the miracle in Mary.
