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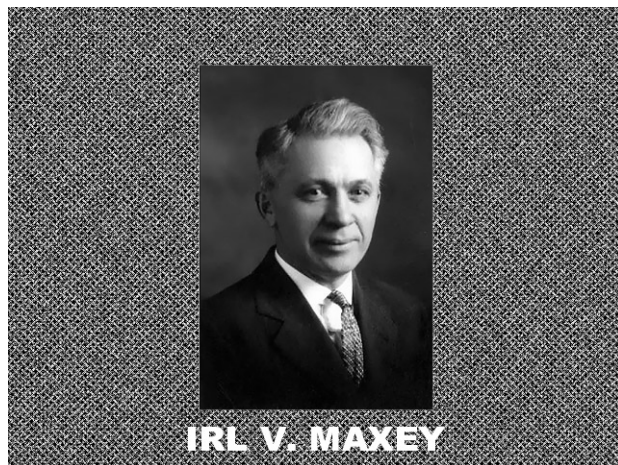
**THE PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST
By Irl V. Maxey**

Digitized By Duane V. Maxey

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CONTENTS

Introduction To This File

The Text

Introduction To The Sermon

I. Christ Is God

II. Christ Is The Creator

III. Christ Is The Head Of The Body, The Church

The End

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INTRODUCTION TO THIS FILE

This sermon is dated February 1, 1906, and is the second of two sermons by my father that were written that year, the first being his sermon on "The Prodigal" dated January 12, 1906. At the time I am digitizing this sermon (January 19, 2006), it is approaching 100 years ago that papa wrote it. It was written in Witt, Illinois, a small town on State Highway 16 northwest of papa's home-town, Mt. Vernon, Illinois.

Here, I shall note: -- All of the handwritten sermons of my father may have been written rather quickly -- like a rough draft, possibly with an eye toward reproducing them later in a more presentable form -- something he probably never did accomplish later. Thus, now that I am attempting to publish these handwritten messages in a smoother and "more presentable form," I am editing into the texts some things that seem to have been intentionally omitted by papa when he wrote them. However, in so doing I am endeavoring to present the exact thoughts set forth by him, so that while this typed, digital presentation of his sermon is more polished, it reflects only what he was saying, and not my own thoughts.

Among those writings of our father that I have received from my brother Gale, I would not classify this sermon as one of papa's best. In one place I have inserted a bracketed statement beneath where, in his youthful exuberance, he may have said more than he intended to say, but -- this sermon does close with a glad Hallelujah from him that shall be re-echoed and re-amplified when He rises with the Redeemed to meet the Lord in the air. -- Duane V. Maxey, (Ahwatukee) Phoenix, Arizona, January 19, 2006.

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THE TEXT: Colossians 1:18 -- "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence."

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

Paul is defending his church at Colosse. Jesus had been preached to them, but there came some "wise men" called "gnostics" preaching a false deity, and teaching that all the space from this false deity to earth was filled with half abstractions and half body people. These people were supposed to be worse and worse until the lowest one was the creator of all matter, the earth and etc. Hence, all matter was evil and opposed to God. These may seem to be silly ideas, but the Eastern mind was theoretical and this was a great trial to the Church.

Paul must defend his church and put the talk of the gnostics to flight by the truth. He starts out most nobly with Christian experience. Hear him as he says,

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). Then he says this Christ is the image of God -- the image of God Himself. Next, that He [Christ] is the Creator of all things visible or invisible in heaven and on earth, and that He was before all things and that by Him all things consist -- hold together, or are maintained. Last, Paul says that this mighty God, Savior, and Creator, is the Head of the Body, the Church -- the First-born of the dead and that in Him all the fullness shall dwell (cf. Colossians 1:15-19).

The gnostic ideas of heathendom are abroad today and have everywhere infected the Church -- ideas such as the teachings of the so-called Evolutionist Charles Darwin and of the so-called Higher Critic, Herbert Spencer Wallace.

So we come today to apply the truths of God as they were used then.

First, Christ is God.

Second, Christ is Creator.

Third, Christ is the Head of the Body, the Church.

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I. CHRIST IS GOD

Let Paul say in our context: "Who is the image of the invisible God." Again, in Hebrews 1:1-3, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person.." And again in 2 Corinthians 4:4, "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." Again John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

Yes, Christ -- Who walked the shores of Galilee, Who healed the sick, Who opened the eyes of the blind, Who caused the lame to leap and the deaf ears to hear, was God in man, lovely and radiant. The Man Who bore the struggle of Gethsemane, the pains of the Cross and the Glory of the resurrection, was Jehovah -- Who led the children of Israel through the Red Sea, shook Sinai and spoke to Moses and his brethren. Yes, Christ was God in man, reconciling the world unto Himself.

Here comes a gnostic and says, "Can you prove the birth of Christ by natural laws? You know that God does not change any of His natural laws for man."

I say, No, I cannot prove it by consequence of natural law. I ask you, Can you prove by natural law the division the Red Sea -- an historical fact? Can you prove the division of the Jordan, the fall of Jericho, or the shaking of Sinai -- all facts of history -- by the seeming natural laws? Can you prove the entire change of a man's purposes in the twinkle of an eye by natural law? Ah no! Ah, vain man and foolish reasoner, faith is the understanding. God does these things of Himself according to His way. The Mighty God and loving Father came to earth, His creation.

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II. CHRIST IS THE CREATOR

Paul said He was before all things, by Him all things consist, and by Him all things were created. John says by Him all things were made.

Here comes the gnostic again, clamoring for light and notoriety to propound the science of life, teaching the beginning of all things and how all things came to their present state. He says all things organic, nonorganic, and mental, came from one little cell or mass of protoplasm, brought together by action causing more heat and thence greater action and more magnitude -- on and on through a space of millions of years, it evolved until it became very large and hot [the Sun]. During its revolution, which peculiar power it had, a piece flew off and commenced to evolve and revolve into that which we possibly call Neptune, then another into what is called Uranus, another into Saturn, another into Mars -- then Earth, then Venus, then Mercury, and then thousands of others. On they went, evolving and revolving, following the path of the first one. Of course, as they got away from this original source they cooled and went through many contortions.

If this were true, it looks as if the Sun would keep evolving.

Next, [according to the gnostics] starting from this one little cell, some way through a peculiar means, there came out another kind of life which grew or evolved upon this earth, and (I guess others) they called plant life. Now, through the cooling of the earth came different changes of life -- many varieties of plants, and many colors of blossoms, etc.

Next [according to the gnostics] starting from this same original cell evolved out another kind of life called animal life. They were brought upon this earth in a quite different form, but by the encrustation of earth, changes of climate were wrought, affecting animals differently. At once there were different species. Somehow through the good environment of one species they were so highly evolved as to be able to domineer over the rest -- they called this species Man. [According to the gnostics] Man mentally developed, pure as he is, only because of his thinking on the high things. They cannot tell us why in the start it did not all evolve into the inorganic or into the organic. So they will recognize a deity with a purpose.

If this were true, I would fear lest some other animal might evolve his brain cells and Man might be subdued, or might go on till he reached God. They cannot account for the Fall of Man. This is undeniable. Anyone with good sight, when seeing the penitentiaries, reform schools, saloons, and thousands upon thousands of debauched lives, knows that sin is in the world and that Man has not come to this state from a worse state, but, rather, fell into his present state.

The Flood, with the once [almost total] annihilation of all animal life, and possibly part of the plant life, is before them [those who teach such things], and they try to do away with that by their quaint saying, "Survival of the fittest" (the saying of Darwin). But here, science clashes with science. They know when a shark goes after his breakfast he picks the best fishes, and when an animal goes to eat it takes the best of the plant or animal life.*

[*Papa's inference here is, that in many cases in the animal world it is the "Survival of the least fit" and the most fit which are devoured by their predators, rather than "The Survival of the fittest."]

The Flood came. Ah, brethren, Let us say with Paul, "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

God was the Origin of the worlds. He called them into existence. Of course He might have been years of time at this, but He made the things visible from invisible things. Job says "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). God, our Christ, formed the plants, some bearing seed to be seen, others whose seed was in itself. Not to be denied is the change climate has wrought and does cause. God formed the animals to be domineered over by Man. Man did not, of his own advancement receive this. God made man a living soul above the animals -- made him pure at first. He never got there of himself, but of himself came sins. God brought the Flood; then came Man's Redemption -- brought about by Man? No! but God putting Himself in Man, purchased salvation by suffering the result of sin.

Ah, Christ was the Creator!

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III. CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE BODY, THE CHURCH

First, Christ is the Origin of all spiritual life. Christ is the type of what God would have every man to be. You know the brain is the center and origin of all nerve impulses to the body. So Christ must be in His people. "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col. 1:27) -- moving from Him through you, the world feels his love.

His authority. The parts only live as they receive the nerve impulse causing a flow of blood and thereby nourishment. Let it stop, the nerve force dies at once. Christ the Head must control your life else it dies. You must feed upon and submit to Him, realizing that He is always affected by your cooperation or rejection. The whole body may die because of poison in a finger. Yes, you may cause the death of the Church.*

[*Perhaps my father meant here that you, as a small member of a local Church Body, may cause the death of that local Church. I doubt that he meant to say that one member of a local Church could cause the death of the entire Church of God. Such, Christ shall not allow, until the last soul that may be saved is saved -- and even then, the ransomed Church of God shall live forever! Papa wrote this sermon when he was 23 years old, about a month shy of being 24, and -- in his youthful exuberance he may have said here more than he intended to say.]

Then, He is thus first because He was the Firstfruits to be resurrected. Our Christ suffered death as the result of Man's sin. He arose, and likewise if we have His Spirit we will die physically, but having His Spirit, will rise again. Glory to God!

He must be first in our preaching. Christ must be preached -- not denominationalism, but Christ. The Cross has power to save. God help us to preach salvation.

Then, finally, He must be first in our lives -- all of our life must be in subjection to Him, for in Him does all the fullness dwell (cf. Col. 2:9).

Bow at the cross of our Christ. Take your affection off of this world. Let Him who died for you, sanctify you wholly. Brethren, "Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne; And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 1:4-6).

Christ, our God, Creator, and Redeemer, saves us and cleanses. Hallelujah! And someday we will break the bands of a long-filled grave and come forth wholly and fully redeemed (Hallelujah forever and forever!) and dwell with Him forevermore. Amen.

[Papa has been in his "long-filled" grave since 1950, but on that Glad and Glorious Day of the Lord, the bands of his "long-filled grave" shall be broken, and the "Hallelujah" he wrote at the close of this sermon shall be re-echoed and re-amplified in his Eternal HALLELUJAH! among the saints of God who rise to meet the Lord in the air.]

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THE END OF THIS SERMON