

Editorial

Accompanying this issue of *Historicism* is a monograph by J. LaMar Sprout entitled, "The French Waldenses of Provence." It documents their history and beliefs from the twelfth century to 1545. The Waldenses were industrious and peaceful, living mostly in northern Italy and southern France. Unfortunately these good folk were heretics. But I will let Sprout tell the story.

The theme topic for this issue is Dan 11:36-39. The king whose policies are discussed there is said to have no regard for any god at all (vs. 37). And yet he honors "a god unknown to his fathers" (vs. 38) and receives help from "a foreign god" (vs. 39). This is a problem. How can any "god" be simultaneously honored and disregarded? But this paradox is fundamental to the passage and must not be minimized. In a paper entitled, "Some Comments on Dan 11:36-39," I point out that the king's aloofness toward all higher authority is in itself precisely what honors the "foreign god."

In a second paper we focus on the single most important feature of the section, which is not the king but "the one desired by women" (vs. 37). This is not some pagan deity; it is Jesus Christ. And the "women" referred to in connection with Him are peoples or nations, as in Hag 2:7, where He is called "the desired of all nations." The syntax of the two passages is the same. The correspondence is exact.

But there is more to consider here than an exact syntactic correspondence. There is a universal human need not to be alone. This need finds expression in the most mundane sorts of ways and in ways that are not mundane. The desire to visit home, once we have left it, to marry, to take one's place in society--this is one form it takes. But there is also a need for spiritual companionship, which can be fully satisfied only by the One who has implanted it within us. When God said, "Let us make man in our image" (Gen 1:26), this is one aspect of what He meant.

From this premise two conclusions follow. First, the need for spiritual companionship is a fundamental part of our nature. And second, it is a fundamental part of God's nature. It is not the case that we alone need Him, although it is true that we do need Him. He also needs us in the sense of desiring our companionship. He wants us to understand Him and share in His feelings. And in my view His desire to understand us in our incomprehensible fallen state is one factor that motivated the incarnation. In taking human flesh Christ did more than enter our world of physical space. He entered the sphere of our thinking and aspirations, our fears and weaknesses. He asks us to come to Him having already come to us. The gospel is an invitation to enter a relationship with Christ that once more is truly mutual--one in which we reflect back to Him His own desire for us.

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