



The Land Dispute

A parody is a comic caricature, a ludicrous likeness, an absurd analogy, a ridiculous representation which exposes a particular reality by comparing it to another of a different order. Parodies can be a useful literary tool to expose the “red herrings” of diversions which distract attention from real issues. By the use of parody one can be direct yet subtle at the same time.

Many centuries ago in the old country a parcel of land was identified and acquired. The old land deed duly records that the property boundary ran “from the large rock on the southeast corner, west to the sea, north to the top of the hill, east to the large oak tree, and south again to the large rock.” Without precision instruments to measure latitudinal and longitudinal bearings and the exact degrees of direction, this type of land demarcation was common in old land deeds. The large rock that marked the southeast corner of the piece of property was immovable and served as the fixed point of bearing for the position of the parcel.

As the years went by the property was passed down by inheritance from generation to generation. The heirs were under the mistaken impression that the cornerstone was on the northwest corner of the lot. The time came when the heirs decided to develop the property commercially. Extensive planning and construction transpired. An entire city division was built, complete with residences, apartments and several large churches. Everything was oriented around, and attention directed to, the large cornerstone to the northwest.

When the regional government decided to modernize the land maps of the region, a surveyor was sent to update the boundary demarcations. He took measurements, drove stakes and recorded his findings. The report concluded that the

entire development had been constructed on the wrong parcel of land. The owners and developers were shocked and dismayed. Needless to say, a land dispute ensued and litigation has continued for years as to the culpability for such misdirected development.

Meanwhile, over the years, a few simple souls have been living on the original parcel of land. Without ornate accommodations they reside at the top of the hill enjoying the majestic view of the rock on the southeast corner, the ocean to the southwest, and the ancient oak tree to the east. Like their predecessors and ancestors before them, they seem to be quite disinterested in the legalities of land descriptions and the commercialization of physical developments. They prefer instead to appreciate the serene beauty of life on the hill.

Organized institutional religion has thought for many centuries that it was rightly oriented to the cornerstone of Christianity in Jesus Christ. They have developed an ecclesiastical community, the city of “Christendom,” complete with crystal cathedrals. Imagine their dismay when they are informed that they have constructed their religious city in the wrong direction, and are not rightly related to the “cornerstone.” What they thought was their “land” does not belong to them.

All along a few Christians have lived simply in the “land of promise” (Hebrews 11:9), recognizing they are “built up as a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5), the “house of God” (Hebrews 10:21; Ephesians 2:19), with “Christ Jesus being the cornerstone” (Ephesians 2:20) thereof. They reside on “Mount Zion, in the city of the living God” (Hebrews 12:22), “the city whose architect and builder is God” (Hebrews 11:10), enjoying the life of Jesus Christ.

Will the religious heirs give up all their materialistic assets and construction plans in exchange for the simplicity of enjoying life in the land, city and house that is spiritually available in Jesus Christ? □

—Jim Fowler



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