

## **The Sophists the Saint and the Spirit**

By Fred Chay

Ours is an age that prefers opinion to knowledge. This is not new, for its history is plainly seen in the sophists who did battle with Plato. The battle for the mind is ever true whether it be in ancient Greece or modern America. The philosophers were lovers of knowledge; the sophists were imposters, who were lovers of opinion. The sophists of the 5th century B.C. were quite proficient at tainting and transforming the truth and turning it to a profit. Theirs was the skill of "spinning" truth into a bastard mishmash of glittering but empty philosophical junkfood. Today we have our own sophists who produce theological junk food. It is tasty to the pallet but empty to the soul. The initial encounter sounds good and tastes great going down, but it soon produces indigestion and in the long run, results in mal-nourishment. If only the patient could understand what true health entailed.

It must be observed that today, as in Plato's day, it is the spiritual sophist who can spin the saint and generate sales. But it should not surprise us. The sophist sees that the world rewards those who cater to its taste for the multiplicity of temporal things, for the multitudes have no vision of the transcendental realm of eternal ideas. The well paid sophists do no more than state in a clever and lively way what the "great beast", the multitudes think and desire, calling what it likes "good" and what it dislikes "evil".

This state of affairs was not unanticipated by the Lord Jesus who instructed the apostle Paul to remind the Christian Church of the desperate desire for designer doctrine that results from the ever itching ear and the spiritual thrombosis of the heart that can compromise the Christian. It was Paul's last request of the Ephesian Elders to watch out for false teachers from among themselves, who would enter into the flock of God as wolves. It was Peter who warned his scattered people, God's Chosen Aliens, to beware of the false teachers who will secretly sneak in and introduce destructive teaching, which will lead the new convert away into heresy and harm.

We have allowed the truth telling to be left to the sophists and not the theologians. In fact we have created a new strata of theologian and homoleititions. They are ones that lack training and precision with the word of God but have no lack of funding in the coffers. They are those who have substituted the gift of "gab" for the gift of teaching. They have no time for training, no desire to be diligent and hence cannot rightly divide or cut straight the word of truth.

May the saints sense the danger and see the difference between the sophist spin and the speaking of the Spirit.