

THE TIE THAT BINDS

I have had some very interesting discussions with Jehovah's Witnesses* via our computer on-line service over the last few years. Many of the JW's who dialogue on-line feel it is their duty to defend the WTBS** against "anti-JW's," as they call us, even though the WTBS has, in recent years, made it clear to JW's that they are not to be dialoguing with "apostates" (former JW's) or "opposers" (me, and others like me who never have been Witnesses) on the computer on-line services. They seem to feel that the average JW could possibly be led astray if they were to read the information we put on the board. They are right about that, we hope.

Many of the JW's who "post" on-line are diehards, people who seem impervious to criticism of the WTBS. You could show them that Rutherford played footsie with Hitler during WW2 and, indeed, we have shown them that, and they seem unmoved. But there are many who we call "readers" or "lurkers," folks who do not venture into the fray, but only read what other people on both sides are posting. These are the folks whose hearts and minds we hope to reach. Sometimes they will venture on-line to ask questions, to find out who we are, and why we are there. One of these was Thomas, a JW who asked some questions of "our side;" thoughtful questions that I felt deserved an answer.

Question #1: Are not other organized religious denominations to be put under the same scrutiny that the JW's have been put under?

My answer: Thomas, have you ever read the magazine called the *Watchtower*? That is my facetious answer. My real answer is...

Yes, I do believe that any organized religion should be put under scrutiny; and I believe that it is my responsibility to scrutinize even the church that I attend, and speak up where I feel that things are not scripturally correct.

But I think your question may imply something more than was actually stated...in other words, what makes "us" better? Do we feel at our churches are so perfect, so good and clean that we can throw stones at the WTBS? I have tried to identify with a JW's feelings about our opposition. It is possible, I reason, that JW's may view the conflict here as one of a clash of organizations; and believe that we are trying to draw JW's away from the WTBS so we can introduce them to an alternative "God's Organization" to be found somewhere in "Christendom." In reality, we believe that God *does not have* an organization at all, but wishes our devotion and loyalty

to go to Him alone. Like the word "Trinity," the word "organization" does not appear in the Bible, but unlike the Trinity, the concept is not to be found there either.

In this, I find myself to be in perfect agreement with C.T. Russell, founder of the Society, who states in the *Zion's Watch Tower* of September 1, 1893, "There is no organization today clothed with divine authority to imperiously command mankind. There is no organization doing this today, though we are all well aware that many of them claim that they ought to be permitted to do so..." Also, his statement in the *Zion's Watch Tower* of September 15, 1895, "Beware of 'organization.' It is wholly unnecessary. The Bible rules will be the only ones that you will need. Do not seek to bind others consciences, and do not permit others to bind yours. Believe and obey only so far as you can understand God's word today, and so continue growing in grace and knowledge and love day by day."

So, no matter who I may be talking to, whether it is a JW, or a Mormon, or a nominal Christian from one denomination or another who may believe that allegiance to some particular denomination or church group will save him, my response would be to show them from the scripture that God's will, "Jehovah's arrangement" if you prefer, is for them to come to Jesus for salvation (John 5:39-40). If a person were relying upon the church I attend to save them, I would tell them *the same thing*. So one major reason that I expose the flaws of the Watch Tower Society is because

they ask for the loyalty from their people that belongs to God alone. "Come to Jehovah's Organization for salvation," states the November 15, 1981, *Watchtower*, p21. But Jesus tells us to come to Him (Matthew 11:28). The *Watchtower* is not good or clean or "God's Organization;" that is what I proclaim to those who will listen. Salvation is not organizational, but personal.

One step further...Mark 10:18 states that there is none good but God alone. Since God's standard of "goodness" is perfection, the church I attend is not perfect either. It is made up of imperfect men. What Paul states in Romans 3:9-12 about individuals can be applied to organizations made up of imperfect individuals as well. "What then?" Paul asks, "Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks [everyone] are all under sin. As it is written; there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands; there are none who seek for God;

(Continued on page 2)



(Continued from page 1)

All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, there is not even one." Uh oh...we're all in trouble! Paul goes on to say in verse 19 that the law pronounces us all guilty so "that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may be accountable to God." That is the bad, bad news. But the good news for the Christian is found in verses 21-24; that God is going to give us righteousness as a GIFT through faith in Jesus Christ. Paul says, "But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Jesus Christ." Jesus is the only one who is good and clean and we are to go to Him through faith to gain forgiveness. No church or organization can secure this forgiveness for us.

To quote Paul once again from Romans 10:1-4, (NASB) "Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them [natural Jews] is for *their* salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believes."

Paul is not implying here that he is a better person than anyone else, nor does he state in any of his writings that he or the Christians he taught had reached a state of perfection or "betterness" than the unbelieving Jews. As for himself, he called himself "the chief of sinners," and he was constantly correcting flaws in the churches he wrote to. Indeed, he readily acknowledges that the unbelieving Jews have a zeal for God, and states that their problem is that they do not know that righteousness comes through faith in Christ alone, and cannot be obtained by any zealous performance for God. It was neither hatred, nor self-righteousness, but love which compelled Paul to try to convince the Jews that their own righteousness was going to come up short with regard to eternal salvation. He himself was a Pharisee. He knew that they, his brethren according to the flesh, were relying upon their Jewishness and their system of rules and works to gain God's approval, and he cared enough about them to tell them this, even though it made them very angry and, incidentally, it would not have made Paul a very popular guest on *Oprah* in today's "truth is relative/sincerity is the only spiritual yardstick" culture.

Question 2: How do you defend the record of Christian churches who, from my point of view, often seem to have become the exact opposite of what Christ intended?

I don't really defend the record of Christian churches at all, at least as far as attempting to disclaim any wrongdoing or imperfection on their part. I'm not surprised by human imperfection at my age. I feel that the church, meaning the Body of Christ, was established by Christ himself; but just like other good things ordained by God, such as the family and human governments, the church has been marred by the sinful nature still present even in regenerate mankind. There is no perfect family, but no one would suggest that for that reason, family must go. "Family" is good, but sin is bad. It is indeed sad that all of us are susceptible to sin, or families, governments, and churches would be perfect.

But, since I recognize the faults of Christian churches, why then do I continue to point out imperfections in the WTBS? Very simply this...I do not condemn the WTBS as a pseudo-Christian group based on their human imperfections, but because:

They claim to be God's channel and then channel false prophecies continually. A false prophet is categorically different from an "imperfect" prophet!!! Moses and the boys, imperfect sinners all, did not falsely prophesy!

They hypocritically crucify other religious groups for their sins and failings, while minimizing (a gross understatement, I believe) or hiding their own errors.

They do not allow their people the freedom to think indepen-

dently, or to freely investigate the Society's checkered past.

They direct the devotion of the people to the Society, and only secondarily to God, and actually replace God as the way of salvation.

When I am asked by JW's why I "hate and attack" Jehovah's Witnesses, I know that the implication is "Why don't you pick someone else?" For the record, I "pick on" lots of groups, including many nominal church goers, who do not "know" God in the true sense. Yet, I do have a special love in my heart for JW's. I can't help it. For me to dialogue more frequently with JW's on-line than with Muslims does not indicate any special "hatred" of JW's, or lack of concern for Muslims, anymore than being a missionary to Ethiopia implies a "hatred" for Ethiopians or lack of interest in the spiritual lives of the people of Australia. I simply care for all, but I am finite. So, I must let someone else "hate" the Muslims!

Question #3: Why is the Trinity one of the standard "tests" of a person's claim to being a Christian?

It's a group check, not a personal pass. How would we determine whether a certain group is Christian or not? There must be a "belief yardstick." The Trinity doctrine is such a yardstick, a tool for dividing the true from the false. Are we looking at a Christian group or a pretender to the title? Having said that, however, I must stress that *personal* belief in the Trinity doctrine (or any other doctrine) is not a test of Christianity at all. Many millions of people on earth today believe in the doctrine of the Trinity, and even teach it, yet do not know God, and so would not be classified as true Christians at all. Knowledge of God, even correct knowledge as I believe the Trinity to be, does not save anyone. As far as true Christianity is concerned it is *who* you know, not *what* you know about who! Eternal life is to "know" God, not to "take in knowledge" of Him, as the NWT incorrectly translates John 17:3.

The Biblical test of a person's claim to being a Christian, or "in the faith," is to be found at 2Corinthians 13:5. "Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is IN you, unless indeed you fail the test."

It is the indwelling Christ that makes one a Christian. But how is it possible for a person to dwell inside of you? Nothing is impossible for God. Jesus said at Revelation 3:20, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me." Please note that the sheep hear the knock of the Master Himself, which is an invisible, intangible, personal thing. No organization need apply.

Now this is interesting: *Who* comes in? John 14:16-17 states, "And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another helper, that He may be with you forever; that is, the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive because it does not behold Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be IN you." Salvation is knowing God, and we know Him because He is IN us: there is no other way!

Okay, so the Spirit dwells in us: anyone else in there? It would appear so from verse 23. "Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.'" The Son is *in* the Father and the Father is *in* the Son, and both of them are *in* the Spirit who dwells *in* the Christian! Gettin' pretty crowded in there!

This is the true Christian unity spoken of at John 17:21; our unity as believers is based on our having the same divine person indwelling us...one Spirit dwells in us all. It does not mean that we are part of the godhead ourselves, but that our Christian unity is based upon the union within the Godhead. Certainly, it does not mean that we as Christians will agree on everything. Romans chapter 14 makes it clear that there will be much that Christians will *not* agree on!

Romans 8:9-11 states, "However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. And if Christ is *IN* you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the

spirit is alive because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead *dwells in you*, He who raised Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit *who indwells you*." Well, I best not dwell on this point any longer...

Question #4: If there is a "Body of Christ," how does one identify it? If it is invisible, I am going to have great difficulty, since I am quite near-sighted.

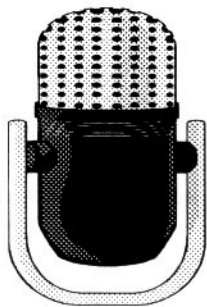
Well, first of all, if I were to ask you what a Christian or a Christian group would look like, how might you answer me? Many times, in talking to JW's or Mormons or others, they will quote Matthew 7:16 where Jesus said, "by their fruit you shall know them..." By this they mean: "WE are the only true Christians; just look at the wonderful Christian works we do! WE are the only group practicing the true Christian works, such as XYZ..." (XYZ = door to door proselytizing, political neutrality, no coffee, no cigarettes, baptism for the dead, etc.) But taken in it's context, Matthew 7 is saying the very OPPOSITE of what they are trying to make it say. Verse 15 shows us that Jesus was speaking not of Christians but of false prophets, and saying "by *their* fruit you will recognize *them*." What fruit is necessary to "recognize" a false prophet? His false prophecies! Apple trees bring forth apples, fig trees bear figs, false prophets produce false prophecies. It's as sure as a pimple on prom night. Why would we have to inspect their teachings and prophetic utterances? Because they would LOOK LIKE CHRISTIANS! Think for a moment what you or I might ex-

pect Christians to look like. That image is exactly the one that the false prophets will project. How do we know that? Jesus said they would be in sheep's clothing! They are dressed up like Christians and will appear to *be* Christians...Neat appearance? Check. Carrying Bible? Check. Theocratic haircut? Check. Friendly smile? Check. Jesus is saying, "Don't be fooled...these false prophets will look, for all the world, like you will expect My true followers to look." Hence, we know that we cannot trust our "eyes" to determine the true from the false.

Read Jesus' parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matthew 12:24-43). According to this parable, will the true Christians be clumped together in a single easily identifiable group? No, they are all mixed up together with the weeds. Jesus said that the evil one sowed weeds of evil among the good Christian wheat. They shall grow together until the harvest, and the harvest will be accomplished by angels under the Lord's command. The true and the false can be easily confused by human beings. Like the wheat and the weeds of the parable, they look a lot alike while they are growing. Our human tendency is to trust our "eyes" to make this judgment...Jesus says we cannot do that.

So when you ask about the invisible nature of the true Body of Christ, I must say, "Yes, it is invisible." Well, sort of...I do not mean that individuals *within* the body are physically invisible, whether alone or in a group, but rather it is the *tie that binds*, as the old hymn goes, that cannot be seen. For example, I am quite visible,

(Continued on page 11)



We would like to remind our readers in the Chicagoland area to tune into our LIVE radio program...

"DEFEND THE FAITH"

every Saturday night at 6pm on 106.7 FM, WYLL.

Call in with your questions at 1-800-775-1067.

If you cannot receive the broadcast, or if you missed a show that you wanted to hear, tapes are available for \$5.00 each.

JULY

6th

Dr. Walter Brown, Director of The Center for Scientific Creation, will be discussing his book and seminar which are both entitled "**In the Beginning: Compelling Evidence for Creation and The Flood.**"

13th

Don and Joy Veinot, President and Director of Midwest Christian Outreach Inc., move to the other side of the studio and become the interviewees instead of the interviewers in a show called "**A Day in the Life of a Countercult Ministry.**"

20th

Bob Wilkin, Executive Director of the Grace Evangelical Society, will be speaking on the highly controversial topic of, "**Lordship Salvation: The Jesus-Plus Plan.**"

27th

Joan Cetnar of Personal Freedom Outreach and former Jehovah's Witness will tell us "**How to Lead a Jehovah's Witness to Christ.**"

AUGUST

3rd

Craig Branch, Vice President of Watchman Fellowship, will be our guest and his topic will be "**What do you think of Scientology?**"

10th

Richard Fisher of Personal Freedom Outreach will be informing us about the "**Rights and Wrongs of Discernment.**"

17th

Duane Magnani, President of Witness Inc. and former Jehovah's Witness, has a "cheery" topic for us this week. It is simply entitled, "**Doomsday!**"

24th

Prolific author and researcher **Dave Hunt's** topic will be "**In Defense of the Faith.**"

31st

Elliot Miller, Editor in Chief of the Christian Research Institute's *Journal* will be our guide on a tour of the "**Pitfalls of Discernment Ministry.**"

SEPTEMBER

7TH

Rev. Don Matzat, host of Issues Etc., will help us to "analyze" "**The Negative Impact of Psychology Upon Christian Truth.**"

14th

Dr. Michael Noble, Senior Pastor of Olivet Baptist Church in Chicago, IL, will have a "real" interesting topic entitled, "**Virtual Reality and the Faith.**"

21st

Jim Leffel, Director of the Crossroads Project, will be our guest and his "eulogy" will be on "**The Death of Truth.**"

28th

Dr. Erwin Lutzer, Senior Pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, IL (and Billy Graham Impersonator*), will take us back for a history lesson on "**Hitler's Cross.**"

"For more on Dr. Lutzer's other 'talents' we suggest purchasing the cassette tape of his talk from the 3rd Annual New Life In Christ Convention available in the Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Resource Catalog.



AND ALONG CAME A SPIDER...

DO ALL PATHS LEAD TO GOD?

FINDING TRUTH IN OUR PLURALISTIC AGE

By Chad Meister

Finding God is like finding your way to the top of a mountain. There are many ways to get there." In one form or another, this is the view many in our culture have about religions. There are many of them, but they are all attempting to do the same thing—find God. They are all true but different ways of reaching the Divine. But can this be true? Can all paths lead to God?

The Fact of Religious Pluralism

It is true that we live in an age of religious pluralism. "Pluralism" simply means the condition of having more than one, and it is a fact that we have more than one religion. Whether we're referring to the condition in America in 1996 A.D., or Israel in 30 A.D., religions have been, and are, plentiful. As a matter of fact, not since the days of Jesus have so many religions flourished together. Here in America, for example, there are currently over one-and-a-half million Hindus, four-million Muslims, five-million Buddhists and ten-million Jews.¹ Besides these major religions, there are over thirty-million who subscribe to some form of the New Age Movement,² and many who hold to Mormonism, Spiritism, Christian Science, Jehovah's Witnesses, and a host of other sects. To deny religious pluralism in our day is to deny reality. This reality can be called the "fact of religious pluralism."

However, many people have unwittingly bought into a certain philosophical interpretation which has been offered about this fact. Since there are so many different religions and so many sincere devotees in each of them, it is argued, they must all be "true" to those who believe them. For the sincere Christian, Christianity is true. For the sincere Muslim, Islam is true. For the sincere Mormon, the Mormon religion is true. As the saying goes, "You have your truth and I have my truth." This interpretation can be called "religious relativism," and it simply means that all religions are true—true to the person—for all religions ultimately lead one to God.

This view runs contrary to the Christian Scriptures which declare that there is "only one way to salvation" (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). But such an exclusive claim, it is maintained, sounds dogmatic, narrow-minded, and intolerant.³ Maybe Christianity was the only way of salvation for followers of Christ in 30 A.D., but we have had many prophets since him in many different cultures and time periods. Surely God would not just pick one culture in which to manifest Himself—God is big enough to work through any culture. As one Hindu put it:

Religion is like a large elephant surrounded by several blind men. One man touches his tail and thinks it's a rope. Another touches his trunk and thinks it's a snake. Another touches his leg and thinks it's a tree. Yet another touches his side and thinks it's a wall. They are all experiencing the same elephant; but are experiencing him in very different ways. The same goes for God and the various religions.

But, while this interpretation may sound nice in our pluralistic, tolerant age, is it possible? Can all religions be true?

The Fiction of Religious Pluralism

Religious relativism is based on a relative view of truth. In order to determine whether or not all religions can be *true*, then, an understanding of the nature of truth is essential. First, truth can be understood as either relative or absolute, and this in two ways.⁴ It can be understood as *relative* to time and place and/or persons, or as *absolute* to time and place and/or persons. Consider the following example. Suppose that someone, call her Joyce, makes the following statement: "I feel sick." Now if Joyce is really sick and she says that she is sick, then it is true for her that she is sick. So the statement, "I feel sick," is true for her. But suppose Joyce's friend Brenda is not sick. Is the statement, "I feel sick," true for Brenda? No. Thus, it is maintained, truth is relative to persons. The same statement can be true for one person and not true for another person.

Consider another example. Suppose that someone makes the following statement: "The president is from Arkansas." Is this statement true? Yes, if by "president" one is referring to the president of the United States in the years 1992-1996. But that same statement made about the president of Brazil, say, is false. Or that statement made about the president of the United States in 1990 would also be false. Thus, it is maintained, truth is relative to time and relative to place.

Since truth is relative, argue religious relativists, one person can have her religion and another can have his religion, and both of them can have the truth. However, if this is the case, a profound problem emerges.

The arguments given above for religious relativism are based on a relative view of truth. However, truth cannot be relative, either regarding persons or time and place, and a careful analysis of the above examples will demonstrate this.⁵

It was argued above that a particular statement, such as "I feel sick," is relative to persons, and the statement, "The president is from Arkansas," is relative to time and place. However, while the *statements* are relative to persons, and to time and place, *truth itself* is not relative. The distinction is difficult to grasp at first, but grasping it is extremely important. In order to grasp it, though, a basic understanding of truth and logic is essential.

Theories of Truth

There are basically three theories of truth: the Pragmatic Theory, the Coherence Theory, and the Correspondence Theory.⁶ The Pragmatic Theory of truth is the view that "truth" is what is expedient or useful; truth is that which works. For example, if it helped one's family to be members of the Mormon religion, then Mormonism is true for them. Many Mormons argue in just this way. However, it is not only Mormons who hold to a pragmatic view of truth. Many Americans today, especially those of college age, hold to some form of the pragmatic view.⁷

The Coherence Theory of truth is another view held by many today. This is the view that something is true if it coheres with one's belief system. In other words, if a particular belief is consistent with other beliefs which one has, then that particular belief is true. For example, if one believes that the Bible is the Word of God, then if asked whether it is true that all believers will rise from the dead, the answer would be yes. It is "true" for the person who believes that the Bible is the Word of God that believers will rise from the dead. But it is not true for those who believe that the Bible is myth that believers will rise from the dead. Thus, the same statement, "believers will rise from the dead," is true for one person and not true for another.

The third view is the Correspondence Theory. This has been the standard view of truth throughout most of history. Simply put, it is the view that a statement is true if it corresponds to reality. For example, if one says that it is true that all believers will rise from the dead, this means more than that it is useful for one to believe it. It also means more than that it coheres with the rest of one's beliefs. It means that someday believers really will rise from the dead, whether anyone believes the Bible is God's Word or not!

A little reflection at this point is necessary. First, it should be noted that the Pragmatic Theory and the Coherence Theory both include a relative view of truth. Regarding the pragmatic view, Mormonism may work for one person, and Islam for another. But if truth is what works, then Mormonism is true for the one and Islam is true for the other. So the Pragmatic Theory includes a relative view of truth.

Second, regarding the Coherence Theory, one person may have a set of beliefs that, while internally consistent, contradicts another person's internally consistent set of beliefs. A Jehovah's Witness may believe that Jesus is the archangel Michael, and this view may be internally consistent with the rest of his beliefs. And a Oneness Pentecostal may believe that Jesus is the Father, and that may cohere with the rest of his beliefs. If truth is understood as that which coheres with one's set of beliefs, then both the JW and the Oneness Pentecostal have the truth. So the Coherence Theory also includes a relative view of truth.

Now, the problem with both the Pragmatic Theory and the Coherence Theory, and any relative theory of truth for that matter, is that they deny one of the central laws of logic--the Law of Noncontradiction--and to deny this law is to commit intellectual suicide.

The Law of Noncontradiction

One of the central laws of logic is the Law of Noncontradiction. Simply put, this is the notion that A cannot equal non-A. For example, the Capitol Building cannot both exist and not exist in the same way at the same time. Either it exists or it does not. If one tries to deny this law, one has to use the law in the process of denying it. Christian apologist Ravi Zacharias has demonstrated this point best in a dialogue he had with a professor of philosophy of religion.⁸

In his dialogue, Ravi noted this point that one cannot deny the law without using it. The professor stated that Ravi was thinking from a Western perspective, and needed to open up his mind and see how those in the East think. Instead of thinking in terms of either/or, Easterners think in terms of both/and. Thus, for the

Easterner, the Law of Noncontradiction is not true.

However, the professor used the law in his attempt to deny it. This is how he did it. If one denies the Law of Noncontradiction, one is saying that the law is not true. However, by saying that it is not true, one is saying that it is "not A," "A" now being the Law of Noncontradiction. The professor was arguing that one should believe the "both/and" view rather than the "either/or" view. But this is equivalent to saying that of EITHER the "both/and" OR the "either/or" views, the "both/and" view is true. The professor used the "either/or" view in his attempt to deny the "either/or" view. In philosophy this is called a self-stultifying or self-refuting proposition. It's like saying in English, "I cannot speak a word of English." It is impossible to deny the Law of Noncontradiction without using the Law of Noncontradiction.

What has this proven? Well, if truth is relative, then it denies the Law of Noncontradiction. For example, if truth is what works (the Pragmatic Theory), and what works for one person is contrary to what works for another person, then two contradictory views are both true. Also, if truth is what coheres to a set of beliefs (the Coherence Theory), and what coheres for one person is contrary to what coheres for another person, then again two contradictory views are both true. But this is impossible for it denies the Law of Noncontradiction. If two views are contrary, either one is true or both of them are false; they cannot both be true. Thus, both the Pragmatic Theory and the Coherence Theory are ultimately self-refuting.

This leaves only the Correspondence Theory. But what has all of this to do with whether or not all religions lead to God?

First, truth is absolute, both regarding time and place and regarding persons. Truth is what corresponds to reality. When

Joyce is sick and she says, "I feel sick," it is true for all persons at all time periods and at all places that she is sick. While the same statement can be used by others, when Joyce says "I am sick," what is implicit in this statement is that Joyce herself, not someone else, is sick.

Also what is implicit is that she is sick at the time she says it. The same goes for the statement that "The president is from Arkansas." Truth, then, is absolute and cannot be relative, for to be so would be to deny the most basic of all logical laws.

Second, as noted earlier, there is a philosophical interpretation of religious pluralism, prominent in our culture, called religious relativism. It is the view that all religions are true. For the religious relativist, truth is understood in a relativistic way, either by holding to the Pragmatic Theory of truth or to the Coherence Theory of truth. However, since both of these theories include a relativistic view of truth, they both deny the Law of Noncontradiction. But, as just demonstrated, to deny this law is to refute oneself. Thus, to hold to religious relativism is to refute oneself and to commit intellectual suicide.

Conclusion

It has been argued that there is a fact of religious pluralism and a fiction of religious pluralism. The fact is that there simply are many coexisting religions. To deny this is to deny reality. The fiction is that they are all true--that they are all leading to God. Since they contradict each other, they cannot all be true, for truth is that which is absolute and corresponds to reality. If Mormonism is true, then there really are many gods overseeing other planets in our universe. But if that is true, then Islam cannot be true, for it holds that there is only one God, Allah. But if Islam is true, then Christianity cannot be true, for Christianity holds that Jesus rose

(Continued on page 10)



SALVATION *Style*

PART-2 In a Series on The Boston Church of Christ

By L. L. (Don) Veinot

"Boston 1979. A group of 30 would-be disciples gather in a living room and commit themselves to, at that time, an idea that had not yet been seen. That the true church would be composed of only disciples, only those people that are totally committed to Jesus Christ. And those that REFUSE to heed the call of Jesus would be unwelcomed in that fellowship and not recognized by God or His human leaders. That was radical!

"In '82 we said we're not gonna send our young men and our young women that we train into existing congregations. We have got to build churches where we can preach the word of God free of all tradition. And so we went to Chicago. And that was radical!"

"We said we're not gonna stay here in the United States where the Church of Christ had dwelt way too long in the rural communities wishing someday to get into the cities. We're gonna go to London and build our second church planting on foreign soil. That, my brother and my sister, was radical!"

*"In 1983 we said listen, we have got to get to the largest English speaking city in the world, New York. We believe that only one church was necessary. One small group of disciples led by spiritual people that knew God. That would be all that would be necessary. All that we needed was just 18 sold-out disciples to go to a city of 18,000,000 and we knew the job would be done because that is God's plan. That disciples make disciples to make disciples. We didn't need 45 different autonomous churches. There's only one church in one city. And that, my friends, was radical."*¹

These are the words of Kip McKean, leader of the Boston Church of Christ, now known as the International Churches of Christ (hereafter, ICC). We find, in these introductory comments to the 1994 World Leadership Conference in Manila, the driving force behind this movement. The first thing of note is that the movement was started by "would-be disciples." They weren't disciples yet, but shortly *would be*. That is very important for, in the view of the ICC, one cannot be a Christian until they are a disciple first. If that teaching is correct, then the ICC was started by non-Christian men and women. Kip McKean pointed out in 1982 that the nine "Bible studies" he had written earlier, what he calls the "first principles," taught that one had to be a disciple before one could be baptized. According to the ICC (as well as the Mainline church of Christ) one actually becomes a Christian at baptism. Kip McKean wrote:

*"I purposely developed this study to draw a sharp Biblical distinction between the Lexington (later renamed Boston) Church of Christ and all other groups. I taught that to be baptized, you must first make a decision to be a disciple and then be baptized. I saw people in and outside of our fellowship had been baptized without this understanding and then, in time, developed a disciple's commitment to make Jesus Lord of their entire life. I taught that their baptism was invalid because a retroactive understanding of repentance and baptism was not consistent with Scripture."*²

True Salvation?

Salvation in the ICC is only achieved by a disciple who has submitted to the authority of a discipler. Only when the discipler is convinced that his disciple is completely submitted to his authority will water baptism be administered. Kip McKean and the others were not disciples at the time they started the movement and didn't have a discipler over them. In fact, there were no disciplers prior to Kip McKean for there were no true Christians prior to Kip and his band of 30. There was, therefore, no true Christian to disciple or baptize them. In this regard, the ICC has a similar problem to that of the Mainline churches of Christ. They both view themselves as restoring the gospel (which presumably got lost in mists of time since the first century) and call themselves "restoration" churches. The Mainline churches were started by Thomas and Alexander Campbell who were baptized by a Baptist. Yet, if we accept church of Christ teaching, we must understand that a Baptist baptism simply won't do! Only a church of Christ baptism, with a church of Christ understanding that baptism is necessary to remit sins, is valid to ensure one's salvation. The Campbell's did not understand these things until much later, which invalidates their baptism, leaving them unsaved. So, according to the prescription for salvation which both groups hold, they were both started by non-Christians! What's more, they never became Christians for there was no one who predated them to teach or disciple the founders with the true gospel, and without a correct understanding of repentance and remittance of sins at baptism, there can be no true conversion.

Some of the earliest and best research and exposure of the ICC was done by the Mainline churches of Christ. One of the works is titled, *The Discipling Dilemma*, which states, "Many observers believe that discipling churches delay baptism until the disciplers are convinced that the prospective converts will submit to their authority without question. The issue is not their readiness to obey the gospel, but their willingness to submit to the control system provided in the discipling system."³

These authors further write, "Many people who have come to the discipling churches from other churches of Christ have been taught by their disciplers that they must be rebaptized."⁴ They were not Christians because they were not disciples to the one true church at the time they were baptized. *The Discipling Dilemma* also points out, "The psychological function of the re-baptism phenomenon is similar to the psychological function of the 'replanting' terminology used when the Boston church takes over another congregation: both serve to deny the validity of the previous religious experience of the individual. This cuts the individual off from his or her roots spiritually and thus gives the discipler more power to control and change that individual."⁵

The ICC grew out of the Mainline churches of Christ and holds fundamentally the same doctrine regarding salvation with the addition of the discipling mandate. The Mainline churches at attempting to distance themselves from the ICC because they correctly, if belatedly, perceive the cultic control aspect of the ICC. Early on the Mainline churches were excited about the growth of the group and their ability to reach the college-age generation but

became concerned over the abuses they began seeing. Yet, in our opinion, the Mainline churches of Christ do bear a large part of the responsibility for the birth and growth of the ICC. The ICC apple does not fall far from the Mainline churches of Christ tree when it comes to elitist attitude.

The Mainline churches view themselves as the only true Christians on the face of the earth and are quite judgmental about other churches. In view of that, it is ironic that what caused the separation between the ICC and the Mainline churches is the ICC's view that the ICC are the only true Christians and that the Mainline churches are spiritually dead. Commenting on the "judgmental attitude" of the ICC, the Mainline church of Christ, authors of *The Discipling Dilemma*, lament the ICC injustice of "telling new converts that other churches of Christ in the area are dead, that they are not spiritual, or that they could not provide the discipling the new converts need. Interviews with over 100 new converts in the Boston church and over 100 others who have left the Boston church have convinced me that these judgmental comments about other churches of Christ are the rule, not the exception."⁶

Since the ICC views themselves as the only true church (where have I heard that before?), salvation comes by association with the group. Proper submission to a discipler includes leaving a job if you are told to by your discipler. It involves getting permission to date, attending Bible Talk meetings and numerous other tests of submission. Independent thought is strongly discouraged in order to bring you into complete dependence on your discipler.

Kicked Out of The Kingdom

Kip McKean considers the ICC to be "God's movement" and himself to be "God's man." Papal authority without the big hat...

In 1994, the leaders of an ICC church in Indianapolis expressed concern about the authoritarianism within the movement. They were fully dedicated to the teachings of the ICC, but had come to the realization that the structure was very similar to Roman Catholicism with Kip McKean as the vicar of Christ on earth. On February 27, 1994, the Indianapolis church held a congregational meeting to discuss the problems with the current structure. They were not advocating pulling out of the movement, but felt that they should have the ability to make certain decisions locally. They were happy to participate in missions projects, for example, but desired the freedom, as a local church, to decide at what level they were able to participate. To illustrate: If the headquarters of the ICC decreed that they must send \$250,000 as Special Missions giving, and they were only able to raise \$200,000, they wanted the autonomy to reject the demand to send \$50,000 that they had been unable to obtain. This may seem like a eminently reasonable request but, as a result of that meeting, the ICC kicked the Indianapolis church out of the movement, brought in a number of leaders from Los Angeles, and started another church two weeks later. ICC representatives Marty Fuqua and Bob Gempel from Los Angeles met with lead evangelist Ed Powers of the Indianapolis church. In a tape of the March 8, 1994 congregational meeting, an associate of Ed Powers recounts that Ed asked Marty and Bob if "last week, would you agree that we [the Indianapolis church] were

part of God's kingdom?' And they all said, 'Yes, I agree that you were a part God's kingdom last week.' He says, 'O.K. now, this next week we're gonna keep doin' all the things we've been doin'. We're gonna continue to teach the same thing we're teaching about how to become a Christian. O.K., the gospel.' He said, 'Will we be a part of God's kingdom?' And again, they did not answer the question. O.K. And I think that that is a real issue here. That these men were not willing to say that we would continue to be a part of God's kingdom."⁷

People who for years had been teaching others that association with the ICC was necessary for salvation, now found themselves outside in the cold, cruel world. If salvation comes by association, then disassociation is spiritual death. Pope Kip and his Bishops hold the keys to the Kingdom.

A Disciple First

I have had correspondence with an individual from the Mainline church of Christ on the issue of salvation. In one of his

letters, he gave me what he considered to be the five pieces to the puzzle of salvation. The first "puzzle piece," belief in Jesus Christ, is an important part of the salvation process, but not the whole enchilada. Repentance is the "second part" of the whole. The third is confession. Baptism (church of Christ baptism being the only valid baptism one could have) is the fourth piece of the puzzle, and Christian living is the fifth and "final part."

The ICC would add a sixth piece: Discipleship. This teaching of discipleship prior to sonship is a bit "puzzling," however. How will an unregenerate person live life as a child of God prior to his new birth? A person needs to be born again before he can toddle, and he needs to toddle before he can walk. Yet, both the Mainline churches of Christ and the ICC put the works cart before the salvation horse. True salvation is not discipleship before salvation, nor some other combination of the two, but is by faith alone in Christ alone (Eph.2:8,9 & Acts 4:12).

The abuses of authority within the ICC toward the lowly disciple is devastating. The first individual I met who was part of this group had just sold his car at the direction of his discipler. He was told that he lived close enough to work that he didn't need a car and this loss would help to keep him humble. The money from the sale of the car was to be given to the ICC as a Special Missions offering.

The next person I met was a young woman whose husband was a member. She was desperate because her husband was gone nearly every night of the week being "discipled." If he missed a night, he had to meet his discipler at 5:30 AM for a prayer walk. Bible studies often lasted until 1:00 or 2:00 AM and her husband had abandoned his responsibilities as a husband and a father. He had run up the credit cards in order to keep up with the financial demands of the ICC. Soon, he remortgaged the house to pay off the credit card debt and then began running up the credit cards again. This young mother was at her wit's end. She was given \$6.00 to \$10.00 per week for food and was borrowing from her family to keep her children fed. She was not a member of the group herself, and so could not reason with her husband, since ICC teaches that outsiders are evil and anything written against the group is "spiritual pornography."

(Continued on page 11)





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A message from the Editors

As you know, Midwest Christian Outreach Inc. is a "not-for-profit" organization. However, just because an organization is "non-profit" does not make it "non-expense." Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. has all the same monthly operating costs as a "for-profit" organization. The very *Journal* you are reading is just one example of the many expenses that Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. has. Most of the production and distribution of the *Journal* is done by faithful volunteers for whom we are thankful. Paper, postage and printing costs do not, however, volunteer to pay for themselves. For this reason, we are asking you to prayerfully consider supporting the Ministry in one or more of the following ways:

1. Pray for the Ministry of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.;
2. Call today and switch your long-distance carrier to **LIFELINE** and ask other people you know to do the same;
3. Consider a financial gift to Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. to help cover our operating expenses.

Thank you so much,
T & C.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

Cornerstone Festival

July 4-7, 1996

Sponsored by Jesus People USA

To be held in Bushnell, IL

For information call: 312/561-2450

The Culting of Christianity Conference

September 12-14, 1996

Sponsored by EMNR and

Personal Freedom Outreach

To be held in St. Louis, MO

For information call: 314/388-2648

Inside the Convention

SPECIAL

Friday, May 31, 1996 was opening day for the 3rd Annual New Life in Christ Convention hosted by Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. It was opening day, but certainly not the beginning.

Preparations for a convention, such as this, begin long, long before the doors open and people begin to take their seats. So many people volunteered their personal time, talents and energy to make this convention possible that space here does not allow me to list them. (I am certain I would unintentionally miss someone and I would really feel bad about that!) Let me just extend a warm and heart-felt "Thank You!" to all of you. You all know who you are, and so does God!

Personally, it was exciting for me to experience a big project like this come together. I am still amazed at how each and every one involved just took the ball and ran with it! It seemed as though no one really had to be told the exact details of what they were to do. A basic suggestion or rough outline, as such, was made and the rest of the details were zealously executed with remarkable professionalism. Although the convention was geared to present apologetics, testimonies and encouragements, I also was deeply touched by the servant's heart our Lord Jesus has given each one involved in this ministry.

Meeting people is usually a fun thing for me. This convention was a great opportunity to do just that. I finally was able to put faces to many of the voices I have listened to on tapes and authors of books I have read. It was really wonderful to meet and talk with some of my apologetic "heroes" and listen to their testimonies and their steadfast commitments to the Lord and His kingdom.

And what can I say about the workshops! Oi vey, did we have workshops . . . 12 excellent workshops to be exact! I heard that a person sympathetic toward witches showed up at Bill Honsberger's "Why Not Burn Witches?" class. Evidently, this person was a former JW who has not realized the deception the Watchtower organization has formulated against the Trinity so that she has wound up "out of the frying pan and into the fire." Unfortunately, this is not a very rare case, and it should be a wake-up call to continue to pursue God's will in each of our lives as to how He would have us share the gospel with those lost in the cults.

Wonderful music and skits provided entertainment and good humor throughout the weekend. We even had a puppet show and those interested got a chance to work the puppets behind the scenes if they so desired. **I DID!** I felt like a little kid and I really loved it!

Dr. Norman Geisler, Dean of Southern Evangelical Seminary, brought us "Paul's Last Words to These Last Days: About Sound Doctrine" and "... About the Word." I've found that most people who get involved in the cults have been involved in a religion that does not read the Bible but only gives it "lip service" or uses it to decorate the pews. The remedy: Know the truth of the Bible. Dr. Geisler pointed this out using Paul's epistle to Timothy. Dr. Geisler is quite an eloquent speaker with a wit that gets rolling so fast your sides ache yet, he presents the truth with clarity and accuracy.

Dr. Erwin Lutzer (or ... hummm ... was that Billy Graham? Dr. Lutzer did an awesome impersonation of Dr. Graham), Senior Pastor of Moody Memorial Church in Chicago, spoke about "Christ Among Other Gods." Dr. Michael Noble, Senior Pastor of Chicago's Olivet Baptist Church, spoke about "No Other Name." Both men had outstanding presentations.

Don Veinot, President of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc., opened the convention with a brief welcome and then introduced Joan Cetnar, former fourth-generation JW and "Bethelite." She encouraged us all with her insight into God's grace and benevolence toward us. Personally, I was thrilled to meet Joan later at lunch. I have read much of her writings and research and listened to her on tapes and have seen her on video. As they say, so it is true, she is

REPORT

even more beautiful in person! I have much admiration for her.

George Kesterson, a former 20-year JW, was kind enough to set aside his busy schedule to join us on short notice. The original speaker had to cancel but you never would have guessed. George, in a very polished manner, related a heart-touching story of being a JW and all the disappointments and cruelties that can sometimes go along with that. Finally, a broken man, George came to know Jesus. Poverty and sickness hung on to George for a while, but now George had asked Jesus to call the shots in his life. You know what happens when you do that!

Melvin Russell, a soft heart protected by God with a tremendous creative mind and outgoing, humorous personality, shared the gospel truths with us using slight-of-hand and illusions as object lessons. I must admit, Melvin can really catch one off guard! He makes us think. His testimonial skits and analogies were quite provocative. Although he makes us laugh, that humor helps us all deal with the serious aspects of involvement with the cults.

Dan Harting took the stage and offered important insights into life as a Mormon. Dan and his wife, Augusta, were former officers and teachers in the Mormon Church for 15 years.

What can I say about all the others! I was particularly touched by testimonies of those whose childhood, and a portion of their adult years, were spent involved in a cult. Laura Althaus, Renee Halley, Diane Gholson, Terry Chorpenning and James Walker all have witnessed the power of God's love in their lives and the way He protected them and guided them on their quest for Him.

I am often humbled when I think that I am no more special than the next person and could have just as easily been born into a family of Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons or could have been led astray by one of these counterfeits. Cults are "equal opportunity destroyers." They are in our neighborhoods, in our families and God has given us the ability to help.

Many of the people mentioned above were able to exit these counterfeit Christian religions through the direct or indirect help of many of the ministries that were represented at the convention. The way God led Terry Chorpenning through a series of phone calls, etc., which eventually led her to the Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Live Help Line, was just one example of the many ways God has equipped our ministry to help.

Two ladies who had gotten involved for a short time with the Mormon Church attended the convention and talked with the likes of Dan Harting and James Walker. Both of these ladies had called our 24-hour Recorded Message Line dealing with Mormonism and, then, called the Live Help Line. They both are intelligent women who were temporarily deceived by a counterfeit. Pray for these two ladies as their personal quest continues. They have found confirmation of their doubts which have allowed them to be confident about their decision to leave Mormonism. They still need answers to other questions and to be grounded in the word of God. We pray God will guide them and protect them.

Others in the cults have been touched by our weekly radio show "Defend the Faith." The show was broadcast live from the convention with James Walker and Terry Chorpenning as the guests. A person who identified very much with Terry's story called and conversed with Terry. Follow up was provided.

If you are saying to yourself, "Wow! It sounds like I missed a great time." You're right, you did! However, through the miracles of modern technology, you can have the next best thing to being there. You can order individual cassettes of the plenary sessions, as well as the workshops. There is also a special price for the complete convention set. You can find this listed in our Resource Catalog along with other helpful materials.

You see, so many things went on and continue to go on behind the scenes. Only God really knows how much a truthful word or kind deed speaks to someone's heart. I can only imagine how many words a simple rooster's crow spoke to the heart of the Apostle Peter. Won't you please help this ministry to speak the truth, in love, to those involved in the cults? Your prayers are the most powerful weapon against the wiles of Satan. Please pray for us and for those with whom we have the privilege to share the truth. Also, please consider helping us bear the burden of the financial responsibilities involved in this ministry. Your monthly support will help this ministry to continue to bear good fruit and someday, someone you know or love may benefit. The cults are here to stay. The question is not "If they come..." but "When they come..." will you help us to help others be prepared?

Love in Christ's Name,
Corkey

Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. works with several other ministries that operate help lines. The information on these lines is changed on a weekly basis. Individuals can call anonymously and simply listen, or they can request additional information. If they desire to speak to someone immediately, they are referred to our LIVE line.

The phone numbers for the pre-recorded lines are:

For Jehovah's Witnesses:

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☎ (312) 774-8187

☎ (502) 927-9374

☎ (815) 498-2114

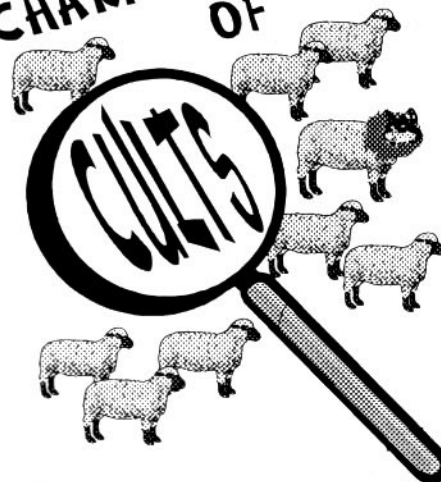
For Mormons:

☎ (708) 736-8365

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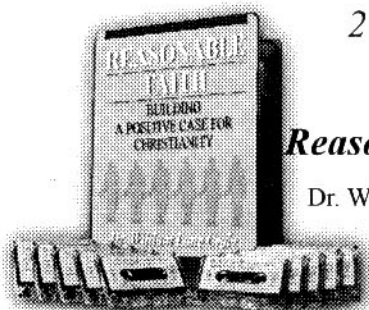
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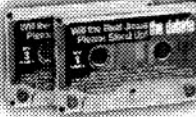
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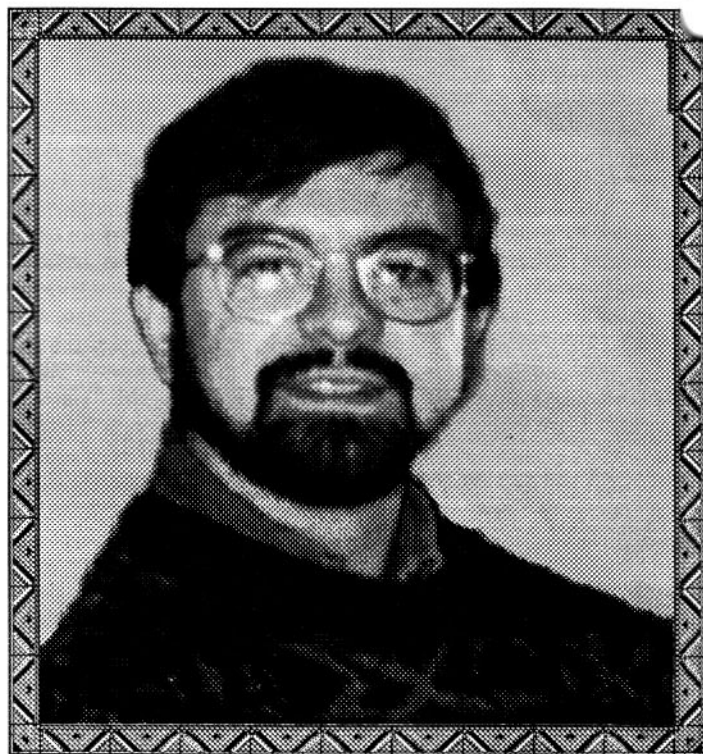
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from the dead and now reigns at the right hand of the Father. Islam denies this. All religions contradict each other. They cannot then all be true, for that would deny the Law of Noncontradiction, which is impossible. Either one of them is true or all of them are false.

Which religion then is true? This is an important question, but in our pluralistic, relativistic age, understanding the nature of truth must come before understanding which religion is true. Ω

End Notes

1.) For current statistics regarding many of the major religions, see *The Universal Almanac for 1996* and the *Information Please Almanac for 1996*. 2.) Russell Chandler, *Understanding the New Age Movement* (Dallas: Word, 1988, p.20.). 3.) Christian philosopher of religion Harold Netland puts it this way: "Clearly, Christian exclusivism has fallen upon hard times. Not only is it being rejected by non-Christians as naive and arrogant, but it is increasingly being criticized from within the Christian community as well for alleged intolerance and for being a vestige of an immoral religious imperialism." *Dissonant Voices* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, p.27.) 4.) For a helpful analysis of truth in religion, see Mortimer Adler, *Truth in Religion: The Plurality of Religions and the Unity of Truth* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990). See also Netland, *Dissonant Voices*, especially, Chap.4. 5.) For a concise argument against relativism which includes an exposition of several theories of truth, see Frederick F. Schmitt, *Truth: A Primer* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1995). 6.) For a very helpful overview of several theories of truth, see Norman Geisler and Ron Brooks, *When Skeptics Ask* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1990 chap.12). For an advanced exposition and critique of the various theories of truth, see Richard L. Kirkham, *Theories of Truth: A Critical Introduction* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992). 7.) Regarding this pragmatic, relative view of truth, professor Allan Bloom says the following: "There is one thing a professor can be absolutely certain of: almost every student entering the university believes, or says he believes, that truth is relative." See *The Closing of the American Mind*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987, p.25.) 8.) Ravi has communicated this story at numerous Veritas Forums. 9.) If a thinking relativist attempts to respond to this argument by saying that both the "either/or" and the "both/and" can be true, a similar response follows. For if both the "either/or" and the "both/and" views are true, then this is contrary to just the "either/or" view being true. In other words, either both the "either/or" view and the "both/and" view or just the "either/or" view is true. Once again, the Law of Non-contradiction emerges. It is impossible to deny it without using it.



The *Journal* would like to thank Chad Meister for untangling this issue's "Spider's Web." Chad is Director of Outreach Ministry at The Chapel in Greys Lake, IL. He has an M.A. in Christian Thought/Philosophy of Religion at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School and is currently finishing his Ph.D. in Philosophy at Marquette University. Chad is also on the Advisory Board of Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.

(Continued from page 3)

although my hubby knows I can make those \$\$\$ disappear! My fellow Christians are also physically visible, but our *ties* are not organizational, but organic; resembling a body, not a business.

This structure of the church may have some similarities to Israel of old, but it has some very important differences also, which partly where the cults get their notions of organization, as they declare themselves to be the "true Israel" or the "new Israel," and use the Old Testament as their pattern. What are some of the differences? Israel was not a spiritual body, but a national one. They had a visible land mass, Israel, in a visible place with physical boundaries. They had a visible king. They had a government and a system of laws. How did a person get "in" to "God's people" in that day? He had to be physically, visibly circumcised with physical, tangible, visible, human hands which positively identified one as being part of the people of God.

How is the Body of Christ different from that of today? We have no particular land mass to call our own, no nationality or specific ethnic group; the members of the Body of Christ are "fellow citizens with all the saints" (Ephesians 2:19). In the body, there is neither slave or free, male or female, Jew or Gentile, black or white, nerd or cool...these distinctions are out.

Historically, every time someone has confused national Israel with the Body of Christ, major problems have resulted. In the Middle Ages, for example, men thought they had a right to invade and conquer Israel, so they would have a visible kingdom in the "land of promise," God's "address," so to speak, but we know that wasn't right. The Body of Christ is *not* the nation of Israel, and has not taken her place. For that matter, Rome is not the new Jerusalem, and neither is Brooklyn, NY or Salt Lake City.

Does the Body of Christ have a visible human king to rule over it? No, Christ is the head...Christians are all brothers. The true body is not led by men visible on the earth, but by Christ from heaven. Now I am not saying that there will not be human leaders in local churches that you might visit; but it must be kept in perspective that they are not God, and should never receive either our devotion or our uncritical acceptance of their exegesis of scripture...their leadership is limited and conditional. Is the church a theocracy, as Israel was and will be again when Christ rules from Jerusalem? No. The Mosaic law is merely a tutor to lead us to Christ in order to be declared righteous by faith. We have been adopted as God's sons and daughters (Galatians 3:21-4:7). We are to be led by the Spirit rather than driven by the dictates of men (Romans 8:14-17). This is, of course, an INVISIBLE leading. The Spirit bears witness with our spirits that we are children of God (Romans 8:16). Can anyone "see" this? No, it is an inner mark of God on the spirits of His children.

(Continued from page 7)

The teaching of the Apostle Paul is diametrically opposed to this view. *"You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? Does He then, who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? Even so Abraham BELIEVED God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness"* (Gal. 3:1-6 NASB).

Paul's position is that those who teach such a distorted view are bewitching, or casting a spell or hypnotizing their followers. The Christian believer is completely justified by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. There is nothing in the gospel either stated or implied about salvation by association with a particular group. In fact, the opposite is true. Salvation only comes by having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ one on one.

Some of the things the ICC promotes legalistically are good things, in and of themselves. Having a one hour-quiet time each day is a good thing. Meeting regularly with the Body of Christ is a good

thing. How do we get "in" to the spiritual Body of Christ? Must we go through a "book study" for 6 months, answer 80 questions, and then be dunked in water at a convention of Jehovah's Witnesses? Speaking of this in 1 Corinthians 12:18 Paul says, "But now GOD has placed the members in the body." God did it, invisibly. The whole context of 1 Corinthians 12:12-18 is speaking of the body, and Paul says in verse 13, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." So we are all baptized into the Body of Christ *by the Holy Spirit*. Who can "see" this baptism? No one can: it is INVISIBLE.

What about our circumcision? Paul says in Colossians 2:11 that "in Him you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands..." This circumcision, therefore, cannot VISIBLY identify you as being one of God's people, but it is nevertheless real. When God circumcises your heart, it is a wonderful, freeing thing. You are marked by God on the inside, and you belong to Him (Romans 8:9-11).

So what *is* our part? We are to receive Him, for as John 1:12-13 states, "as many as received Him, to them gave He the power to become children of God, even to those who believe on His name, who were born not of blood, [that is, naturally], nor of the will of the flesh [you can do nothing to earn it], nor by the will of men, [no "God's organization" can bring you IN or put you OUT!], but of God."

Well, where is Christ so we can receive Him? How can we find Him? In Romans 10:8, Paul says the word of faith is NEAR us, and that we must simply call upon the name of the Lord to be saved (Romans 10:13). We are to call upon Jesus for salvation. Just call. How do we know that the "Lord" spoken of in this passage is Jesus, since the New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses have inserted the name "Jehovah" here? 1 Corinthians 1:2 and other scriptures (Acts 9:14, 9:20-21, Acts 22:16-19) teach us that it was Jesus that the early Christians called upon. There is no scriptural evidence of anyone calling upon the name of Jehovah in the New Testament. The WTBS just inserted that so Jesus would not be correctly identified as Jehovah, as Paul obviously sought to do. You call, and you just leave the invisible part to Him. He WILL come in (Revelation 3:20). You won't be able to "see" His entrance, but it will be very real, nonetheless. And the beauty of it is, it doesn't matter if you are near- or far-sighted, or even blind. You will have no difficulty, believe me. If you call upon the Lord, He will find YOU! Ω

Love to all,

Joy

* a.k.a. JWs

** Watchtower Bible and Tract Society

thing. Likewise, supporting missions and evangelizing the lost are extremely important, but all these good things are the fruit of the Christian life, not the means of obtaining it. A disciple is one who follows Christ, but no one can follow Christ without the indwelling Holy Spirit, which is given at the moment of faith and salvation.

The teaching that belief and repentance are two separate "parts of the puzzle" is completely flawed. Repentance is a change of direction and is simultaneous and synonymous with belief. When one moves from unbelief to belief they have at that moment changed direction or "repented." In the last issue of the *Journal*, Joy wrote an excellent article on the place of good works in the experience of the Christian. Salvation is freely imparted by faith; eternal rewards are based on our actions as a Christian.

In the next issue, we will look at baptism and salvation. Ω

Endnotes

- 1.) "Malachi: God's Radical Demand for Remaining Radical," Kip McKean. Delivered at the 1994 Manila World Leadership Conference (#9104).
- 2.) (Kip McKean, "Revolution Through Restoration", *Upside Down*, April 1992).
- 3.) *The Discipleship Dilemma* by Howard W. Norton, Don E. Vinzant & Gene Vinzant, edited by Flavil R. Yeakley, Jr., 1988 by Gospel Advocate Company, p. 62.
- 4.) *Ibid*, p.63.
- 5.) *Ibid*, p.63.
- 6.) *Ibid*, p.64.
- 7.) Taped Congregational Meeting, Indianapolis Church of Christ, Questions and Answers, March 8, 1994, Tues. eve., tape 1.

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Galatians 4:16