

# Dancing With Wolves

**T**here is a cult system for everyone. There are more cults and cult-like organizations in our society today than I have space here to list. Each holds appeal for a different type of person, and it seems that all the bases are covered.

For example, if you are a college student, there are groups on campus, tailor made for idealistic young people who are away from home, and looking for some "truth" to believe in. The Moonies, the International Churches of Christ, and the University Bible Fellowship are only a few of these.

If you are a stay-at-home mom, lonely for company, there are cultic wolves that will waltz right up to your door and offer you a free Bible study or an eternal marriage. For the record, marriage is eternal, according to Jesus (Matthew 22:30), though some may seem more eternal than others!

Are you a person with a grievance against society and a penchant for conspiracy theories? Do you believe that your race is superior to all the rest? Would you like the comfort of blaming others for all your current life's troubles and failures? There are wolves out there who are more than willing to dance with you. There is an important color coding requirement for these particular types of cult groups, however. For example, if you are black, the Nation of Islam may be just the ticket for you, but a white man will probably feel a bit more comfortable in the KKK or the Identity Movement. Nevertheless, these groups have much more in common with each other than people would think. They make excellent dance partners, since they are shuffling to the same tune. Cataloging their similarities would make an interesting topic for another day.

Do you enjoy science fiction? There is a cult enjoying worldwide membership whose founder was a science-fiction writer who used his talents to make the big bucks, and get himself worshipped in the process. Engrams, E-meters, Thetans, and the like can be very seductive, I'm sure, but that is hardly your only science fiction option. You could join a UFO cult, and swap abduction stories and/or government cover-up theories all the day long.

Tired of the patriarchal, male-dominated, religious system of your experience? Would you rather worship a goddess and gain "empowerment?" Like to do your dancing by the light of a full moon? The Fellowship of Isis may be just what you are looking for. We met and interviewed the founder of the Fellowship of Isis, the Most Honorable Lady Olivia, at the Parliament of the World's Religions here in Chicago in 1993. We asked her if the spirit beings that she communes with were *real* or mere Jungian archetypes, as some prefer to see it. She was incensed at the very concept! "Of course they're real!"

she retorted quite crossly. "How would *you* like to be referred to as a Jungian archetype?" Chill, Ms. Olivia! Remember: One person's "real goddess" is another person's "Jungian archetype!" Let's be tolerant of each other's "truth."

Sadly, even Christians are not automatically exempt from participation in this evil hoedown. Jesus warned His followers to be on the lookout for the ravenous wolves that would attempt to seduce them (Matthew 7:15). You think you'd be safe at Grandma's house, but the wolf is in the bed! Ron Henzel was an evangelical pastor who found himself sucked into a psychotherapy cult that nearly destroyed his life. And these days, most cults and even major world religions are willing to add Jesus to the mix, no matter how opposed to Christianity you would suppose the belief system to be. We would expect Bible-based cults to have a Jesus "lure" on their hook, but these days even Hindus and Buddhists speak often and highly of Jesus, though the Jesus they speak of is *not* the Jesus of the Bible.

Cults are not the only dangerous wolves around these parts. False beliefs and pseudo "spirituality" abound in our culture. There are a wide variety of seemingly harmless paths that lead to the deep woods. Love animals? Worried about the environment? Think intolerance is the one thing that must not be tolerated? Watch out! You may buy into much more than bird feeding, recycling, and "live and let live"... and become convinced that God is everything and every-

(Continued on page 2)



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**Wolves (Continued from page 1)**

thing is God, including you and me and Jack the Ripper!

The June 24, 1996 issue of *TIME* magazine ran an article entitled "Faith and Healing," where they led off with the question, "Can prayer, faith and spirituality really improve your physical health?" I'm just the type of small-minded bigot who would immediately pose a counter question. . . Prayer to whom and faith in what? And does the "spirituality" they mention have anything to do with the God of the Bible? These are questions that even Christians fail to ask sometimes, and it can lead them into cultic teachings.

The article states that "Western medicine has spent the past 100 years trying to rid itself of remnants of mysticism," but that recently there has been a "shift among doctors towards the view that there may be more to health than blood cell counts and EKG's, and more to healing than pills and scalpels." Christians have always known that God, THE God, was in the business of healing, but the mysticism that today's doctors are leaning toward has a lot more to do with Shamanism than Biblical Christianity. This article does not even mention Jesus Christ, and clarifies for us what type of "spirituality" they are highlighting in these statements. . . "Many seek solace in the offices of alternative therapists and faith healers, to the tune of \$30 billion a year. . . millions more are spent on best selling books and tapes by New-Age doctors such as Deepak Chopra, Andrew Weil, and Larry Dossey, who offer an appealing blend of medicine and *Eastern flavored spirituality*."

According to *TIME*, "Sociologist Paul Ray, who has been studying the makeup of the self help and healing movements for eight years, calls the eager listeners 'cultural creatives,' some 44-million strong, 60% women, mostly middle and upper class, with auxiliary interests in ecology and women's issues."

What danger could there be in "spirituality," whether Eastern or not? Plenty. Yet, even many Christians or people calling themselves Christian do not seem to understand the dangers of involving themselves with Eastern mysticism. *TIME* quotes a Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ nun, Sister Judian Breitenbach, as saying, "We're moving toward the integration of the East and West, and its happening through health care." *TIME* goes on, "A fan of Chopra's, she sees no conflicts between the new and the old age: 'People are so uptight about this kind of thing. We used to call it trust in God.' " No,

Judian, we used to trust in *the God of the Bible*, which is certainly *not* Chopra's god. Chopra, who has been called by some the Billy Graham of the New Age Movement, holds to Hinduism's pantheistic view that everything is God and God is in everything. *TIME* says of him, "Like all great teachers, he was telling Americans something they already know, in this case, about health. At the same time, he was hinting at something they didn't know, a *simplified Hinduism* that was fascinating to a nation of seekers" (emphasis added). "Chopra says that on a cosmic level, we all exist simultaneously throughout the universe." Riiiiight. . . I'm here, I'm on Mars, I'm now, I'm seven million years ago, I'm ageless, I'm timeless . . . We're to reject the Bible but believe *this*? I don't think so.

The Bible teaches that God is omnipresent, but people are *finite*. Chopra disagrees. *TIME* condenses Chopra's religio/philosophical belief as follows; "Our bodies, which seem so solid and finite, are not. For one thing, we replace most of our component cells regularly; thus, rather than collections of aging organs, we are works in constant progress. On the subatomic level, moreover, we are no denser than the air around us and indistinguishable from our surroundings. Finally, since quantum physics asserts that matter and energy are interchangeable, are not individual beings at all but merely cal expressions of an infinite universal field of energy." Chopra's god is. . . US! Yep. We're all just parts of the universal mind, chips off the old block, each "chip" divine. No offense, Sister Judian, but is this the sort of thing you learned about God, the *real* God, in Catechism class? Do you remember hearing anything at all about the uptight God of the Bible who warns us over and over again not to follow after strange gods, but to remain loyal to Him?

Concerning our own death, Chopra teaches that "Death should hold little fear, since we understand that in our essential identity, as parts of that universal field, we are immortal." Hmmmmmm. . . The 23rd Psalm, revisited: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for my essential identity is universal fieldness. . ." In opposition to Chopra's rosy outlook, however, Hebrews 9:27 teaches that "it is appointed to man to die once, and after this comes judgment." It is true that *Christians* need not fear death or judgment, because our faith in Christ's substitutionary death frees us from the penalty of our sins. But folks who are trusting that their identity as parts of some universal field will assure them of immortality (eternal life) will



be horribly surprised come judgment day. 1 John 5:11-12 makes it pretty clear. "And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son *does not have the life*." Why should anyone trust Chopra's wisdom with his/her *eternal destiny*, especially when Chopra himself admits these grandiose pronouncements of his are "vast assumptions." More like *presumptions*, I would say! Chopra was once dubbed the "Lord of Immortality" by the Maharishi, but someday he will stand before the *real* Lord of Immortality to give an account for his "assumptions." It would not be a good idea, I don't imagine, to be standing *too close* to him when that day arrives. I charitably believe that Sister Judian hasn't a clue about what she has gotten involved with. Perhaps she has only a passing knowledge of the Bible, or perhaps someone has convinced her that the Bible is an outdated book for uptight fundamentalists. I have to believe that she does not realize that, in her search for greater wellness and fulfillment, she has left Christianity behind.

The *TIME* article also introduces us to "Soracco, an Estonian-born 'healer' who draws on Christian, Buddhist, and Native American traditions." Her technique? "Picturing a patient in her mind, she would ask for 'permission to heal' and then start to explore his body in her mind: 'I looked at all the organs as though it is an anatomy book. I could see where things were distressed. These areas are usually dark and murky. I go in there with a white shower and wash it all out.'" I don't know what "Christian" traditions she is supposedly drawing from, but I do not see that form of healing in the Biblical record. In the book of Acts, the apostles did not take the time to "picture" the infirm or "explore their bodies in their minds." As far as we have been told, they did not look for dark and murky areas. "In the name of Jesus, walk!" they said (Acts 3:6-8). They *had* "permission to heal" in the "name of Jesus," something Soracco does not mention at all. As for healing prayer today, God does the healing, not us.

Another form of "spirituality" *TIME* featured was the practice of meditation for stress reduction. Many people, some of them Christians, have told me over the years that meditation is a neutral practice with no real connection to religion. Jewish screenwriter and producer Marty Kaplan writes, "What attracted me to meditation was its *apparent* religious neutrality. You don't have to believe in anything; all you have to do is do it." He goes on to say, "The spirituality of it *ambushed me*. Unwittingly, I was engaging in a practice that has been at the heart of religious mysticism for millennia. To separate 20 minutes from the day with silence and intention is to worship, whether you call it that or not" (emphasis added). I heartily agree with Marty on this point, but I disagree with his contention that the God he found is "common to Moses and Mohammed, to Buddha and Jesus." How do I know that? He tells us that he experiences his God "not only in roses and sunsets but right now, as something not out there but in here. . . ." The God of Moses, YHWH, *created* sunsets, roses, and Marty, but He is *not* part and parcel of His creation. That is an Eastern belief, and antithetical to Christianity and Judaism, which Mr. Kaplan seems not to have noticed. He says, "I used to think of psychic phenomena as New Age flim flam. I used to think of reincarnation as a myth. I used to think the soul was a metaphor. Now I know that there is a God, my God, in here, demanding not faith but experience..." Marty's new-found god is *certainly not* the God of the Bible, who teaches us that faith is *absolutely necessary* to please Him (Hebrews 11:6), that psychic phenomena is not mere "flim flam" but deadly occultism (Deut. 18:9-12), that reincarnation is not a myth but a counterfeit, and that souls like Marty's can be lost forever. I feel for Marty. As he himself said, he was "*ambushed*"... by

a savage wolf who appeared as a stress reducer, I believe.

The main focus of the *TIME* article was to ask if these "spiritual" techniques "work" to cure disease or to reduce stress. Whether something "works" is not the first question for a Christian to ask. The Christian's priority is to determine if such techniques line up with the revealed truth of Scripture, and other outdated, uptight ideas like that. Adultery "works" just as well as marital relations to produce sexual pleasure, but adultery is not for Christians! Yet, being uptight, stick-in-the-mud, left-brained empiricists, we would also like to examine the evidence that these New Age healing techniques truly produce the promised benefit. *Do they "work?"* Well, Soracco's results are claimed to have been "encouraging," but what that means in practical terms is not defined, and no evidence is offered for objective scrutiny.

In Chopra's case, *TIME* informs us that he has decided to shift his focus to writing fiction books, because "Nonfiction, he told *Publisher's Weekly*, leaves people saying, 'Where is the evidence?' And it is so boring to try to address that!" Ooooh yes. . . boring old evidence often gets in the way of "truth". . . It's so much more fun just to make truth claims than to prove them! "It's my destiny to play an infinite number of roles," concludes Chopra philosophically. And the one he plays most convincingly these days involves mangy fur and large canines. . . the better to eat you with, my dears. Ω

Love to all,

*Joy*

***"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God, which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; but from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them."***

*Apostle Paul's farewell message to the Ephesians (Acts 20:28-30).*

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# And Along Came A Spider . . .

## LEAVING A SPIRITUALLY ABUSIVE GROUP

by Ron Henzel

**A**fter three frustrating and disillusioning years, my ministry position in an evangelical church came to a disappointing end in 1987. My wife and I searched for a new church home, but even more, we searched for answers. We longed for a fellowship that exemplified ideal Christian unity. I wondered if, maybe, God really *hadn't* called me to local church ministry. "Perhaps, I should go into Christian counseling," I wondered. My spiritual life was also in decline. I wasn't the kind of person I wanted to be.

Many events led up to my resignation, including my efforts to get counseling for some people in our church. It was at this point a local evangelical pastor referred me to a counseling ministry that sounded promising -- it specialized in people who had been psychologically abused as children, which sounded like a perfect fit for my friends' situation.

But after talking to the head of this "counseling ministry," I was confused. He didn't seem too helpful, nor very interested in my friend I was referring to him. But the counselor was willing to meet with me, so I drove to see him. By the end of our discussion, he had me considering the possibility that I, myself, needed counseling. He didn't deny that the other people in my former church needed counseling, too, but as hindsight showed me, to him I was "a bird in the hand" and worth more to him than "two in the bush."

Over several long, grueling weeks I engaged in "phone counseling" with him. He didn't have time to meet with me in person and, for some reason, didn't mention he ran counseling "groups." Over two months, he gradually stripped me of the roles I continued to play in helping my friends from my former church -- or of doing any kind of ministry whatsoever -- and told me to introspect (he called it "asking God") about my "problem." But every time I thought I'd found "the answer," the counselor would find something wrong with it. When I was fully desperate, he finally invited me to a group.

My very first night in the group, someone spoke about basing my self-esteem upon Christ, instead of my efforts. For some reason -- perhaps out of desperation, I reached out and grabbed this as my "answer," and suddenly the dark cloud over me vanished. Maybe there was something to this "therapy" after all! I did briefly wonder, "If the answer was this simple, why didn't the counselor share it with me at the beginning?" But I quickly suppressed the thought.

I shared my relief, enlightenment, and new-found freedom with the counselor (who was also the group leader). My "crisis" (which, in retrospect, hadn't existed until I met this man) was over. Before, I was vulnerable -- spiritually weak, grieving the loss of a ministry position, worried about my friends, and depressed. Now those clouds had lifted. The counselor recognized I no longer had need of his services, so he quickly changed the subject, "Can you think of any better place to learn counseling?" He then suggested I do some kind of "internship" at his counseling

ministry, a tactic that kept me connected to his group.

The internship seemed like a wonderful opportunity. I had a reference from the evangelical pastor who originally told me about this counselor. There appeared to be a legitimate board and list of references, so I felt safe in casting my lot with this little counseling ministry. I saw so much concern and closeness in the various groups! The leader seemed compassionate and strong. Shortly after I joined, I even sat in on an interview he gave to a nationwide Christian magazine. I knew I still had problems in my life, but couldn't believe how fortunate I was to get this opportunity!

There were a few "red lights" flashing at the front door, which I ignored. First, the counselor had been excommunicated from his church in 1986. His board stood with him through this crisis, and many still think he was wronged. Second, he had also been fired from a well-known youth ministry a few years earlier. He had a pattern of not being able to get along with people, most notably, his own wife. Third, he frequently used profanity. This seemed quite inappropriate for a man who claimed to be a conservative, evangelical Christian. But I and others rationalized it as part of his "therapeutic background," since some therapy groups are known for tolerating profanity.

The counselor disarmed criticism by being very up front about these things. He spoke of being "accountable," but the funny thing was, no one in or outside the groups could ever convince him he was wrong about anything. He had an amazing way of turning the tables on anyone who questioned whether some of his critics might be right. He initially appeared humble, open, and reasonable and even openly confessed some of his sins from years ago, which were often embarrassing! Only gradually could I see how closed off he was toward anything that might tarnish his image.

Within 18 months (by the end of 1988) after I joined, much had changed. The original board of directors had resigned in frustration with trying to hold the counselor accountable. He gave us only very sketchy details about their resignation, some of which were deceptions. The original list of references was also shrinking, because these people criticized him when they discovered how he actually ran his "ministry."

The inner workings of the groups gradually went from warm and loving, to confrontational and controlling. The leader began hammering at us to verbally confess our sins in the group. He kept repeating Bible verses that seemed to justify this. He used humiliation, comparing us unfavorably to secular "12-step" groups, telling us the people in those groups were "more honest" than we were. Sometimes people would make fledgling efforts at confession, but the leader would burst out in a dissatisfaction.

He offered a place where we could be "real" and yet "safe," and the desire for this resonated within us. TRUE fellowship, where we could share EVERYTHING! But somehow, we missed the contradiction be-



tween the counselor's promise of "safety" and his own unsafe behavior: his outbursts of anger, his use of humiliation, his role-playing scare tactics. We were so drawn to his Utopian promise, we were blinded to how disqualified he was to be our Utopian leader.

True, he had a way of seeing "into" people. He called it "the gift of discernment." God told him things. He would tell us of all the people who had praised his "great discernment" over the years, accompanied by stories of how these same people turned away from him when he HAD to tell them what God wanted them to know, i.e., about certain sins in their hearts. But the use of his "gift" didn't end after he had helped others by giving them "self-awareness." It always led to people turning over their decision-making powers to him -- unless they left first.

The counselor also claimed that weight problems were indicative of people who had "issues they refused to deal with" and, yet, he himself was quite overweight. He would loudly declare, "I don't tell you people what to do! I don't run your lives!" But, in practically the next breath, he would tell a married couple to stop having sex or order someone to break off contact with parents. These were some of the many internal contradictions in our group.

Most could not handle the resulting tension. Many left from 1987 to 1990, and the groups became so small they were combined into one. Oddly, instead of three groups that each met weekly, there was now one group which met three times a week! As the demanding nature of the counselor drove people away, the demands he made on our time and energy actually *increased*! It gradually became clear -- although we all suppressed our awareness of it -- that *nothing* would ever be enough!

He had us read "Recovery Movement" books, because many of them advised readers of two primary things: 1) *Everybody* comes from a "dysfunctional" family, and 2) to "recover," you must separate yourself from your family of origin, which had passed the "dysfunction" on to you. Some of these books were written by evangelical Christians, most weren't. But the fact that Christian authors were involved gave us confidence in what we were reading. We were never told exactly how long we'd need to separate from our families, but by 1990, just about everybody in the group had cut off family ties, and we were at the mercy of the counselor. Most of us separated for a very long time. I, myself, separated for three years; others for longer periods of time.

There was never any solid, Biblical reason for doing this, but there was a typical scenario: a) members started "realizing" how "dysfunctional" they were; b) they were further convinced the "dysfunction" came from their family of origin; c) they would try to either separate from their families in order to "heal," or set up family group counseling with the counselor; d) when the family figured out what was

up and they were about to be raked over the coals by the counselor, they would back out; e) then the counselor labeled the family as truly "evil" (as per the book, *People of the Lie*, by M. Scott Peck) and further justified the members' staying away from their families. Sometimes the members' families truly had committed sin. But, instead of the counselor teaching the members how to forgive and move on with life, the leader taught the members how to refuse forgiveness until complete satisfaction was made by the family and thus hold grudges -- all in the name of "healing" and even "reconciliation!"

The same "logic" was applied to our churches. Since all churches were too "sick" for us to belong to, we ended up making the group the equivalent of "church."

Almost everyone in the group was well educated. A few had Master's Degrees. One had a Ph.D. Another was the son of a respected theologian. Nearly all were raised in Christian homes. I, myself, had even been involved in counter-cult/apologetics ministry prior to my church ministry experience. How could we be so misled?

For me, the answer is that the counselor, who had degrees in psychology and communications (which carries heavy doses of group psychology), understood human conditioning processes. He knew how to attract people, how to get them to commit, and how to influence them over time. He had a very behavioristic approach, which didn't work on everybody, but worked on enough people to satisfy him. Those people it didn't "work" on usually left confused and hurting.

He knew how to create credibility and plausibility and how to command respect. He knew how to organize these dynamics in a sequential process so that, eventually, we were convinced he had great discernment, he could read people's hearts, he knew if

we were truly sincere, and he knew if we were making progress in being cured of our "dysfunction."

The requirement to confess sin in the groups became stricter. He required EVERYTHING be brought before the group, in blatant contradiction of what he had previously said, demonstrating how much control he came to exercise.

This burdensome requirement caused some people to drop out, and then "drop back in" ... including me. I eventually confessed deeply embarrassing sins I thought I'd take with me to my grave and soon discovered that sins confessed were NEVER forgotten! They became your "ID Cards" in the group. You would always be "the person who did 'such and such.'" Whenever you questioned the leader, he would haul

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# Liquid Salvation

Part-3 in a series on the Boston Church of Christ  
By L.L. (Don) Veinot

In the last two issues, we have been examining the ICC, or the International Church of Christ. Our first installment covered the history of the movement, and part two was about discipleship as defined and administered by the ICC as meritorious toward salvation. There are six parts to the "puzzle" of salvation, ICC style: discipleship, belief, repentance, confession, baptism, and Christian living. As we pointed out in our last issue, to demand discipleship as a prerequisite to salvation makes the cart pull the horse. We all know that carts cannot pull horses. They have no power to do so. Just so, an unregenerate non-Christian cannot live as a regenerate believer. Discipleship follows salvation. It cannot lead.

The second and third "puzzle pieces" are not truly two different actions but are, in fact, the same thing. Repentance is a change of belief or change of direction. Going from non-belief to belief or turning from sin to righteousness is repentance. The Scriptures teach that salvation is a free gift to those who personally accept Jesus Christ as God and Savior. Romans 10:9-13 states, "...that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved...." Ephesians 2:8-9 says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." In 1 Corinthians 15:1-11, Paul outlines the gospel which he preached as the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the gospel which the Corinthians received (v:1), in which they stood (v:1), and by which they were saved (v:2). He finished with the statement in verse 11, "...so we preach and so you believed." The word here for "believed" is *pisteuo* and carries with it more than the idea of an intellectual acceptance, but committing to or placing our complete trust in Christ and His death, burial, and physical resurrection.

In the above citations, there is nothing expressly stated or even implied linking belief with water baptism to achieve salvation. Paul never tied water baptism to salvation.

According to Matthew 28, *Peter and the ten* (Judas had hanged himself and had not, as yet, been replaced by Matthias) *were sent to baptize*. They also kept the Mosaic Law as believers. The Jerusalem Council was convened in Acts 15 because the Jewish believers had continued in the Law and they were uncertain about whether the Gentiles should be under the Law as well. In Acts 21, almost 30 years after the resurrection, the Jewish believers were *still* practicing the Mosaic traditions, of which water baptism was one. Paul, on the other hand, said that, "...Christ *did not send me to baptize*, but to preach the gospel..." (1 Corinthians 1:17). Paul differentiates between baptism and the gospel, showing that baptism is not part of the gospel. Why did he do that? He tells us in the same verse, "...that the cross of Christ should not be made void." Paul didn't want the rite of baptism or "...cleverness of speech..." to void or nullify, in any way, the gospel of the grace of God. He reiterated the gospel that he preached to this church in 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.

## Acts 2:38, Saved By Water?

One of the main verses which the ICC and the Mainline churches of Christ appeal to in order to support a water-baptism-for-



salvation position is Acts 2:38, which reads, "And Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus

Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'" Their interpretation of this passage is that we must be baptized "in order to obtain" salvation.

In understanding what Peter was saying, we must ask whether the "for" in this passage (in the Greek, "eis") means "in order to obtain?" Well, sometimes the word *for* does mean "in order to obtain," such as in the sentence, "I'm going to the store *for* biscuits." But, it would be very simplistic to suppose that it always has that meaning in Greek or English. If I said, "Would you go to the store *for* me?" would you understand that you were going to the store "in order to obtain" yours truly? That would be absurd. Let's try some other short statements:

- John was beheaded for his faithfulness. *To obtain* his faithfulness?
- The criminal was hung for his crime. *To obtain* his crime?
- The people laughed for joy. *To obtain* joy?
- Christ died for our sins. *To obtain* our sins?
- The child cried for hunger. *To obtain* hunger?

It is apparent from the above examples that "for" doesn't always mean "in order to obtain."

To press the point further, let's go to some Biblical texts which are grammatically similar to Acts 2:38 and compare. Each time we come to the word "eis," please insert "in order to obtain":

Matthew 3:11: "I indeed baptize you with water **unto (eis)** repentance."

Matthew 28:19: "Go... baptizing them **in (eis)** the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Mark 1:9: "...Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John **in (eis)** Jordan."

Acts 19:3: "And he said unto them, **Unto (eis)** what then were ye baptized? And they said, **Unto (eis)** John's baptism."

Matthew 12:41: "...they repented **at (eis)** the preaching of Jonah."

We could continue this examination by looking at Acts 19:3, Romans 6:3-4, 1 Corinthians 1:13, 1:15, 10:2, 12:13 and Galatians 3:27, all having to do with baptism.

So "eis," translated alternately as "for," "in," "unto," or "at," does not always mean "in order to obtain," and the context would



dictate the meaning. Establishing that fact, let us look at the context of Acts 2:38.

In verses 1-13, we see the manifestation of the Spirit on the Jewish disciples. This manifestation occurred on a Jewish feast day, Pentecost; in the Jewish capitol, Jerusalem; in a crowd of Jews both natural-born and proselytes. As the hearers were perplexed regarding these things, Peter stood up to explain to them what these events meant. He addressed them as "Men of Judea, and all you who live in Jerusalem...". This was an entirely Jewish audience. He explained that they were witnessing fulfillment of prophecy from the book of Joel. What nationality was the prophet Joel? A Jew. Who was he prophesying to? The nation of Israel, Jews. What was he prophesying about? The "...last days..." (Acts 2:17), or the tribulation period. A cursory reading of Joel 2:28 through the end of the third chapter bears this out.

Peter tells the hearers that in the "...last days..." God would pour forth His Spirit and that "...Your sons and daughters shall prophesy and your young men will see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both men and women, I will in those days pour forth My Spirit." Who were these sons, daughters, old men, etc.? Jews, of course. A Jewish prophet talking to a Jewish nation concerning future events involving their Jewish sons, daughters, etc. In verse 21, Peter talked about salvation, "And it shall be, that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Everyone who simply calls; no water baptism here.

In verses 22-32, Peter laid out the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. This is similar to what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

In verse 33, Peter told the hearers that Jesus "...poured forth this which you both see and hear." What were they seeing and hearing? The manifestation of the Holy Spirit through Jewish people in fulfillment of Jewish prophecy. In verse 38, Peter told the hearers what they would receive when they repented and were water baptized. He said, "...you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Did he say, "You shall receive salvation," or "You shall receive eternal life," or something to that effect? No, he did not. Peter promised that his hearers will receive the very same thing that they just witnessed, the sign gifts, in fulfillment of prophecy.

Water baptism for (in order to obtain) salvation, is not taught here. Water baptism to receive the Holy Spirit and the accompanying sign gifts is taught. This does create an interesting dilemma for the ICC. You see, they teach that the sign gifts have ceased with the passing of the apostles. Why, then, would they choose to hold on to the water baptism of Acts 2:38, while rejecting the very reason for the act?

### A Cult Cocktail...Scripture With A Twist

The ICC seems to hold the view that all of the New Testament APPLIES to the Church which is the body of Christ. They also believe that Peter's commission and Paul's commission were the same. A third problem arises in that, every time the word "baptism" appears, they seem to automatically interpret that as water baptism. I will deal with these issues in the balance of this and the next article.

First, all of Scripture, both Old and New Testament, is written FOR us, for our instruction and learning at least, but certainly not all of it is written TO us for our obedience. For example, during Jesus' earthly ministry, He plainly stated that He was sent only to the Jews.

Matthew 10:5-7, Jesus told his disciples not to preach or minister to the Gentiles, but only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. In Matthew 15:21-28, Jesus told the Canaanite woman that He was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and that "It is not good to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs" (v:26). Was this same instruction communicated by the Lord to Paul? Of course not,

for Paul was sent to Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Is this a change in commission? Certainly! Does that make God the author of confusion? That would be absurd. Someone may become confused by applying to the Church that which rightfully belongs to Israel, but God did not author that confusion. It was brought on by a lack of contextual reading. At different times, God told Noah to build an ark, Samson to grow his hair, Joshua to walk around Jericho, Peter to preach the "gospel of the kingdom" and Paul to preach the "gospel of the grace of God."

What about this instruction from Jesus, "...sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me" (Matthew 19:21). Did Jesus mean this? Of course. It is obvious from Peter's response to this incident, "Then Peter answered and said to Him, 'Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?'" Another supporting evidence is the actions of the Jewish believers in Acts 2:44-45 and Acts chapter 5.

Jesus also told His disciples, "The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in the chair of Moses; therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds..." (Matthew 23:2-3). What was the job of those in Moses' seat? It was to make sure that the Mosaic Law was strictly followed. Did the Jewish believers do that? Yes, they did (Acts 15:5). In fact, we can see in Acts 21 that the believing Jews were zealous Law keepers more than 25-30 years after the resurrection! I don't believe that this makes God the author of confusion, however, since Acts is the book of transition from the Kingdom program to the establishment of the age of Grace (Eph. 3:1-13). It chronicles the gradual and temporary setting aside of Israel and the ministry of the twelve, and shows the rise and eventual predominance in the Gentile era of the Apostle Paul.

The ICC does recognize this truth where it is convenient, for they *do* speak to Gentiles, they *don't* sell all of their possessions and they *do not* submit to the Jewish leadership and keep the Mosaic Law. Christ taught these things and, yet, Paul taught the Gentiles, including us, to lay them aside. Sometimes Paul accomplished this by direct command, such as when he stated that circumcision was no longer a requirement ... did Peter ever teach this, or James, or even Jesus? Sometimes he taught this by implication, such as at Romans 14:5-6, where he leaves Sabbath keeping to the discretion of the individual. Does this difference between the gospels and the epistles of Paul make God the author of confusion? No, He simply gave different directions at different times to different people for different purposes.

We can clearly see that Peter was commanded to baptize in the Great Commission. Paul, however, equally as clearly said that he was NOT sent to baptize but to preach the gospel. If baptism is part of the gospel, as the ICC claims, then Paul would have been out of line. Possibly Paul was confused and didn't understand his divinely revealed commission as well as the ICC claims they do. Paul clearly stated that he was entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision and Peter with the gospel to the circumcised (Gal. 2:7).

### Contextual Reading

The Bible should be interpreted using the same rules as we would use to interpret other literature. We must ask certain questions in order to understand what the Bible is saying to us today. Who is writing, who are they writing to, when are they writing, what are they saying, and how does it apply to me? It is a severe mishandling of any text to try to mix, match, and distort in order to support a particular teaching.

Let's look at some of the more popular verses which this group

(Continued on page 11)

# A Mother's Story

**H**aving grown up in a small town in western Illinois in a Christian family I, too, became a Christian and have been a life-long member of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod (LCMS). Whenever LDS (Mormon) or Jehovah's Witness missionaries appeared at our door, my mother always made certain my sisters and I knew neither was a Christian religion. During two years of confirmation class instruction, my pastor explained the doctrinal differences between various Christian and non-Christian religions, including Mormonism, Jehovah's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, and Seventh Day Adventists.

As was customary, my husband, also a Christian in the LCMS, and I carried on the tradition of raising our sons in our faith. We attended church and Sunday School together as a family each Sunday, enrolled our sons in our congregation's parochial Christian day school, and faithfully supported our sons during their years of confirmation instruction. During his youth, our eldest son exhibited early signs of a strong religious faith. He wrote worship services and devotions in which he led our family during various holiday celebrations. As a teenager, he enjoyed participation in church youth group activities. While away at college, he attended the LCMS church near campus, where he was active in Bible class studies, etc. These signs caused me to become complacent regarding my son's religious beliefs.

Then, during his senior year of undergraduate school, my eldest son announced to our family, in the presence of both immediate and extended family members who were celebrating Christmas Day at our home, that he had abandoned his life-long Christian religion of Lutheranism to become a baptized member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS Church). How we pleaded and begged him to leave Mormonism! How could this happen? Had his Mormon roommate during his freshman year at college influenced him? The LCMS pastor at his church near campus personally knew our son and informed us that our son had been actively participating in church Bible studies.

At that time, we, as a family, weren't knowledgeable enough to know that Mormonism was a cult, but we shared with our son that Mormonism was a non-Christian religion. From our family visit to Temple Square in Salt Lake City during the '70s, we knew of the LDS teaching about spirit children and celestial marriage in heaven. Additionally, we knew, as most Americans do, that Mormons have practiced polygamy. We didn't believe the LDS teaching that the *Book of Mormon* is another inspired scripture which is more accurate than the Holy Bible; and we considered Joseph Smith to be no more important than any other earthly person, like you and me.

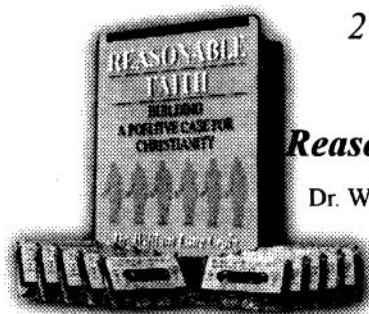
Our son's rejection of our advice as loving, caring Christian parents (brother, grandparents and aunts included) filled me with anger and resentment. Consequently, I embarked on a personal mission to learn why Mormonism is a non-Christian religion, so I would be prepared to prove to my son that the LDS religion is wrong! I began reading and studying books related to Mormonism, many authored by former LDS members. While Mormons, in general, angered me at the onset, the more I read my Bible, the more I realized I needed to change my attitude. I needed to learn to love Mormons as Christ loves, if I ever wanted to become an effective Christian witness. Embarrassed at my son's abandonment of Christianity, I timidly began to reveal to my friends that my son had become a victim of Mormonism. While most friends were compassionate and sympathetic, our conversations and their astonished expressions, upon hearing my informed description of LDS teachings and practices, clearly showed me that most (relatives included) didn't have even the slightest clue that Mormonism is a cult, and most were not familiar with even the basic teachings of the LDS Church.

Meanwhile, our son went on to serve a two-year Mormon mission, during which he was forbidden to have phone contact with his family, except for Mother's Day and Christmas Day. He was permitted to write us weekly, but his letters only included information concerning his mission; he didn't ask personal questions regarding family members. This was quite depressing to me, for we had been a close-knit family. I now know, first-hand, that the LDS TV commercials suggesting "the good family life" which Mormons experience is misleading. They do not tell you, as my husband learned first-hand while counseling a Mormon woman who was attempting to break away from the LDS Church, that a Mormon whose spouse becomes an unbelieving Mormon is expected to divorce that unbelieving spouse and remarry another Mormon. They do not tell you, as a Mormon recently informed my husband, of the physical abuse in Mormon households, sometimes inflicted upon children for not bringing home good grades. And they do not tell you of the depression which is common among Mormon women in general or the high teenage suicide rate in Utah. According to a recent Good Morning America broadcast, Utah [currently 75% Mormon, according to information I learned recently during a trip to Utah] is one of only a handful of U.S. states which has installed divorce kiosks to make easier to commence the divorce process.

Just over a year ago, through an LCMS Northern Illinois District pastor, my husband and I were led to a Witnesses for Freedom representative who, in turn, led us to a Midwest Christian Outreach,

(Continued on page 11)





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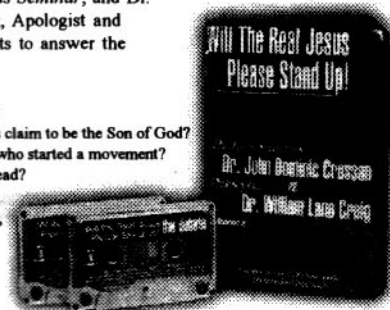
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From (one of) the Editors

## JOIN THE "DEFEND THE FAITH" TEAM!!!

**"O**ur God is big. . . He is big!" (or something very similar to that). That is the response that Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. President, L.L. (Don) Veinot, gave me during a recent telephone conversation we were having about different aspects of the ministry. The response was a direct answer to my questions on how the ministry was going to get through the ministry's current financial crunch. I have always heard "other" ministries, on the radio or in their literature, talk about the "summer crunch" but I never thought that I would be *telling* others about our own "crunch." But that is exactly what I am doing. Our mailing list for the *Journal* increases every month, our volume of calls for help and information is increasing every month. Our income is increasing every month. . . NOT! While we all here would love that to be the case, it is not. At the moment, we are running the ministry on *extremely low resources*. And, while I know that our God is big, I also know that He uses His people to accomplish His will. If you enjoy getting the *Journal* every other month, or listening to *Defend the Faith* on the radio, or if you just like the fact that we are here if you

need us, would you *please* prayerfully consider becoming a regular supporter of this ministry? It is not as hard as you might think. If everyone who reads this could commit to give \$5.00 - \$10.00 each month, the ministry could operate comfortably in the "black." We understand that not everyone can do this. We would also like to ask our readers to consider sending a special gift at this time to help us get through some of our immediate financial difficulties. If you are already one of our few, but faithful, supporters, we sincerely offer you our thanks. If you are not, won't you consider joining our "Defend the Faith" team today?

Thank you and may God bless you in whatever you decide to do.

Todd McGehee

**PS.** Just a reminder of another quick and easy way you can support Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. Switch your long-distance phone carrier to **Lifeline** and 10% of your long-distance phone bill will go toward the support our ministry. Just call the number on the back cover. Thanks.

### **Abusive Group (Continued from page 5)**

them out and throw them back in your face! Any sense of forgiveness could be snatched away at a moment's notice.

When there was no more to confess, the counselor wanted more. So, he had to create more. This came in the form of accusations against our consciences, our motives, our attitudes, our desires - ANYTHING the counselor thought he could "discern." If people showed up in the group wearing slightly unusual clothing, the counselor accused them of pride, or even of "trying to seduce." If a woman made a suggestion to a man that the counselor thought was too forceful, she was accused of "castrating" him. He always had plenty of "reserve ammo" in the form of previous confessions we had made and always found a way of justifying new accusations as ways of "getting us to confess" things we were now hiding, even though we'd previously admitted to being guilty of them.

If we ever objected to an accusation from the counselor, he would throw a previous confession in our faces. "Aren't you the same person who ...?" Then he'd just stare at us in silence. Sometimes he'd start screaming and swearing at us. He claimed such extreme harshness was "necessary" in order to counter the "power" we supposedly projected. This somehow justified his violation of the example of Christ's meekness. He frequently complained about how we "hurt" him and "grieved" him by "forcing" him to act in such a manner. It was a lot like having an abusive parent, although we couldn't see it ... nor could we figure out how to escape.

Over a four-year period, I watched as he elevated a single woman in the group to the status of his near-equal, only to eventually find fault with her and, then, to publicly humiliate her until she, quite literally, barely could crawl away in utter despair! He'd been spending literally scores of hours on the phone with her each month (which was a questionable activity in light of his own extremely poor relationship with his wife) supposedly "mentoring" her. But when he suddenly decided to question her sincerity, the phone calls turned ugly, as did her treatment in the group. He would call her names in front of the rest of us. Names like "seducer," "slut," and "the ultimate deceiver." One day, amidst all the hysteria the counselor had induced in her, she put her little blind son in his wagon and steered it to the leader's house, only a few blocks away. He later accused her of doing this "to sexually seduce him."

He never clarified the exact nature of her supposed "sins," yet she was required to "see" them and repent of them since he had "discerned" them. No one dared to stand up or question. We knew from vast experience the tables would be turned on us as well. The leader's retort would be to accuse anyone who came to another's defense of "rescuing behavior." He taught that "rescuing behavior" always indicated the "rescuer" was protecting the accused in order to hide the fact the "rescuer" was guilty of the same sin! So, to stand up in someone else's defense was treated as an admission of guilt, giving the leader virtually limitless accusatory power.

After this woman barely escaped our group with her sanity, the counselor re-created the same scenario with me, setting me up in a position of leadership only to knock me down. Before I could escape, he accused me of "committing adultery" because I had a 20-second phone conversation with a woman. The nature of that conversation? She asked me how I was doing, and I told her. There was no sexual content whatsoever. There was no attraction between me and that woman. There was no relationship other than that which had been created by our membership in the group. I was very happy with my wife, not looking around for anyone else and, frankly, not attracted to this other woman. It didn't matter. The fact that the counselor made the accusation was satisfaction enough for him and the group, and so began nine months of utter hell for me.

I thought I was the only one in the group who was so evil as to be "unable to see his sin." I begged God to show it to me! I must be truly

reprobate to be so blind! In the midst of grueling introspection and prayer, the leader kept hurling other accusations against me until I no longer knew whether I had ever been a Christian! For much of the summer of 1992, I was only allowed to come to the group meetings for the first 15 minutes and share what "progress" I had made, and then go home. I was "under discipline" in this way until August, when he persuaded I was truly "repentant." As much as I could be of a sin I was not guilty of! I was MORE than repentant!

After that brief period of respite, when there was no more talk of "discipline" and I could stay in the group meetings as long as everyone else, I began to see I was not the only one who was going through hell. It became obvious to me from listening to others, EVERYONE around me was in bondage! I thought, "Maybe I just need a 'time out'; get away for a while, get my head together, and come back when God shows me how it all fits together." On the last Monday in October, I asked permission from the counselor for this "time out," and he gave it. That Friday he called me at work to withdraw permission -- for no reason! -- and demanded my presence at that night's group meeting. I refused.

My wife was still in the group. Over the next few months, the counselor applied as much pressure as he could to intimidate me into either remaining totally silent or coming back to the group. He worked HARD to drive a wedge between my wife and me and only ended up driving her away. He concocted many lies about me and gleefully violated my confidence by sharing the embarrassing sins I confessed in the group with my new friends outside the group. For many months, I was devastated and wanted to do something about it. I can very clearly relate to others who speak of feeling "spiritually raped" after these kinds of experiences. The humiliation and loss of spiritual orientation are difficult to describe.

But I needed to go through it. I needed to see how low my former counselor would stoop to protect himself, even if it meant destroying me. I needed to go through the pain of having my confidence violated by him even to the point of breaking state laws! -- so I could see him for what he was and, as far as I know, remains: a pathetic, self-absorbed, controlling, Pharisaical, lying loser. I know that sounds harsh. I don't want it to be. Perhaps the emphasis should be on "pathetic," rather than on all those other adjectives. Calling him "pathetic" emphasizes the fact I mean him no harm. A person who's pathetic can only harm you if you believe his lies. But therein lies the danger: a pathetic person *can*, nonetheless, harm you, and you need to be aware of just *how* that person can do it. He can do it if you IGNORE his self-absorption, his controlling nature, his Pharisaical condemning spirit, his lies, and his "loser-mentality" (i.e., his tendency to blame everyone else for his own problems). We, in the group, ignored those aspects of his personality. We made excuses for him. And so we fell into his trap of blaming others and set ourselves up to be abused by him the way he had abused countless others before us.

When I first came out of the group, I was EXTREMELY protective of my ex-counselor. I even defended him! I thought he was misunderstood. Only after I repeatedly tried to straighten things out with him did I come face-to-face with his true nature. I've also learned that many, many people take a long time to go through the process of "disillusioning" themselves, i.e., dropping all the comforting illusions about their abusive ex-leaders. It's a common phenomenon. More than three years have passed, and I'm FINALLY able to completely identify him for who he is: a spiritual abuser on the order of "brutal shepherds" of Ezekiel 34 and the Pharisees of Matthew 23. Spiritual abuse is nothing new. It is thousands of years old.

The essence of my recovery process has been to allow God to lead me over time using His appointed means: His Word, prayer, worship, and the fellowship of believers who are "grace-driven" rather than "guilt-driven." I discovered I could share these experiences with spiritual people

*(Continued on next page)*



### Abusive Group (Continued from page 10)

without being labeled a "slanderer," which is what the counselor called anyone who tried to hold him accountable and be understood. I also met others who had been through similar experiences, which was a real comfort because it took away my feelings of being abnormal for falling into this.

It showed me the agony I continued to experience was not unusual and, yet, I learned others had recovered from it, which gave me hope. Books like *Healing Spiritual Abuse* by Ken Blue were enormously helpful. My wife and I now attend Grace Community Bible Church in Roselle, Illinois. Finding a church where the Word of God is central and where it is preached with the same emphasis found in the Bible itself, that is, with an emphasis upon GRACE! -- and where this same grace is extended to all who attend is the first thing I would recommend to anyone seeking to recover from an experience similar to mine. Ω

The Journal would like to thank Ron Henzel for untangling this issue's "spider's web." Ron currently works in the Advancement Division of Wheaton College and is pursuing an M.A. in Biblical Studies at Wheaton College Graduate School.



### Joy's Story (Continued from page 8)

Inc., support group. As we began attending support-group meetings, our healing process began. Thanks be to God, a year later, I am much better prepared to DEFEND MY FAITH to my own family, to cult members and family members of cult victims. I know from I Peter 3:15 that the Lord expects it of me. Our eldest son has since married a Mormon, but our youngest son is a crusader for Christianity. And I hold dear the promise found in Proverbs 22:6 ("Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."). As a pastor recently commented to me, "The Lord is not yet finished with

son!" Ω

Joy Axelsson

**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:

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- ☎ (815) 498-2114

#### For Mormons:

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#### LIVE LINE:

- ☎ (630) 627-9028

### Liquid Salvation (Continued from page 7)

appeals to in an attempt to support the "liquid salvation" which the ICC proposes.

In the third chapter of the Gospel of John, Jesus is talking to Nicodemus. In the fifth verse Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The ICC attempts to make the case that to be "...born of water..." means to be water baptized. In holding that position, the ICC (and Mainline churches of Christ) make essentially the same type of mistake that Nicodemus was making, thinking they can become a spiritual person through natural means. Nicodemus thought Jesus was talking about a physical rebirth (natural means) and the ICC believes that physical water applied through a physical act (baptism) is what brings about spiritual salvation. Let's look at John chapter three in context.

In verse three, Jesus informed Nicodemus that one could not see the kingdom of God unless he (or she) was "born again." That implies TWO births. The first birth is a natural birth (of the flesh), and the second birth is spiritual. Nicodemus missed the point. In verse four, Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?" Nicodemus didn't understand how he could be physically reborn. To this Jesus responds, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water (natural birth) and the Spirit (spiritual birth), he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." To be sure that His analogy wasn't missed, He reiterated it in the next verse. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (v:5). The entire context of the passage is a contrast between natural birth and spiritual birth. There isn't even the slightest hint of baptism in the text. The ICC is under the mistaken idea the natural, physical water is the agent for spiritual regeneration or the new birth. Jesus whole point was that the new birth does not happen by any natural means but is purely a work of the Holy Spirit.

We will finish this series in the next issue as we look at the "baptismal" verses which the ICC uses and distorts. We will place them back into their historical, as well as grammatical, context. Stay tuned! Ω



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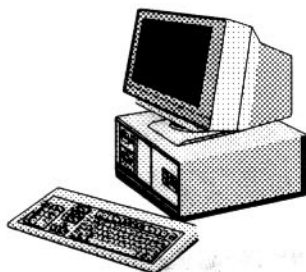
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