

WAR GAMES

by Joy A. Veinot

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTBTS)* has set itself up as the “Grand Inquisitor” of the Christian churches which it lumps all together and calls “Christendom.” The Christian who meets with a Jehovah’s Witness (JW) for a Bible discussion will most often find himself under attack about issues that are not spelled out in the Bible — issues such as holiday celebration, the display of the cross, political neutrality, and especially that old standby, WAR. There really is no need to be defensive about these issues, because the JW has no real ammunition. He is just firing blanks: playing the WAR GAMES he has been taught at his Kingdom Hall. However, since the JW and most Christians he meets at the door have no knowledge of the true history of the Watchtower Society, these War Games can be fairly effective in putting the Christian on the defensive and keeping him there. A little history lesson, therefore, can be most beneficial along with some understanding of the way the WTBTS misuses Scripture and logic to arrive at its erroneous conclusions.

The Society teaches that true Christians are forbidden to fight any wars at any time based on its interpretation of John 18:36 where Jesus told Pilate that His disciples would not take up arms to establish His kingdom. Of course, we needn’t fight to establish Christ’s kingdom, anymore than we need endlessly to announce it. God will set up His kingdom in His own time and by His own power.

The Society further claims that, since Jesus said His followers are “no part of this world” (John 17:16, NWT), Christians today cannot vote or hold any government position. Jesus, indeed, did teach that His followers were no part of this world, but that does not mean that God’s people were forbidden to take part in the political process or join the military. God’s people always have

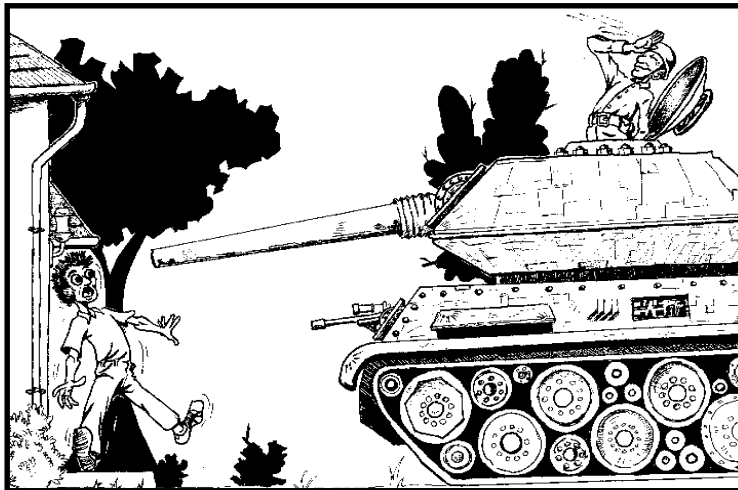
been “no part of this world,” but they have participated in governance and warfare.

The eleventh chapter of Hebrews tells about such heroes of the faith as Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, and many others. Hebrews 11:16 says that these men and women were strangers and aliens on this earth, and they longed for a better country — the country of their real citizenship — heaven. Yet these strangers and aliens,

who were no part of the world they lived in, were very much involved in that world. Verses 33 and 34 tell us that they conquered kingdoms, administered justice, were powerful in battle, and routed foreign enemies. Daniel, of course, was included in this tribute as one who shut the mouths of lions; nonetheless, he was a highly placed government official in the Babylonian empire. He used that God-given position very wisely to effect good in his time and his place. So should we to-

day. Our citizenship is in heaven, but even as strangers and aliens, we are to use the gifts God gives us for the good we can accomplish here.

In all fairness, since the Watchtower Society judges the actions of others based upon its biased interpretation of what it means to be “no part of this world,” we have a legitimate right to question whether its members comply with their own rule. Robert Bowman makes the excellent point that, judged by the Society’s own standard, Jehovah’s Witnesses are just as much a part of this world as anyone else. “Satan’s world” (according to the Watchtower Society) is a three-legged stool comprised of false religion, political governments, and “the greedy oppressive commercial system” (*You Can Live Forever in Paradise Earth*, 1982/89, pp.209-211). For that reason, JWs are forbidden to go to a church, join the military, or be involved in any way with the evil government — except to



We're in the neighborhood to talk about Jehovah's Kingdom

(Continued on next page)

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"Games" (Continued from page 1)
take any food stamps or welfare for which they may qualify.¹

But what about the third leg of that wicked stool? The Society says, "Satan's commercial system, along with false religion and political governments, promotes selfishness, crime, and terrible wars" (ibid., p.210). To be consistent, then, in order to honestly assert that JW's alone are "no part of this world," they must avoid Satan's "greedy, oppressive commercial system" just as scrupulously as they avoid Satan's false religious system or Satan's political system. But they do not, and that leaves them open to the Society's own charge of promoting "selfishness, crime, and terrible wars!" They compromise their stand for the sake of filthy lucre. To say that JW's need to participate in this part of Satan's world in order to get by is a weak excuse, indeed.

Even so, the Watchtower Society, while sitting in self-righteous judgment of "Christendom," lamely instructs its membership to go ahead and take part in Satan's "greedy, oppressive commercial system," merely admonishing them to avoid the dishonest practices associated with it. By that same logic, wouldn't it be okay to be involved in the political process (if you avoided dishonest practices) just as Daniel was in Babylon? The Society's stand is arbitrary and hypocritical.

The next item on the WTBS agenda is to roll out its version of the early church writers to find justification for its view. The Society claims that none of the early Christians participated in the army or other government offices. However, prior to 170 A.D., nothing is said for or against military service. Additionally, the Christians who later spoke against it had reasons that do not apply to us today — such as the persecutions Christians were suffering at the hands of the Roman military and the idolatrous nature of Imperial Roman military service.

But this is what I find most incomprehensible about this line of reasoning: *Why* would the WTBS attempt to buttress its position by bringing up the beliefs and practices of these men? After all, the Society teaches that the early Christian writers were the very ones who brought about the "great apostasy" — corrupting the faith by infusing pagan Greek philosophy into it. Why does the Society demand that we pay no

attention to what apostates of today have to say, while it continually (albeit selectively) quotes the apostates of yesteryear? The Society cannot have it both ways. Either these early writers were true Christians, or they were apostates. They cannot be "Christian apostates," whose theology we must reject, but whose stand on the military we must emulate.

While I do not agree with the Society that the early church writers were apostates, their uninspired writings *are not* the final word on matters of faith and practice. The Bible is our authority. And the Bible mentions that one of the early Christians, a man named Erasmus, was a city treasurer (Romans 16:23). Also, military men, when they came to faith, *were not* told that they must find a new career or else (see Matthew 8:13 and Acts 10). And, of course, *NO ONE* was instructed to "come to Jehovah's organization for salvation" as JW's are instructed today (*WATCHTOWER*,** November 15, 1981, p.21). But I digress ...

What is God's view of war? As much as we may detest the thought of killing and bloodshed, it is obvious from the Old Testament record that GOD is not against it when the cause is a righteous one. I'm not going to try to defend Him, except to say that He is not one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The JW may attempt to counter that obvious truth by saying that the Israelites were forbidden by God to war against each other, citing 1 Kings 12:24 to "prove" their assertion. Funny thing though ... if you look at that verse in context, you will notice that the nation, "God's organization," already was divided into TWO separate nations with separate governments and kings. YHWH was specifically commanding King Rehoboam of "God's organization Judah" at that precise moment in time to refrain from going to war against King Jeroboam of "God's organization Israel." This was hardly a law set in stone for all time. The Bible records that, some years later, "*God routed Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. The Israelites fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their hands*" (2 Chronicles. 13: 15-16, NIV).

The wars between Judah and Israel continued for years; nevertheless, God sent His prophets to both of them and consid-

ered both nations His people. Not only were God's people divided in two, but He took sides in their conflicts as He saw fit.

The idea of it being “unloving” and, therefore, wrong for a Christian today to fight a “brother” has some holes in it as well. It may seem, at first glance, that to use violence of any kind against a Christian brother would be wrong. In fact, the case might be made that it is “unchristian” to strike *anyone* — brother or not. Still, of course, there are exceptions that most fair-minded individuals would allow. Even the Watchtower Society allows for the use of violent force “to protect himself or others.”² If I see a bully beating up on a weaker person or a group of young persons mugging an elderly person, I don't think I would take the time to ascertain the religious beliefs of either the perpetrator(s) or the victim. I would consider it right to intervene — by whatever force necessary.

During one meeting with a JW elder and his mother some years ago, I asked him if he would allow me to beat up his mother or if he would stop me. He actually said he *would not* stop me! Shame on him, in my view, that he would let his allegiance to this false-prophet organization keep him from properly defending his own mother.

Now for the history lesson: The Watchtower Society often brags about its supposed integrity in Nazi Germany during WW II. The August 22, 1995 edition of *AWAKE!* gives a highly propagandized version of the events surrounding the persecution of JWs in Nazi Germany during the early thirties. It relates how the Nazis seized the Society's branch office in Magdeburg and launched a persecution of Jehovah's Witnesses in June of 1933. President Rutherford bravely (from a safe distance and from a free land) stood up to Hitler, issued him an ultimatum, and threatened to expose Nazi persecution to the world if the persecution of JWs did not cease by March 24, 1934. Would the WTBS have exposed the Nazi's cruel persecutions of other groups if the JWs had been exempted?

I guess we'll never know that for sure, but we do know that Rutherford was no friend of the Jewish people. You see, what the *AWAKE!* article leaves out of this narrative is far more telling than what it includes. The rest of the story, as Paul Harvey would say, can be found in the Society's *1934 Yearbook*.

Page 130 of that book reads:

In June [of 1933] the president of the Society visited Germany to take some action to get the Society's property restored to our possession and to carry on the work further.

Pages 131-138 inform us that a declaration of facts was prepared and unanimously adopted by the Witnesses at the Society's 1933 Berlin Convention, and that the resolution was printed and distributed throughout Germany. This “declaration of facts” was

Rutherford's pusillanimous attempt to appease Hitler. In it he says:

It is falsely charged by our enemies that we have received financial support for our work from the Jews. Nothing could be further from the truth. Up to this hour there never has been the slightest bit of money contributed to our work by Jews. We are the faithful followers of Christ Jesus and believe on him as the Savior of the world, whereas the Jews entirely reject Jesus Christ and emphatically deny that he is the Savior ... The greatest and the most oppressive empire on earth is the Anglo-American empire ... It has been the commercial Jews of the British-American empire that have built and carried on Big Business as a means of exploiting and oppressing the peoples of many nations.³ The present government of Germany has declared emphatically against Big Business oppressors and in opposition to the wrongful religious influence in the political affairs of the nation. Instead, therefore, of our

literature and our work's being a menace to the principles of the present government we are the strongest supporters of such high ideals.

Hitler was not impressed with Rutherford's attempted “bedfellowship,” so the persecution of JWs continued. This enraged Rutherford, who then threatened to publish a worldwide exposé of the Nazi's brutality if the persecution did not cease. Again, Hitler was unmoved, and that is why Rutherford began denouncing Hitler and Nazism, safely from his home in the evil, oppressive, Jewish-owned (in his view), American empire. Rutherford agreed with Hitler's “high ideals” so long as that “idealism” was directed at *other* groups.

The aforementioned *AWAKE!* article ironically states that in October of 1934, JWs from 49 countries sent a telegram to Hitler warning him that he must refrain from persecuting Jehovah's Witnesses or “God will destroy you and your national party.” God eventually did destroy Hitler and the Nazis. And how did He accomplish this destruction? With fire and brimstone from heaven? No, through the *armies* of the Allies — the most evil and oppressive empire on the face of the earth — according to Rutherford!

What about the 10,000 Jehovah's Witnesses detained in Nazi concentration camps? Are they not to be considered martyrs? Perhaps. However, being a martyr does not make one a Christian. There have been countless Muslim martyrs throughout the centuries and continuing even today. But all of the Muslims who have died for Islam have died for a lie! And the same holds true for those JWs who were imprisoned or even lost their lives as victims

(Continued on next page)



Don't shoot. . . I'm not armed!

"Games" (Continued from previous page)

of Hitler. They did not die so that righteousness could prevail, nor because they took a righteous stand to protect their defenseless neighbors; they were just following orders. Also what about all the young persons of "Christendom" who died in the struggle that freed the Jews in the camps? Any praise in the *WATCHTOWER* for these Christian martyrs? I haven't seen any.

Next, we must consider the Society's oft-repeated claim that one of the reasons Jesus chose the WTBTs over all the churches of "Christendom" back in 1919 was because "Christendom's" clergy were praising (i.e., "paying homage" to) the proposed League of Nations and had high hopes for that organization. The Society goes so far as to say that those who promoted or even merely admired the League of Nations will "not have their names written upon 'the scroll of life'..." (*WATCHTOWER*, October 1, 1983, p.16). Yet, by this accusation, the Society condemns itself, for the *WATCH TOWER* of February 15, 1919, p.51 gave very high praise and admiration to the proposed League of Nations! To me, the issue is *not* that the Watchtower Society admired the League back then. The issue is that the Society covers it up now while, at the same time, hypocritically condemning others for doing what the Society, itself, did!

Of course, the vast majority of rank-and-file Witnesses are completely ignorant of this deception, taking into account that they have *never seen* that 1919 *WATCH TOWER* and are highly discouraged from reading "old light." (No surprise there, once you learn what's *IN* that "old light.") Witnesses, likewise, generally are unaware that many Christians heartily dislike and distrust the United Nations (and its forerunner, the League of Nations), because the Watchtower Society implies that all of "Christendom" adores these organizations. That is nothing more than sheer propaganda. As for any members of the clergy who did have high hopes for the League of Nations at its inception — isn't it at least *possible* that they liked it because they *detested war* and *strongly desired peace*? This condemning attitude seems incongruent coming from the likes of the pacifist Watchtower Society. "We are the good pacifists; those people are the evil pacifists." Isn't this just another example of Watchtower double-talk?

The Watchtower Society often castigates Augustine's "just war theory" as being an example of "Christendom's" role in the promotion of warfare in the world. Sanctimoniously it asserts, "Christendom's leaders have always been ready to call a war 'just' if it was waged by the country they happen to live in..." (*AWAKE!*, March 22, 1984, p.6). Now for a little history test: Which one of "Christendom's" leaders said:

"We as Christians are opposed to war among truly Christian people; and yet we must acknowledge that some causes of war are more just than others, and of this more just class the wars of the United States seem to have been?"

Go to the head of the class if you guessed that the speaker was Society President Joseph "Judge" Rutherford in the *Golden Age* (the Society's magazine at that time) of February 18, 1920, p.334. Are you beginning to see a pattern here?

What about the issue of neutrality? The WTBTs book, *Rea-*

soning from the Scriptures, p.269 states:

It is a fact of ancient and modern day history that in every nation and under all circumstances true Christians have endeavored to maintain complete neutrality as to conflicts between factions ...

If that is true, then why does the *WATCHTOWER*, May 1, 1994, p.25 claim that:

"it was not until 1939 that the Jews saw clearly the issue of Christian neutrality"???

Moreover, since the Society teaches that there were true Christians down through the centuries — but it has no idea of who they were — how could it possibly know that in every nation and under all circumstances, these (imaginary) Christians maintained complete neutrality?

The Society asserts that Satan "promotes nationalism and tribalism, the belief in the superiority of one nation, race or tribe over others" (*WATCHTOWER*, April 15, 1997, p.10). In addition, on page 112 of the Society's *1986 Yearbook*, the story is told of a man named Andrilina who left his church in disgust and joined the Witnesses "when his minister, during Sunday services, prayed for the victory of the Allied Armies" in WW I. Oh forfend!! But, in its rush to judgment against "Christendom," the Society, once again, neglected to mention that in 1918, the Society called upon the Bible Students (early Jews) to join with the country in praying for the victory of the Allied forces of WW I. I quote:

In accordance with the resolution of Congress of April 2nd, and with the proclamation of the President of the United States of May 11, it is suggested that the Lord's people everywhere make May 30th a day of prayer and supplication. God was graciously pleased to cause this nation to be formed and to grow under the most favorable conditions in the world for the preservation of liberty, civil and religious ... Here the love of truth has for three hundred years attracted from all quarters of the world people who love God, love the Bible and love religious liberty. Countless blessings have flowed to devout people through the wise provisions of the laws of the United States, blessings whose influences have been felt to the remotest corners of the earth, wherever even a spark of love for God-given freedom might be fanned into a glow ... This class (the anointed Bible Students) love to 'assemble themselves together' ... and they will be of all people the most ready to embrace an opportunity of gathering in an additional service of prayer and supplication" (*WATCH TOWER*, June 1, 1918, pp.173-174).

The blessing of "liberty, civil and religious" that the *WATCH TOWER* extols here was bought with the blood of thousands who were willing to fight to secure and defend that "God-given freedom." That sacrifice gave the Society the very liberty it today enjoys to defame those who paid a *terrible price* to obtain it.

Since Jesus could not really have chosen the WTBTs as His channel in 1919 on the basis of its staunch stand against the League of Nations nor its neutrality, why DID He choose it? Why on earth would He? At the very time of His alleged "return" and subse-


quent “appointment” of the Bible Students over all others, they not only were paying admiring “homage” to the League of Nations, but also were celebrating holidays, displaying the cross prominently, teaching that the pyramids in Egypt were “God’s Stone Witness” corroborating their (false) prophetic chronology (Studies In The Scriptures, vol.3 *Thy Kingdom Come*, 1891, p.71), erecting a huge stone pyramid at Russell’s grave site, and teaching that Jesus had come “invisibly in 1874” (Ibid., p.621), among other nefarious things.

The crux of the matter is this: A false history adds up to a false authority from Jesus. The WTBS has never been appointed — either in 1919 (as it claims) nor at any other time. It is not God’s channel of communication. The Society is channeling lies from another source.

The Watchtower Society lays responsibility for all the wars in the Christian era upon the shoulders of the Christian clergy, because the Watchtower Society forbids its members to participate in war, while the clergy do not. It should be obvious that only an organization exerting UNGODLY control of its membership could keep their people in lockstep conformity to its extrabiblical directives. War is undeniably horrible, and Christians have the freedom to be pacifist if that is their conviction. On the other hand, they also have the freedom to consider another viewpoint — the viewpoint that some things (“God-given freedom”) *may just be worth fighting for!* This will be difficult for the JW to grasp, because he has been taught that there only can be one possible way to look at things, and that is whatever viewpoint the Society is advocating at that moment in time.

I use the phrase “at that moment in time” because WTBS “truth” is not stable. The Society could decide tomorrow to *send* its people to war, and the Witnesses would obediently go. If it became expedient, the Watchtower would change its mind about war just as it has for so many cardinal “truths” of the past. JWs who, only a few years ago, confidently asserted that accepting alternate (non-combatant) service in the military *was not* a good thing and was contrary to God’s requirements, now confidently assert that alternate service can be viewed as a “good work [a JW] can perform in obedience to the authorities.” It is obviously not *God’s* requirements that have changed, but the requirements of a handful of men in Brooklyn, NY. (Compare the WTBS book *United in Worship*, 1983, p.167 with the *WATCHTOWER*, May 1, 1996, p.20.)

It is possible for *anyone* to make up some criteria for “true Christianity” and then stamp as “unchristian” anyone who does not meet it. The Watchtower Society is only one such group that does this. However, we must reject WTBS criteria concerning what is true Christianity because it employs an invalid test. The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians, “*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?*” (2 Corinthians 13:5, NASB). He did not say, “Test yourself, to see if you have voted, examine yourself, to see if you agree with the Watchtower’s [current] stand on the military.” The *Bible’s* criteria for true Christianity is the indwelling Christ, but the necessity for that is denied by the chieftains in Brooklyn.

I am not primarily interested in defending the Christian church from unfair attacks. I happen to love the JWs who believe that we are the enemy. The JWs are a people at war — not with “Christendom” — but with God, Himself. Peace with God is obtained solely by faith in Christ, not by faith in Michael the archangel + association with God’s organization + political neutrality + preaching work + shunning apostates + any of the myriad other dictates of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (Romans 5:1, Titus 3:5, Romans 11:6). Jehovah’s Witnesses have never accepted *God’s* terms for peace, having been tricked into accepting the bogus terms expounded in the *WATCHTOWER*. They are ignorant of the righteousness that is obtained by faith and are seeking to establish their own (Romans 10:2-4). Sadly, as much as He loves the Society’s members, God will not accept them on the Society’s terms. They need to lay down their arms, and flee to His. My heart’s desire is that many will do so. 

Love to all,

Joy

*The “clergy” (or government) of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

***WATCHTOWER* and *AWAKE!* are the alternating bi-weekly magazines published by the WTBS which its members must read in order to keep up with the Society’s ever-changing “truth.”

Endnotes

1. *Our Kingdom Ministry*, February 1994, p.7:

“A needy one may find it beneficial to speak with one of the elders. The elders may be aware of government programs that are set up to provide assistance and may be in a position to help complete the paperwork or understand the requirements for such programs.”

2. *AWAKE!*, September 8, 1975, p.28:

“The situation is such that the only thing a person can do is to use whatever is at hand to protect himself or others. As a result, the attacker may receive a fatal blow. From a scriptural standpoint, the one acting in self-defense would not thereby incur bloodguilt.”

3. This issue has been widely discussed on the Internet, and the WTBS is under tremendous pressure to respond to its critics. After this article had been sent to the editors, I received the July 8, 1998 issue of the *AWAKE!* which contained an admission (pp.13-14) that Rutherford had, indeed, written to Hitler, denied having Jewish financial support, and blamed the “commercial Jews” for the current oppression of the peoples of many nations. The *AWAKE!* article then offers the lame excuse that:

“This statement clearly did not refer to the Jewish people in general, and it is regrettable if it has been misunderstood and has given cause for any offense.”

I see. Rutherford was not lambasting the Jewish people in general; but only the oppressive, monied Jews who ran the world. I am not sure that Hitler would have seen the subtle distinction. No, Rutherford knew *exactly* what he was doing by agreeing with Hitler that the Jews were responsible for the world’s ills. I do not know which is more contemptible: Rutherford’s actions during the thirties or the Society’s present attempt to excuse the inexcusable. And, the fact that Rutherford’s condemnation *DID* refer to Jewish people in general clearly can be seen from Rutherford’s statement:

“We are the faithful followers of Christ Jesus, and believe on him as the Savior of the world, whereas the Jews entirely reject Jesus Christ and emphatically deny that he is the Savior of the world sent of God for man’s good.”

This statement, of course, is *nowhere* to be found in the July 8, 1998 *AWAKE!*.

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Bill Gothard's Evangelical Talmud, Part 3:

Gothard and the Law

In Parts 1 and 2, we assessed some of the teachings of Bill Gothard and his Institute in Basic Life Principles (IBLP) through a chronological approach. While we wish to maintain that basic perspective in this series, this article covers such a vast and pervasive topic in Gothard's ministry that it will depart from the chronological format. To evaluate Gothard's teaching on the Law, we must examine it in the context of the overall history of IBLP.

by Ron Henzel

Is Gothard a Legalist?

"Legalism" is a time-honored word Christians use to refer to some kind of misuse of law.¹ Gothard, himself, once used it,² but now he writes:

The word legalism is not a biblical term and should not be used since it has conflicting meanings that are emotionally charged.³

It is interesting that Gothard seeks to legislate how Christians use words and ironic that he chose "legalism." It is reminiscent of George Orwell's "thinkspak" of 1984. Words are the coins of human ideas, and whoever controls their flow becomes a kind of Federal Reserve Board Chairman⁴ of Christian thought. Should anyone have such power?

If we limited our vocabulary to words found in Scripture, then technically we only should speak Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. Even if we extended this rule to include English translations of biblical words, we still could not use important theological terms like "Trinity," "inerrancy," "Calvinism," "Arminianism," or "dispensationalism," all of which have conflicting meanings and emotional overtones for various people. Nor could Gothard, himself, use phrases like "chain of authority" or "umbrella of protection."

Since Gothard has been bombarded with charges of legalism in recent years, we can understand why he would like to erase the word from the English language — but this cannot be allowed. Instead, we must determine the legitimate meanings of "legalism" and consider whether any of them apply to Gothard and IBLP.

When Christians use the word "legalism," they usually are referring to one or more of the following definitions:

1. Keeping the Law as a means of salvation;
2. Keeping the Law's "letter" without keeping its "spirit";
3. Building a "fence" of unnecessary, extra-biblical laws around biblical laws;
4. Imposing obsolete Old Testament (OT) requirements on New Testament (NT) believers.

Gothard denies that we must keep the Law in order to be saved,⁵ so he does not qualify as the first type of legalist.

He also repudiates keeping the "letter" without the "spirit." This would include something that everyone has been guilty of:

hypocritical compliance with God's commands. It also includes the way the Pharisees nullified the Law through human traditions (Matt. 15:1-8; Mark 7:6-13).

When we come to the third definition, however, it does not seem that Gothard can be acquitted of legalism. It was precisely the practice of adding extra commandments to the Law that Christ was referring to when He said, "They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them" (Matt. 23:4, NIV).

The Pharisees (and their rabbinic descendents, who wrote the Talmud) were quite unapologetic about this practice. They believed they were protecting the Law by building a "fence" of extra commandments around it,⁶ and that "tradition" was a "fence" that protected the Law.⁷ The idea was this: the more rules you set up for yourself, the easier it would be to keep from sinning. Thus, there was a rule against a woman looking into a mirror on the Sabbath. Why? Because, if she looked into a mirror, she might see a gray hair; and if she saw it, she might pluck it — and that would be "work" on the Sabbath! Hundreds of other examples could be cited.

It never seemed to occur to them that the resulting thousands of pages of rules and regulations would become far more burdensome than the Mosaic Law ever was! It would also suck the very life out of God's people and make hypocritical compliance an inevitability under the strain of so many do's and don'ts.

With all the "universal, non-optional principles of life" that Gothard's *Basic Seminar Textbook* contains, it is a kind of "Evangelical Talmud." But this does not only apply to the *Basic Seminar Textbook*. As I sit writing this article, I literally have thousands of pages of IBLP materials stacked around me, donated by concerned Christians, all filled with lists of "principles" for living the Christian life. How could anyone who reads them avoid drawing the conclusion that the Christian life is one of extremely complicated rule-keeping?

Gothard even sets up principles for which either a biblical reference is lacking or the one he does supply is questionable. This is a dangerous procedure, as Carl Hoch writes:

What is legalism to one is not legalism to another. People have their own set of extrabiblical rules that seem appropriate to them. But then each person's set

becomes the standard for other Christians. The person who has power and influence will soon gain a large following whose adherents will believe that their “set” is the true set. Those individuals in the group who do not necessarily accept that set as legitimate may still comply out of fear of punishment, ostracism, and “shunning.” All of these supererogations⁹ become identified with Christianity and build up an unnecessary wall between the church and the world. We should not be surprised when people reject Christianity for the wrong reason, thinking that they must give up movies or some other item on someone’s list in order to become a true believer. What a terrible distortion of Scripture and true Christianity! In essence another gospel has been created that leads to confusion within and without the church.⁹

In Gothard’s *How to Respond to the Term Legalism* tract, he does not even mention either the third or fourth definitions listed in this article, and yet, they are among the word’s most common meanings. As for the fourth definition — imposing obsolete OT requirements on NT believers — this takes us into an area of widespread disagreement among Christians: the exact role of OT Law in the Christian life. To evaluate Gothard’s tutelage on this point, we must set it in the context of the broad spectrum of evangelicalism.

Gothard Steps in to Fill a Vacuum

Many feel that the Church has not faithfully done its job in preaching the OT. In 1993, theologian Walter C. Kaiser wrote:

The hunger for someone to give the believing community instruction in the proper use of law is so great that one popular seminar since 1968, focusing on Proverbs (a veritable republication of the law of God in proverbial form, as can be seen from the marginal references to Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy), has literally had tens of thousands of people swarming to its sessions in every major city in North America and now all over the world. [A footnote to this sentence reads: “In the Basic Youth Conflicts seminars.”] This is an indictment on the church and its reticence to preach the moral law of God and to apply it to all aspects of life as indicated in Scripture.¹⁰

A widely respected scholar, Kaiser is well known for his independent position on the relationship between Law and Gospel. He certainly is not a Dispensationalist, but he also is not a Covenant theologian in the traditional sense; and while his remarks fall short of an endorsement of Gothard and IBLP, they urge Christians to have a greater appreciation for the Mosaic Law.

This quote is used as a starting point in order to emphasize the diversity of evangelical opinion on how to relate the Law of Moses to the Christian life, and that this diversity affects the way one evaluates Gothard’s use of the Law. Not all believing scholars follow Kaiser’s view — in fact, he is in a minority camp. (I agree that Christians have sadly lost an appreciation for the Mosaic Law as an important part of Scripture, although I do not accept his view of how Christians should relate to the Law. But our task here is to evaluate Gothard’s view.)

Gothard vs. Matthew 5:17

Among evangelicals, three primary positions on the Mosaic Law exist. They can be distinguished from each other by one simple test: how they interpret Christ’s words, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them” (Matt. 5:17, NIV). More specifically,

each view can be identified by how it interprets the phrase “to fulfill” (Greek: *plerosai*). At the risk of oversimplifying (for variations exist within each viewpoint), the three positions and their adherents are as follows:

1. Christ Revises the Law (Reformed);
2. Christ Replaces the Law (Lutherans and Dispensationalists);
3. Christ Reaffirms the Law (Theonomians and others).

Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox hold to a variation of position two in which the “one true Church,” through its clergy, mediates Christ’s authority in the world. So, in practical terms, they believe the Church replaces the Law.

Since Gothard claims to be an evangelical, we will focus on comparing his position with the standard evangelical positions.

1. Christ Revises the Law (Reformed)

This broad heading does not do justice to the spectrum of Reformed interpretation of Matt. 5:17, but it accurately conveys its results. In Reformed theology, Christ “fulfilled” the Law in the sense of revealing its true meaning and intent — and, to some extent, transcending it. Reformed tradition divides the Law into three categories: moral, civil, and ceremonial. The moral laws are seen as still in force for the Church, but Christ’s ministry helps us better understand them. The civil and ceremonial laws are considered types and shadows of Christ that no longer function as pointing forward to Him, so they have been set aside.

Gothard’s position clearly is not Reformed, since he promotes Mosaic ceremonial law in the areas of abstinence from sexual relations on specific occasions (Leviticus 12 and 15)¹¹ and circumcision.¹² Gothard’s entire rationale for circumcising infants uses the OT in a way that Reformed Christians reject. He urges the need for an actual circumcision ceremony¹³ on the eighth day after the birth of a male child.¹⁴ To document the event, he even provides a “Certificate of Circumcision”¹⁵ (not something I would hang on my wall) with places for signatures from an officiating minister, “medical attendant” (doctor?), family members, and other witnesses.

Regardless of his employment of medical evidence to support his use of ceremonial laws, Gothard ultimately does not promote them for medical reasons. He picks and chooses what he will accept from medical authorities, as he so much as states in his bulletin on circumcision:

In recent years, the time-honored practice of circumcision has been challenged by many groups, including pediatricians.

The attack against circumcision in the United States coincided with the revolt against morality and authority in the 1960s. One of the chief reasons given for not having circumcision was that it decreased a man’s sensual pleasure.

Indeed, uncircumcised men have, as a group,
(Continued on next page)

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"Gothard" (Continued from previous page)

been more promiscuous than circumcised men ...

Because this is one subject which is so strongly commanded and reinforced in Scripture, there is no question what the decision of Christian parents should be on the matter.¹⁶

While one might wonder how Gothard knows so much about the sexual habits of uncircumcised men, it is clear that he does not present circumcision as an option for Christians, but rather, as a moral requirement. This, alone, places Gothard's view outside the Reformed tradition which interprets circumcision as a moral requirement under the Law but not under the Gospel.

2. Christ Replaces the Law (Lutherans and Dispensationalists)

Despite his popularity among Dispensationalists, it would be a mistake to think Gothard is one of them.¹⁷ The dispensational position on the Law can be summarized as follows: "Christians are not under the Law of Moses as a rule of life." This position reads Matt. 5:17 and 18 together, and the emphasis is placed on the phrase "until everything is accomplished" at the end of verse 18. Since Jesus has "accomplished" (or fulfilled) the entire Law, all of it has "passed away" (see v.18) for Christians. The Law remains a vehicle of revelation but not regulation.

Lutherans agree that Mosaic Law is not binding on Christians, but they differ from Dispensationalists in that they allow for "three uses" of the Law. The first use is to restrain evil in the world; the second use is to bring people to an acknowledgment of their sins, so they can understand their need for Christ; the third use is to restrain the remnants of sin that remain in true, regenerated believers.¹⁸

So, what do Dispensationalists say is the "rule of life" for Christians today? When you consider the fact that a wide range of teachers — from John MacArthur, to Charles Ryrie, to Zane Hodges — call themselves "Dispensationalists," the answer obviously varies. But the most common response is that the NT, itself, provides all the moral guidance that believers need.

Gothard's view of the Law is not even close to the Lutheran position. It also is more-or-less opposite that of Dispensationalists. While he does not attack the dispensational view overtly, much of what he writes seems intended to refute that position.¹⁹ He does not admit that the Law has passed away in any sense other than, perhaps, that its sacrificial system has ceased.

3. Christ Reaffirms the Law (Theonomians and others)

Theonomians are a small, fringe group of evangelicals whose origin traces back to Reformed scholar Rousas J. Rushdoony, who insisted in his 1973 book, *The Institutes of Biblical Law*, that the Church should work to bring Mosaic civil laws and penalties (e.g., the death penalty for adulterers, idolaters, and sorcerers) into the law books of modern "Christian societies." Sometimes called Christian Reconstructionists, their views have spread beyond their Reformed birthplace into Pentecostal circles.

Theonomians depart from the Reformed view in that only the moral aspects of the Law apply today, and they believe that only the ceremonial aspects of the Law passed away in Christ. Thus, Gothard is not a Theonomian. However, we can say that, of all the interpretations of Matt. 5:17, this one comes the closest to his po-

sition. Like the Theonomians, Gothard believes Christ's basic meaning was to reaffirm the validity of the Law for all time.²⁰

Nonetheless, Gothard's view goes beyond that of the Theonomians. He, too, believes that modern civil laws should be based on Scripture,²¹ but he also strongly promotes the ceremonial requirements of the Law for Christians today. In this, his belief comes closer to that of a group outside of evangelicalism: Seventh-Day Adventists (SDA).

One of the things Gothard has in common with the SDA is his admiration for a popular book from the 1960s: *None of These Diseases* by S.I. McMillen, M.D.²² McMillen primarily interpreted Mosaic ceremonial laws in medical terms. He was an early popularizer of the notion that circumcision reduces the risk of cervical cancer in women²³ — which has since been repudiated by the American Cancer Society.

Following McMillen's lead, many Bible teachers jumped on the bandwagon, finding medical reasons for the distinction between "clean" and "unclean" foods, the treatment of lepers, the handling of corpses, and numerous other ceremonial requirements which, otherwise, seem inexplicable to modern man. For Christians interested in apologetics, this approach also seemed to provide evidence for the hand of an omniscient God at work in Scripture.

But were health and hygiene the primary (or even partial) reasons that the ceremonial laws were given?

While this view of the ceremonial laws enjoyed its heyday among some commentators,²⁴ it has been thoroughly discussed by Christian scholars and no longer carries much weight. As Gordon J. Wenham observes, the reasons this view does not work can be found in the Scriptures:

First, hygiene can only account for some of the prohibitions. Some of the clean animals are more questionable on hygienic grounds than some of the unclean animals. If ancient Israel had discovered the dangers of eating pork, they might also have discovered that thorough cooking averts it [sic]. In any event, trichinosis is rare in free-range pigs ...

Secondly, the OT gives no hint that it regarded these foods as a danger to health ...

Third, why, if hygiene is the motive, are not poisonous plants classed as unclean?

Finally, if health were the reason for declaring certain foods unclean in the first place, why did our Lord pronounce them clean in his day [Mark 7:19]? Evidence is lacking that the Middle Eastern understanding of hygiene had advanced so far by the first century A.D. that the Levitical laws were unnecessary. Indeed, if the primary purpose of the food laws was hygienic, it is surprising that Jesus abolished them.²⁵

We should add two items to Wenham's list:

First, if ceremonial laws were given for health reasons, then (because our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit) some moral imperative must be attached to those laws. The inspired Apostles should have recognized this and taught believers to keep ceremonial laws as proper stewards of their bodies — but they didn't. Even when they had a Greek Christian in their midst (Titus), the Christian church in Jerusalem did not require him to get circum-

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cised (Gal. 2:3). Ultimately, however, Gothard does not seek to justify “Christian circumcision” on medical grounds; for him it is a matter of biblical “morality.”

Second, to focus on matters of health and hygiene, or interpret Mosaic ceremonies as moral requirements, is to lose the prophetic function of those laws as pointing forward to Christ and to risk removing Christ from the core of the Bible. Paul’s teaching, “*These are a shadow of the things that were to come; the reality, however, is found in Christ*” (Col. 2:17; cf. Heb. 10:1), recedes into the background. Keeping ceremonial requirements becomes the main thing, and we end up trading the substance for the shadow.

To all Christians, especially those who follow Gothard, his teaching on the Law should be quite alarming. It forces us to ask the question, “Is Gothard truly an ‘evangelical’?”

The Historic Christian Position

The historic Christian position on Matt. 5:17 has not been that Christ came to reaffirm the Mosaic Law; but that, in its original form, the Law was provisional and incomplete at some level. The fact that it was necessary for Christ to come and “fulfill” it is proof enough of that. This is a basic area of agreement between the Reformed, Lutherans, and Dispensationalists.

Another area of agreement among evangelicals has been that neither the ceremonial nor the civil aspects of the Law are required of Christians today. Evangelicals take different theological routes, but they arrive at the same conclusion: it is not only unnecessary but wrong for Christians to require others to be circumcised, to keep the Levitical purification rites, or to impose Mosaic civil sanctions.

Gothard has not merely adopted a “fringe” position on the Law; he clearly falls *outside* historic evangelicalism, having gone much further than Theonomianism.

Recently, I explained Gothard’s view to Dr. Walter Elwell, Professor at Wheaton College, during a personal conversation. He identified Gothard’s position (as I explained it) as a “moderate Judaizing” position, because Gothard clearly does not require circumcision for salvation, and yet, he makes it a requirement for Christians.

Full-blown Judaizers, whom we read about in the Book of Acts, required circumcision for salvation. Then there were Jewish Christians who practiced the Law but did not require Gentile Christians to do so. Moderate Judaizers fall in between Judaizers and Law-observing Jewish believers.

So now we should ask: “Is there room in evangelicalism for moderate Judaizers?” An “evangelical” is one who adheres to the gospel message as it was preached in the NT. So does Gothard’s gospel match the Apostle’s gospel? This question goes beyond the scope of this article.

Gothard’s Key Text

Gothard defends his position on the Law by quoting Gal. 3:24 from the KJV: “*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ ...*” Should not Christians follow the Law if it brings people to Christ? Several things need to be noted here.


First, Gothard often misquotes Paul’s verb tense by saying that the Law *is* a schoolmaster. Paul used a past tense (“was” KJV, NIV²⁶) to indicate that the Law no longer functions in this way.

Second, the phrase, “to bring us,” is not in the original Greek (it’s italicized in the KJV). The NIV and NASB add similar phrases, but the NIV provides the alternate translation, “*the law was put in charge until Christ,*” in its margin. Many scholars agree that the Greek preposition “eis” has this temporal meaning of “until” which

fits the context (especially v.25).²⁷ Paul was not so much describing what the Law did (i.e., bring us to Christ) as he was emphasizing its temporary role.

Third, Gothard omits Gal. 3:25, “*But after that faith has come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster,*” where Paul made it clear that the relationship described in v.24 no longer exists for Christians. By quoting Gal. 3:24 out of context, Gothard tries to get Paul to say the opposite of what he intended.

But Is It Legalism?

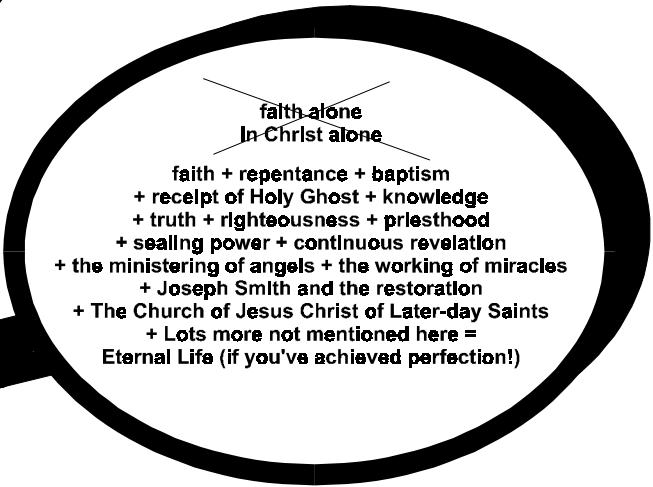
Based on the evidence, we conclude that Gothard is a legalist according to the third and fourth definitions previously listed. Several Bible teachers have observed that legalism inevitably leads to license, because it frustrates the very grace of God. We need to become holy. Instead of being cleansed by God’s Spirit, legalism depends on one’s own efforts; and since man is not up to the task, sin invariably boils over in the human soul. 

ENDNOTES

1. For definitions from three evangelical writers: Erwin W. Lutzer, *How In This World Can I Be Holy?* (Moody Press, 1974), pp.82-92; J.I. Packer, *Concise Theology*, (Tyndale House, 1993), pp.175-77; Charles C. Ryrie, *The Grace of God*, (Moody Press, 1963), pp.73-84.
2. *Instructions for our Most Important Battle*, (IBLP, 1976), p.27.
3. *How to Respond to the Term Legalism*, (IBLP, 1996), p.1.
4. The Federal Reserve Board Chairman heads the agency that controls the American money supply.
5. *Ibid.*
6. *The Mishnah*, tractate Aboth 1:1.
7. Aboth 3:14.
8. Supererogation — the act of performing more than is required, usually for the purpose of gaining merit.
9. Hoch, *All Things New*, (Baker, 1995), p.212.
10. Kaiser, “The Law as God’s Guidance for the Promotion of Holiness,” in *The Law, the Gospel, and the Modern Christian*, (Zondervan, 1993), p.198.
11. *The Unexpected Benefits of Periodic Abstinence in Marriage*, (Medical Training Institute of America [IBLP], Revised 1992), p.5.
12. *How to Make a Wise Decision on Circumcision*, (MTIA, Revised 1992).
13. *Op.cit.*, pp.11-14.
14. *Op.cit.*, pp.7-8.
15. *Op.cit.*, p.15.
16. *Op.cit.*, p.2.
17. Robert J. Sheridan wrote: “... if there is a dispensational approach [in Gothard] it is inconsistent.” *Bill Gothard and Dispensationalism*, (Calvary Bible College, 1984), p.20. However I detect few, if any, dispensational tendencies in Gothard.
18. “Formula of Concord, Article VI,” P. and D. Schaff, eds., *The Creeds of Christendom*, Volume 3, (Baker, reprinted 1985), pp.130-31.
19. See especially point 25, “We Despised His Law,” in *The Power of the Living Church: A Biblical Strategy for Courageous Pastors and Congregations*, (IBLP), p.34.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Be Alert To Spiritual Danger*, (IBLP, 1980), p.12.
22. (Revell, 1963); reprinted numerous times.
23. *None of These Diseases*, pp.17-22.
24. Especially R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, (Eerdmans, 1969), p.605; and R. Laird Harris, “Leviticus,” *Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, Volume 2, (Zondervan, 1990), pp.529-30.
25. Wenham, *Leviticus*, (Eerdmans, 1979), pp.167-168.
26. Also: R.Y.K. Fung, *Galatians* (Eerdmans, 1988). NASB interprets the verb (ginomai, in the perfect tense) as “has become” which is an attempt to bring out the perfect tense but at the cost of introducing ambiguity. It is still not the same as “is.” F.F. Bruce’s use of “has been,” *Galatians*, (Eerdmans, 1982), is a better choice.
27. See Bruce’s and Fung’s commentaries on Galatians.

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The **MORMON** VIEW **Of** SALVATION



by Dave Johnson

There has been much public discussion in recent months, both inside and outside of Bible-believing churches, as to whether The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (commonly known as Mormons) should be considered part of the Christian community. Is it just another Christian denomination? The vigorous and highly visible public relations campaign being presented by the LDS Church is aimed at persuading everyone that Mormons love and serve Jesus Christ the same way as Methodists or Presbyterians.

Two recent events have caused this debate to heat up: First, the publishing of the 1997 book *How Wide the Divide* (co-written by an evangelical scholar and a Mormon apologist) which sought to clarify and minimize the differences between traditional Christianity and Mormonism; and second, the decision by Southern Baptists (among the most conservative of churches) to hold their annual convention this past June in Salt Lake City, Utah (the location of the headquarters of the Mormon Church).

It is not surprising that non-Christian journalists (whose self-appointed role is to support "tolerance" and "pluralism") and Mormon apologists are vociferous in their defense of the "Mormons are true Christians" mantra. Tragically, many Christians are either unsure or completely unaware that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints cannot be considered a part of the body of Christ because it preaches a different God, a different Jesus, and a different gospel.

Perhaps the most important aspect of their different gospel is their teaching on salvation and how it is obtained.

According to traditional Christianity, the terms "salvation" and "eternal life" are synonyms, (having the same meaning) when pertaining to the condition of the human soul. At the time a person trusts Christ as his Savior, he receives the gift of eternal life which he never can lose (John 3:15-16, 5:24, 6:47, 10:27-28). This is NOT the case in Mormonism. As for the LDS doctrine of salvation, there is a significant distinction between the general meaning of "salvation" and what is meant by "eternal life."

Defining the Terms

It is important to understand how the LDS Church defines these terms in order to communicate with Mormons effectively. Like virtually all cults, the Mormons use the same *vocabulary* as Christians but a different *dictionary*. When a Christian asks a Mormon, "Have you been saved?" the latter can respond "Yes" truthfully and sincerely according to his understanding. Yet, the Mormon may be an-

swering a completely different question than the one the Christian intended to ask.

Salvation, according to Mormonism, can mean many things. LDS doctrinal authority Bruce R. McConkie, for many years one of the 12 "apostles" of the Mormon Church, taught that there are three distinct categories of salvation. In his highly respected book, *Mormon Doctrine*, McConkie wrote:

1. Unconditional or general salvation, that which comes by grace alone without obedience to gospel law, **consists in the mere fact of being resurrected.** In this sense salvation is synonymous with immortality; it is the inseparable connection of body and spirit so that the resurrected personage lives forever.

This kind of salvation eventually will come to all mankind, excepting only the sons of perdition ...

But this is not the salvation of righteousness, the salvation which the saints seek. Those who gain only this general or unconditional salvation will still be judged according to their works and receive their places in a terrestrial or a telestial kingdom. They will, therefore, be damned; their eternal progression will be cut short; they will not fill the full measure of their creation, but in eternity will be ministering servants to more worthy persons.

2. Conditional or individual salvation, that which comes by grace coupled with gospel obedience, consists in receiving an inheritance in the **celestial kingdom of God.** This kind of salvation follows faith, repentance, baptism, receipt of the Holy Ghost, and continued righteousness to the end of one's mortal probation. (D. & C. 20:29; 2 Ne. 9:23-24.) ... [D. & C. = *Doctrine & Covenants*, one of the books considered to be Mormon Scripture; 2 Ne. = 2 Nephi, one of the books contained in the *Book of Mormon*]

Even those in the celestial kingdom, however, who do not go on to exaltation, will have immortality only and not eternal life. Along with those of the telestial and terrestrial worlds they will be "ministering servants, to minister for those who are worthy of a far more, and an exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory." They will live "separately and singly" in an unmarried state "without exaltation, in their saved condition, to all eternity." (D. & C. 132:16-17.)

3. Salvation in its true and full meaning is syn-

onymous with **exaltation or eternal life** and consists in gaining an inheritance in the highest of the three heavens within the celestial kingdom. With few exceptions this is the salvation which the scriptures speak. **It is the salvation which the saints seek.** It is of this which the Lord says, "*There is no gift greater than the gift of salvation.*" (D. & C. 6:13.) **This full salvation is obtained in and through the continuation of the family unit in eternity, and those who obtain it are gods.** (D. & C. 131:1-4; 132.)

Full salvation is attained by virtue of knowledge, truth, righteousness, and all true principles. Many conditions must exist in order to make such salvation available to men. **Without the atonement, the gospel, the priesthood, and the sealing power, there would be no salvation.** Without continuous revelation, the ministering of angels, the working of miracles, the prevalence of gifts of the spirit, there would be no salvation. If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, **there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.** (*Doctrines of Salvation*, vol. 2, pp. 1-350.)¹

It is therefore crucial to understand that the Mormon Church teaches that "full salvation" or "eternal life" is the goal of every faithful member, and this is NOT obtained by grace alone but by "obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel."

It also is crucial to understand that in Mormonism the goal of becoming a god or goddess is described by these synonyms: *exaltation, eternal life* and *having an eternal family*. Only those who achieve exaltation have eternal life, and *only* those who have eternal life have an eternal family.

A number of Mormons may be unaware that their church makes these claims, so some quotes from LDS authorities should be helpful in making this case.

McConkie states:

As used in the scriptures, eternal life is the name given to **the kind of life that our Eternal Father lives ... He being God, the life he lives is God's life;** and his name (in the noun sense) being Eternal, the kind of life he lives is eternal life. Thus: **God's life is eternal life; eternal life is God's life — the expressions are synonymous.**²

Mormon founder Joseph Smith declared:

Here, then, is eternal life — to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves, and to be kings and priests to God, the same as all Gods have done before you, namely, by going from one small degree to another, and from a small capacity to a great one.³

The basic LDS teaching manual *Gospel Principles* tells us:

Exaltation is eternal life, the kind of life God lives. He lives in great glory. He is perfect. He possesses all knowledge and all wisdom. He is the Father of spirit children. He is a creator. We can become like our Heavenly Father. This is exaltation ... They [those who obtain eternal life] will become gods.⁴

Joseph Fielding Smith, the tenth president of the Mormon Church, described eternal life this way:

ETERNAL LIFE IS EXALTATION. Now there is a difference between immortality and **eternal life**. Immortality is the gift to live forever. It comes to every creature. **Eternal life is to have the kind of life that God has. All those who become servants will have immortality, but they who become sons and daughters of God will have the additional gift of eternal life, which is the greatest gift of God.**

Eternal life is life in the presence of the Father and the Son. Those who receive it become members of the 'Church of the Firstborn' and are heirs as sons and daughters of God. They receive the fulness of blessings. They become like the Father and the Son and are joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

What is eternal life? It is to have "a continuation of the seeds forever and ever." **No one receives eternal life except those who receive the exaltation.**⁵

LDS Requirements for Eternal Life

How is eternal life obtained in Mormonism? Not by grace alone but by great effort on the part of the individual who seeks it. It is not a gift to be received but a reward to be earned. Joseph Fielding Smith wrote:

None shall receive eternal life save it be those who keep the commandments of the Lord and are entitled thus to enter into his presence.⁶

He explained the requirements for eternal life:

SALVATION COMES BY GRACE, FAITH, AND WORKS. Unless a man will adhere to the doctrine and walk in faith, accepting the truth and observing the commandments as they have been given, it will be impossible for him to receive eternal life, no matter how much he may confess with his lips that Jesus is the Christ, or believe that his Father sent him into the world for the redemption of man...

So it is necessary, not merely that we believe, but that we repent, and **in faith perform good works until the end;** and **then** shall we receive the reward of the faithful and a place in the celestial kingdom of God.⁷

And how strictly must the commandments be observed in order to obtain eternal life?

COMPLETE OBEDIENCE BRINGS ETERNAL LIFE. But to be exalted one must keep the whole law ... to receive the exaltation of the righteous, in other words eternal life, the commandments of the Lord must be kept in all things.⁸

Some Christians may wonder if the Mormon Church really teaches its members that they must flawlessly keep the entirety of God's law. Wouldn't this require perfection? Who, in their right mind, can expect to be perfect? The sad truth is that LDS leaders teach that God not only expects but also *requires* perfection from his children for them to obtain eternal life. Spencer W. Kimball, the twelfth president of the LDS Church, wrote:

Immortality has been accomplished by the Savior's sacrifice. **Eternal life hangs in the balance awaiting the works of men.**

This progress toward eternal life is a matter of achieving perfection. Living all the commandments guarantees total forgiveness of sins and **assures one of exaltation through that perfection which comes**

(Continued on next page)

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“Salvation” (Continued from previous page)

by complying with the formula the Lord gave us. In his Sermon on the Mount he made the command to all men: **“Be ye therefore perfect,** even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Matt. 5:48) **Being perfect means to triumph over sin. This is a mandate from the Lord.** He is just and wise and kind. **He would never require anything** from his children which was not for their benefit and **which was not attainable. Perfection therefore is an achievable goal.**⁹

From the beginning, historic Christianity has denied the idea that human beings inherently are good (this point Mormonism also affirms) or that they can become perfect in this life — even with the help of Christ. The teaching that man can receive eternal life by grace plus his own good works has been thoroughly refuted for thousands of years by biblical writers and great church leaders. “Grace alone!” was the resounding cry of Martin Luther and the Protestant Reformation. Yet, this doctrine has been denounced by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in the harshest of terms:

One of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation.¹⁰

But perhaps the Mormon belief in the insufficiency of grace alone is an early teaching which the LDS Church has since abandoned. Is this the case? On the official web site of the LDS Church, this statement currently is found in the section called “Core Beliefs and Doctrines:”

Through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, all will be resurrected, and through his Atonement, all may partake of his love, mercy, and forgiveness. **All have the potential of eternal life, conditional upon individual worthiness and obedience to the Savior’s ordinances and teachings.**¹¹

In an address at the 168th Annual General Conference of the LDS Church given on April 5, 1998, Apostle Dallin H. Oaks proclaimed the following in a message titled “Have You Been Saved?”:

Finally, in another usage familiar and unique to Latter-day Saints, the words saved and salvation are also used to denote **exaltation or eternal life** (see Abr. 2:11). This is sometimes referred to as the “fulness of salvation” (Bruce R. McConkie, *The Mortal Messiah*, 4 vols. [1979-81], 1:242). **This salvation requires more than repentance and baptism by appropriate priesthood authority. It also requires the making of sacred covenants, including eternal marriage, in the temples of God, and faithfulness to those covenants by enduring to the end. If we use the word salvation to mean “exaltation,” it is premature for any of us to say that we have been “saved” in mortality.** That glorious status can only follow the final judgment of Him who is the Great Judge of the living and the dead.¹²

What the Bible Says About Eternal Life

In stark contrast to Mormon doctrine, the Bible knows nothing of eternal life that is earned by works. According to the Bible, eternal life is a *gift* (something freely given) received by faith alone in Christ alone. Consider the words of Jesus:

*John 3:15-16 That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*¹³

John 4:14 But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall

give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 5:24 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.

John 6:40 And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.

John 6:47 Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.

John 10:28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

John 17:2-3 As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

And examine Paul’s teaching on this subject:

Romans 5:19-21 For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:22-23 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Timothy 1:16 Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

Justification is the Answer

The Christian doctrine of justification is the key to understanding how a sinful person is enabled to have eternal life in the presence of a holy God. Job asked the vexing question, “How can a man be righteous before God?” (Job 9:2, NKJV). The answer is found in justification, the legal or forensic act of God by which He declares the sinner to be righteous on the basis of the perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ.

There are two crucial elements to justification. The first is that man is not justified or perfected by his own works but by faith in Christ:

Acts 13:38-39 Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.

Galatians 2:16 Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

Galatians 2:21 I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.

Galatians 3:11 But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith.

Romans 3:20-24, 28 Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.

Romans 4:4-5 Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Romans 5:1 Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Titus 3:5 Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

The second element of justification is that the Christian's righteousness comes from Christ alone:

2 Corinthians 5:21 For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Philippians 3:8-9 Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

Unfortunately, Mormons do not understand the biblical teaching of justification. Instead, they seek to be righteous by their own works and keeping the law. All Christians should understand about Mormons what Paul understood about unbelieving Israel when he wrote:

... they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth (Rom. 10:2-4).

Paul also opposed the LDS belief that "full salvation" comes by grace PLUS works when he wrote to the Romans:


And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work" (Rom. 11:6).

Grace and works are mutually exclusive when it comes to obtaining eternal life.

Evangelism of Mormons

In summary, Christians need to realize that the Evangelism Explosion* question that is usually effective with most unbelievers doesn't work well with LDS Church members. When a Mor-

mon is asked, "If you were to die today, do you know for certain that you would go to heaven?" he is likely to respond by saying, "Which heaven? I believe in three different heavens."

To be more effective, Christians should ask Mormons, "If you were to die today, do you know that you have eternal life? Are you certain that you will spend all eternity with God the Father?" This gets to the heart of the matter because a knowledgeable and honest Mormon must answer these questions "No!" This opens the door for the Christian to present the true gospel of Christ, that we can know with assurance that we have eternal life (1 John 5:11-13); because, by His death on the cross, Jesus "hath perfected forever them that are being sanctified" (Heb. 10:14). This is the good news that brings eternal life. 

*Evangelism Explosion is an evangelistic outreach program begun by Dr. D. James Kennedy.

NOTES

1. Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2d ed., (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), s.v. "Salvation," 669-70 (emphasis mine).
2. Ibid., s.v. "Eternal Life," 237 (emphasis mine).
3. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Press, 1938), 346-47 (emphasis mine).
4. *Gospel Principles*, (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1992), 302 (emphasis mine).
5. Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation: Sermons and Writings of Joseph Fielding Smith*, ed. Bruce R. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1954-1956), 2:8-9 (emphasis mine).
6. Ibid., 2:4 (emphasis mine).
7. Ibid., 2:311 (emphasis mine).
8. Ibid., 2:6 (emphasis mine).
9. Spencer W. Kimball, *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft Inc., 1972), Ibid., 208-209 (emphasis mine).
10. Ibid., 206-207 (emphasis mine).
11. The Internet address for this material is "http://www.lds.org/Global_Media_Guide/Core_Beliefs_and_Doctrines.html" (emphasis mine).
12. The Internet address for this material is "http://www.lds.org/General_Conference/98_Apr/SunMor/Oaks-Have_You_Been_Saved.html" (emphasis mine).
13. All Bible verses used here are from the King James Version since that is the version used by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

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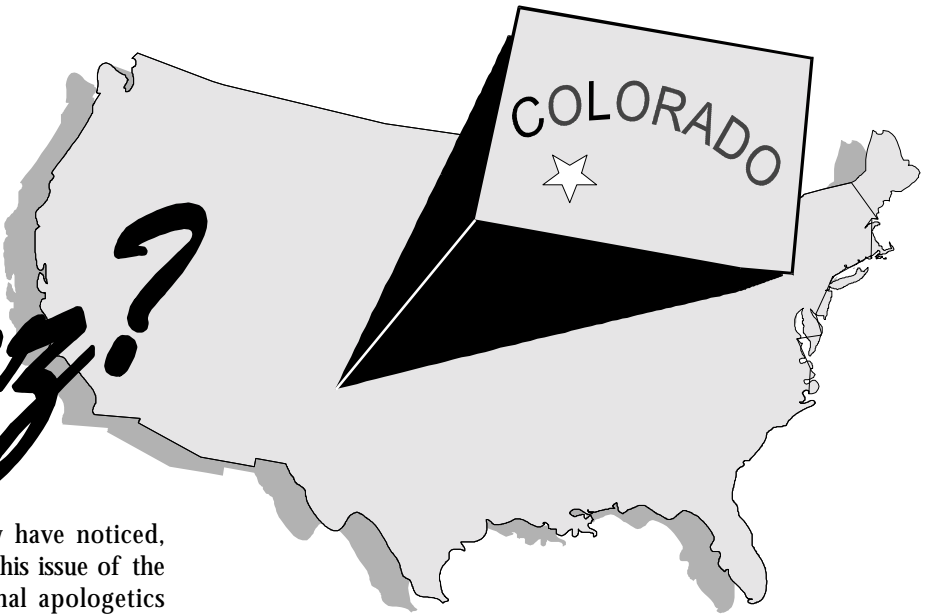


Visa



Discover

Why Cortez?



As you probably have noticed, there is a brochure in this issue of the *Journal* announcing a national apologetics conference to be held in Cortez, Co. from Oct. 30-

Nov. 1, 1998. When I was called and asked to set up this conference I was quite excited about the opportunity. I contacted Dr. Ron Rhodes (Reasoning From The Scriptures Ministry) as a possible plenary speaker and his first question was: "Why Cortez?" After I explained why (which you will find out momentarily), he said: "Why not?"

Next, I called Pastor G. Richard Fisher (Personal Freedom Outreach), and his initial response was: "Why Cortez?" He also agreed after hearing my story. This was the same response from Craig Branch and Clete Hux (Watchman Fellowship), Bill Honsberger (Mission to the Americas), and every plenary speaker and workshop leader who will be there.

Now, you too, may be wondering: "Why Cortez?" My response: "It is someone's gift to her community." Let me explain.

In 1996, my good friend Randy Dean and I, along with several others, went to Israel. (Plan now to join us in March of 1999!) I was seated next to Dani Chaffin from Cortez, CO. In my usual, reticent way, I baited this woman with some provocative spiritual questions — our discussion escalated into a debate that lasted ten days.

She questioned me: "Once you have helped somebody out of a cult, how do you ever prepare them to sort through the confusion and mixed messages of the religion of Christianity?" "How in the postmodern culture we live in, do you ever come to understand the teachings of each cult?" "As Christians, how can we ever defend our faith as the only way to heaven?" "Will you hold the Bible as being inerrant to the same standard as you would hold false prophets?" "Who really assassinated Kennedy?" (She really didn't ask that one!)

Dani had been raised in the church, but she had never heard of a person's "worldview" as the foundation from which one understands all the teachings that abound — especially in these days, when truth has become relative instead of absolute. Suddenly, she realized there were answers for her questions and the Christian worldview could be defended, absolutes established, and doctrine debated in the light of Scripture. Theology could be established across denominational lines, and people could meet in a spirit of growth instead of contention. Since returning from Israel, the idea of a conference to introduce apologetics

to Cortez has grown and finally come to fruition!

In May of this year, I went to Cortez to look at possible conference locations. While I was there, I met with the Ministerial Alliance and encountered another wonderful surprise: I had breakfast with two Assembly of God pastors, one Bible Church pastor, and one Episcopalian pastor — all believers and all very concerned about their community! As we talked about the culture we live in, these men of God shared what was on their hearts and their various concerns for their people. At the Ministerial Alliance meeting, the 10 minutes allowed for my presentation was stretched to 40 minutes. Afterward, several people wanted to go to lunch to talk more.

Over the next several days, we met in smaller groups to brainstorm and pray. The pastors took ownership of this conference in a way I haven't seen in other areas. They are prompting their churches to support this event with prayer and finances. (It is being done on faith with no registration fee for the conference.)

More recently, I received an e-mail from a young man who had been at one of the churches that I had spoken at during my visit to Cortez. He said that he had been at that church as an atheist. He purchased and studied our Basic Defender's Kit intending to prove to his friends (who had taken him) that Christianity was not true. Two days before he e-mailed me, he had accepted Christ as his personal Savior! He is a new believer because of God's awesome talent with coincidences, His wonderful timing, and His willingness to prove Himself to us if we ask!

So what do we have? A group of pastors with enough love and concern for their people to allow the hard questions to be asked, to scrutinize what Christianity believes to be true, and enough security in Christ to risk the development of a local apologetics group! We serve a great God!

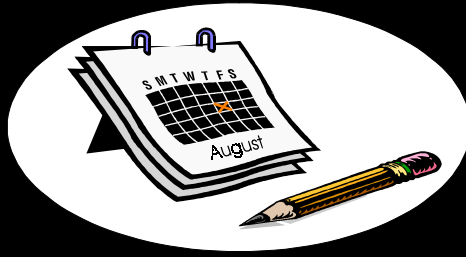
So, my response to: "Why Cortez?"
"Why not?"

See you there,

Don

L.L. (Don) Veinot, Jr.
President,
Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc.

CALENDAR



OF EVENTS

Sun., August 9, 1998; 10:00 AM

Calvary Chapel, 1000 Wellington, Elk Grove Village, IL. Don Veinot will be speaking on *"Leaving the Christian Ghetto."* For info, call 847/895-3545.

Sun., August 29, 1998; 10:00 AM - 3:30 PM

First Baptist Church of Wheaton, 1310 N. Main St., Wheaton, IL. *"Reaching Out To Your Hindu Neighbors"* Seminar. Don Veinot will be speaking on *"New Age: Out On a Very Old Broken Limb."* For info, call Sneha International at 847/289-4538.

Sun., September 6, 1998; 9:15 AM

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 85 S. Constitution Dr., Aurora, IL 60506. Don Veinot will be speaking on *"Thinking About God: What is a Worldview?"* For info, call 630/896-3250.

Sun., September 13, 1998; 9:15 AM

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 85 S. Constitution Dr., Aurora, IL 60506. Al Axelson will be speaking on Mormonism. For info, call 630/896-3250.

Faith Bible Church, 146 S. Maple, Cortez, CO 81321. Don Veinot will be speaking on (TBA). For info, call 970/565-3918.

Sun., September 20, 1998; 9:15 AM

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 85 S. Constitution Dr., Aurora, IL 60506. Don Veinot will be speaking on *"Jehovah's Witnesses: God's Organization?"* For info, call 630/896-3250.

Sun., September 27, 1998; 9:15 AM

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 85 S. Constitution Dr., Aurora, IL 60506. Don Veinot will be speaking on *"Did Jesus Really Rise From The Dead?"* For info, call 630/896-3250.

Fri.-Sun., October 2-4, 1998

Bethel Community Church, 7601 W. Foster Ave., Chicago, IL. EMNR National Conference, *"Cult Evangelism: A Biblical Imperative."* For info, call EMNR at 205/871-2858.

Sun., October 4, 1998; 9:15 AM

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 555 E. Benton St., Aurora, IL 60505. Don Veinot will be speaking on *"Thinking About God: What is a Worldview?"* For info, call 630/820-3450.

Sun., October 11, 1998; 9:15 AM

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 555 E. Benton St., Aurora, IL 60505. Don Veinot will be speaking on *"Did Jesus Really Rise From The Dead?"* For info, call 630/820-3450.

Sun., October 18, 1998; 9:15 AM

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 555 E. Benton St., Aurora, IL 60505. Don Veinot will be speaking on *"Jehovah's Witnesses: God's Organization?"* For info, call 630/820-3450.

Fri.-Sun., October 23-25, 1998

Blue Mountain Christian Retreat, New Ringgold, PA. *"Witnesses Now For Jesus Convention."* Hosted by Personal Freedom Outreach. For info, call 610/381-3661.

Sun., October 25, 1998; 9:15 AM

St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 555 E. Benton St., Aurora, IL 60505. Al Axelson will be speaking on Mormonism. For info, call 630/820-3450.

Fri.-Sun., October 30-November 1, 1998

Cortez, CO. *"Foundations For Faith Conference."* Hosted by Midwest Christian Outreach, Inc. and The Montezuma Ministerial Alliance. For info, call 630/627-9028.

Sat., Nov. 7; 5:00 PM

Sun., Nov. 8; 8:15, 9:30, 11:00 AM

Naperville Bible Church, 1320 E. Naperville Rd., Naperville, IL. Don Veinot will be speaking on *"Designer Faith."* For info, call 630/355-4126.

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.
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IN THIS ISSUE!

War Games	Page 1
Joy A. Veinot	
Gothard and the Law	Page 6
Ron Henzel	
The Mormon View of Salvation	Page 10
Dave Johnson	
Why Cortez?	Page 14
Don Veinot	