

Focus on the Kingdom

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Abolishing Jesus?

Christianity is the only world religion which begins by discarding its own founder's creed (Mark 12:29)

The chaos of many denominations in Christianity is the best proof of the fact that something has gone badly wrong! Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, instructs us to “contend, battle hard, for the faith once and for all handed to the saints” (Jude 3).¹ Thousands of denominations, unable to agree, is proof positive that we have done a very poor job with the teaching of Jude on this point! And we must have done a totally inadequate job with the teachings of Jesus, the founder of our claimed Christian faith.

So what can you and I do to repair a broken system? Our current American politics is laced with discussion about how to repair a broken system. That is, fix a healthcare system, build a wall or not, etc. But no one seems to know about, care much about, or talk about the broken system which is current Christianity, with all its chaotic disagreements and divisions. How well are we doing in view of Paul's directive to us in 1 Corinthians 1:10: “I urge you, brothers and sisters, that you all be in perfect harmony in what you say, that there be no dissensions or factions among you, but that you be perfectly united in your common understanding, opinions and judgments” (Amplified Bible).

So let us call a special counsel to investigate (again note the parallel with current American politics). We can do this simply and easily by starting with Jesus. Start where he started. Where did he start? The straightforward answer is found in Jesus' reply to a fellow Jewish scholar, who, checking Jesus out, asked him: “Master, what is the first and greatest and most important command of all?” (Mark 12:28).

The question was firstly about defining who God is. To get this wrong was to commit the crime of idolatry, worshipping the wrong God, a God one has imagined, a God one has invented for oneself, or a God one has accepted blindly and uncritically. The danger of “group think” is a peril against which Jesus warned very often.

¹ I offer you the full force of the emphatic Bible: “Beloved, my whole concern was to write to you in regard to our common salvation. But I found it necessary and was impelled to write you and urgently appeal to you and exhort you to contend for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints, the faith which is the sum of Christian belief which was delivered verbally to the holy people of God” (Jude 3).

So then, what is the Christian mind, the mind of Christ, on the Great Question about who God is? Jesus gave the answer by quoting the celebrated passage in Deuteronomy 6:4, which Jews were willing to die for. They knew, as God's people, to whom the sacred oracles, the Scriptures, had been entrusted, that there is only One Person who is God. His name was Yahweh, referred to by Israel since probably about 300 BC as ADONAI, the Lord God.

As we look at the basic answer to the problem we defined above about all the confusion in churches, we see immediately that Jesus defined GOD as precisely the One God of the faith of Israel, that is precisely as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses.

There is nothing to argue about here. These are just Bible facts which every real scholar and historian knows about. For example:

Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics has this to say about how Jews defined God: “Abraham, Moses and Elijah were all **equally zealous monotheists**, and in none of their successors was there any retrogression from the highest and **purest form of unitarian belief.**” Another expert: “Mark's point in Mark 12:28ff was to emphasize **the essential orthodoxy of Jesus and his faithfulness to the law...Mark's emphasis on the **strict monotheism** of Christianity was particularly necessary.**”²

When the Regius Professor of Theology at Oxford, Leonard Hodgson, D.D., dedicated a series of lectures on the Trinity in 1944, he reported correctly: “The **monotheism of the Jews** was then, as it is still, **unitarian.**”³

The Jewish Encyclopedia, 1906: “Judaism has always been rigorously **unitarian.**” Emil Brunner: “Judaism [is] **Unitarian.**”⁴ Richard E. Rubenstein: “The monolithic God worshipped by **the Jews** [is worshiped] by...**unitarians.**”⁵ Bishop Beveridge: “The Jews...to this day... still assert that God is only **one in Person**, as well as nature.”⁶

“There was no real doubt as to the great commandment, **the Shema [Mark 12:29]**, which was repeated daily by the Jews. It was the foundation text of

² Dr. D. Nineham, *Pelican Commentary on Mark*, p. 323.

³ *Christian Faith and Practice*, 1952, p. 74.

⁴ *Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, p. 205.

⁵ *When Jesus Became God*, 1999, p. 209.

⁶ *Private Thoughts on Religion*, 1829, p. 66.

their **monotheism**, which was not a speculative theory but a practical conviction.”⁷

Bishop Tom Wright: “The answer Jesus gave [in Mark 12:29] was thoroughly noncontroversial, quoting the most famous of **Jewish** prayers. ‘Hear O Israel, YHVH our God is one.’ The prayer, **the Shema** which begins with these lines, was as central to Judaism **then as it is now...Jesus was a first-century Jewish monotheist.**”⁸

Hugh Anderson: “We must suppose that the Markan form goes back to oral tradition passed on by a Church that **did not any longer recite the Shema. [What was the church doing giving up on Jesus, leaving him behind, departing company with him?!]** But here at least in his statement of the first commandment **Jesus stands foursquare within the orbit of Jewish piety.**”⁹

“The God of whom Jesus speaks is the one God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”¹⁰

“With **the Shema**, Jesus stood in complete and conscious agreement with Pharisaism.”¹¹

For all Jews, “Polytheism is the religion of paganism.” By contrast, **Israel’s monotheism**: God speaks to Moses as “a person speaks to a friend (Ex. 33:11)”

“In order to protect the Oneness of God from every multiplication, watering down, or amalgamation with the surrounding world, Israel chose for itself the verse of the Bible to be its credo, which to this day is impressed on every five-year-old child. This is the confession which Jesus acknowledged as the most important of all the commandments, and which is spoken by every child of Israel in the hour of death: ‘**Hear O Israel**: the Lord our God is One Lord’ (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29).

“After this all other questions shrink to secondary ones. The creed is **the credo of Jesus** and all his brothers and sisters in the flesh. To the average Jew the Trinity sounds much too like polytheism.”

“**The Trinity indeed contradicts the Jewish understanding [i.e. Jesus’ understanding!]** of God. The Apostle Paul held fast to the monotheism of his heritage [1 Cor. 8:4-6], to the monotheism of his lord. In the first century God is still **monotheistic in good Jewish fashion**. In the second century God becomes two-in-one. From the third century God gradually becomes threefold. Only in 381 is the Trinity fixed. Hans Kung laments the genuine concern of many Christians and justified frustration of Jews and Muslims at trying to find in the Trinity the pure faith in One God.

⁷ Arthur Samuel Peake, *A Commentary on the Bible*, 1920, p. 696.

⁸ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 305, 652.

⁹ *New Century Bible Commentary on Mark*, p. 280.

¹⁰ H.H. Wendt, *Teaching of Jesus*, Vol. 1, p. 184.

¹¹ Schlatter, *Wort Jesu*, p. 221.

“The God on the lips of Moses, the prophets and Jesus of Nazareth remained always only the one, only indivisible God of Israel.”¹²

I trust the point is clear and unarguable, and simple. Jesus’ definition of the only God who is to be believed in or worshiped is the God of the Hebrew, i.e. Jewish Bible (our Old Testament). He is the God of the famous **Shema** = “Hear O Israel...” (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29). He is the God who in the New Testament Greek Scriptures appears about **1300 times** as “*The God*,” and often as “the God who is one Person,” or “only one (**monos**) person” (*eis*, pronounced “ees” in modern Greek, meaning “one and not more than one”). You can show that from an exact language parallel: “Abraham was **only one person**” (Isa. 51:2; Ezek. 33:24; Greek *eis*, Heb. *echad*).

This is an easy point and bears repetition. Exactly the same language is used of God as is used of Abraham, who is equally “only one Person” (Ezek. 33:24; Isa. 51:2). Thus the Emphatic Bible captures the same very easy truth in Galatians 3:20: “Now an intermediary has to do with and implies more than one party; there can be no mediator with just one person. Yet **God is only one Person**, and He was the sole party in giving that promise to Abraham.”

The unitarian definition of God is plain, uncomplicated and clear. **He is one Person**. He is also called the Father, the “Father of Jesus Christ” and of Christians. Listen to how well Israel was schooled on this massive truth: “Do we not all have **one Father**? Has not **One God** created us?” (Mal. 2:10). Then remember the 1300 places in the New Testament where “the one GOD” means the Father. And the One God never ever means a Trinity. 11,500 times (roughly 1/3 of all the Bible verses) we read the various titles for God (YHVH, *Elohim*, *Adonai*, *theos*). Not one of them can be shown to mean a Triune God.

Why do we not follow Jesus on the **Great Command**? No one would think of discarding the Lord’s Prayer or the Lord’s Supper, but what about the Lord’s **creed** in Mark 12:29, John 17:3?

No one would imagine disregarding the **Great Commission** as the final summary of Christian obligation (Matt. 28:19-20). But we seem uninterested in knowing about what Jesus called the **Great (in fact the Greatest) of all commands in Mark 12:29**.

There appears to be a gaping hole in the system we have inherited from tradition. Have we been building on sand? Why is it that in church we do not all insist on defining God as Jesus did? Are we really following and **obeying Jesus** at this foundational point? (Heb. 5:9).

¹² Lapse and Moltmann, *Jewish Monotheism and Christian Trinitarian Doctrine*, 1981, p. 27ff.

Eric Chang, Trinitarian turned unitarian, expert and teacher, backed us up with this challenge:

“The fundamental problem created by elevating Jesus to the level of Deity is that a situation is created in which there are at least **two persons who are both equally God**; this brings Trinitarianism into conflict with the **monotheism** of the Bible [and of Jesus]...In regard to the New Testament, it is Trinitarianism that is on trial; **it will have to explain why it has taken the monotheistic Word of God and interpreted it in polytheistic terms**, thereby utterly distorting its fundamental character...Could it not be this distortion that is the reason for the disastrous disappearance of the **Shema** from our prayer lives? Jesus was a thorough-going, monotheistic, **Shema**-reciting Jew. We have redefined the core principle inherent in the **Shema**. Is this valid?”¹³

A leading commentary on Mark (above) asks itself this incriminating question. It wonders why Mark wanted to include **the Shema** in his account (Mark 12:29), since as the author thinks, his audience was “a church which no longer recited the Shema.” Excuse me? A church which had discarded Jesus at the most basic of all levels? This needs to be pondered, and acted upon.

John is sometimes brought forward to undo everything we have shown above. But John is the one who explicitly tells us why he wrote his whole book! **“These things have been written that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**, and by believing this, you might have the life of the age to come” (John 20:31). John is also the one who at the start of his book, as a master-teacher laying out his definitions at the beginning, lists no less than 8 titles to identify who Jesus is:

Jesus is the **Son of Man = The Human Being**, the **Son of God**, the **King of Israel**, **Rabbi**, the **prophet predicted by Moses**, the **Lamb of God**, **Messiah**, **son of Joseph** (John 1:29, 34, 38, 41, 45, 49, 51). Very soon he adds yet another title: Jesus is “the Savior of the world” (John 4:42).

How easy it would have been for him simply to say “Jesus is God” (or to our JW friends, “Jesus is Michael”!). This would have contradicted the very unitarian creed of Jesus in Mark 12:29 and the rest of the Bible. It would make John contradict himself since he tells us why he wrote the whole book: to prove that “Jesus is the Christ” and that life is found in that confession (John 20:31).

John has a dogmatically clear view of how and when the Son of God was brought into existence (that is “begotten”), and it was not in eternity but just as Luke and Matthew report, it was in time and in the womb of Mary some 2000 years ago.

¹³ Chang, *The Only True God*, 2009, p. 2.

Astute NT professors have clearly seen that “John is as undeviating a witness as any in the New Testament to the fundamental tenet of Judaism, **of unitary monotheism** (cp. Rom. 3:30; James 2:19). There is the one true and only God (John 5:44; 17:3); **everything else is idols** (1 John 5:21). In fact nowhere is the Jewishness of John, which has emerged in all recent study, more clear.”¹⁴

The Virginal Begetting in John

John also taught us when and how the Son of God, Jesus, began to exist, was begotten. To follow me here one needs the easy definition of a key word not so much used in current English — the word “beget.” Here is what it means now, and what it also meant in the Greek of the NT:

Beget (typically of a man, sometimes of a man and a woman): **bring (a child) into existence** by the process of reproduction.

Example: “They hoped that the king might beget an heir by his new queen.” Synonyms: to father, sire, have, bring into the world, give life to, bring into being, spawn. Example: “he begat a son.”

The teaching of Matthew and Luke is lucidly clear on this easy point: “The one begotten in her is from holy spirit” (Matt. 1:20). Note carefully that the word here is “beget” which means **to cause to begin to exist**. Yes, the mother, Mary, of course, conceived, but Matthew was emphasizing the **begetting, bringing into existence** of the Son of God by the miracle caused by the Father: “And this is how Jesus the Son began to exist” (see Matt. 1:18, the “genesis, origin,” of Jesus). The same truth is carefully stated in Luke 1:35.

Little known to the public is the fact that in John 1:13 John described the same origin of the Son. The oldest known reading of that verse applies it to Jesus and not to Christians. The (older) Jerusalem Bible has this in its text: “**he who was begotten**, not of blood nor of the will of flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” rather than “they who were begotten...”

John 1:13 in most translations says that believers in Jesus become children of God not through any of the three natural causes mentioned, but through God who is the immediate cause of the new spiritual life. They were born (the Greek verb can also mean “begotten”) — not from a male, or “born” from a female, or from human parents. However, **the variant version reads in the Greek “he who was begotten,” asserting Jesus’ virginal conception.** The New Jerusalem Bible says in its footnote, “There are strong arguments for reading ‘**who was born.**’”

¹⁴ J.A.T. Robinson, *Twelve More New Testament Studies*, 1984, p. 175.

A well-known German translator of the NT, Albrecht, says: "I follow here a very old reading known to Irenaeus and Tertullian. The simple 'was born' was indeed the dominant reading in the West from the 2nd to 4th century and in the East in old sources it left significant traces. **John recognizes here emphatically the virginal conception and birth of the Son.**"¹⁵

Another prominent NT scholar has this to say: "There are strong reasons for John 1:13 reading 'he who was born [i.e. Jesus] not of the will of man...but of God.' For John would then have expressly acknowledged the traditions in Matthew 1 and Luke 1...I have become convinced of the originality of the reading 'he who was begotten' which prevailed until the fourth century in the western Church...According to the original text in John 1:13...John describes the **begetting and birth** of Jesus without the assistance of a man...There is no doubt that John calls Jesus the unique Son of God because of this wonderful entrance into human life."¹⁶

All of this of course confirms Matthew 1:18, 20 and Luke 1:35, which describe with complete clarity how and when Jesus the Son began to exist. If this information had been believed and clung to, along with **the Shema**, the whole doctrine of the Trinity could never have started.

Jesus cannot possibly have believed he was GOD, second member of a Trinity. The creed he affirmed in Mark 12:29 denied any such idea. And in John 17:3 in his final prayer to God, Jesus spoke of God as "the only one who is true God." He then placed himself alongside God as the "one sent or commissioned by God."

Now consider this astonishing information (show your friends): When the Trinitarian Augustine came to John 17:3, he was stuck! He crashed in to the notion that only the Father was God. This was not Augustine's tradition. So what did he do? Repent and believe the words of Jesus? Alas, no, he simply rewrote the text of Scripture. In his *Homilies on John* he said, "The proper order of the words is, 'That they may know You and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent, as the only true God.'"

John 17:3 is an absolutely clear statement repeating the **Shema** (Mark 12:29), and Psalm 110:1 repeats the very same truth. "The Lord (YHVH) sent an oracle to my lord" (**adoni** in the Hebrew, and it always means, all 195 times, non-Deity). The one God, the Father, now has an immortalized **human being at His right hand** (Ps. 110:1). The unique position of the Father as the one God of the Bible is not in any way disturbed by the session of the non-Deity lord at the right hand of God.

¹⁵ Albrecht New Testament, my translation from German.

¹⁶ Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, pp. 266, 288, 310.

1 Timothy 2:5 speaks of the one God and the **man** Messiah Jesus. 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 speaks of Christians as abandoning idols and turning to God, **the one true and living God**, and then eagerly looking forward to the Second Coming of His Son from heaven, Jesus, the one whom God raised from the dead and who will rescue us from the vengeance to come. The **unitary monotheism** of the entire Scriptures can facilitate unity among billions of Muslims, Christians and Jews, combined.✧

Psalm 110:1 Made Simple

by Etienne Curnow, France

I spy, with my little eye,
 Something that ends with an "ai"
 When "adon" ends with "ai"
 Then that tells you and I,
 It's the upper case Lord God on high.
 It's the only one called El Shaddai.
 I see, in good commentary,
 Something that ends with an "ee"
 When "adon" ends with "ee"
 Then that tells you and me,
 It's a lord of a lesser degree.
 It's a lower case non-Deity,
 Whether king in his lordly attire,
 Or lord husband, or landowning squire,
 Or the prophesied man, lord Messiah.

The Cult That Snapped by Karl Kahler Review and Commentary by Barbara Buzzard

I was asked to do this review. It has been very painful. We have known many ex-Way people who have either not known about the hideous practices of the Way International (once considered the 2nd largest cult in the U.S.), or did not want to know or in some way defended it. But unless you admit that you have been scammed or deceived, where is the discernment that is required of us? And do you not owe a debt of responsibility to save others from the same fate? There is a saying to the effect that not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until/unless it is faced.

And so here is a snapshot of the cult leader, V.P. Wierwille, guru of some 40,000 victims in The Way's heyday. You should know that Wierwille sided with neo-Nazis in denying the Holocaust and put Jews at the top of his hate list. He became famous for the slogan "Word Over the World" (albeit a perverted "word") and controlled people in 50 states, six continents and 40 countries.

"People join cults because they cross paths with cultists who single them out for attention, love, a hug, a sales pitch. The recruiters are victims themselves, normal people who were taken in by other recruiters and

expertly trained to use the same tactics that worked so well for them.”¹⁷

The Way classes were based on information overload. Some describe the experience as the mind going comatose, being bombarded and having no time to think or consider, being “tranced out.” “I quickly accepted what I was told. When the voice on the cassette claimed he was a Greek scholar, I’d believe it. When he’d explain passages in the Bible, I’d accept it...But looking back, I realize there was no message. The message was mind control.”¹⁸ Cigarettes and even joints were often a part of this.

Speaking in Tongues Was Mandatory

A class was considered a failure (and there were to be none of those!) unless each student spoke in tongues at the end. Our author said to another student after that experience: “Guess what? You don’t have to believe God raised Jesus Christ from the dead to speak in tongues.”

“I know,” she said.

“Speaking in tongues is easy, if you can force yourself to speak gibberish. With no thought for how foolish you sound, you push syllables out of your mouth that link up to form nonsense words, a string of which will make a whole sentence of gobbledygook. Keep this up and you can speak volumes.”¹⁹

It Gets Worse – a Sinister Way

(Believe it or not, I am sparing you the worst.) It was made plain to author Kahler when he was a student that any kind of cuddling, hugging or kissing inside “the family” was not only allowable but encouraged. But even this did not pave the way to imagine what went on in the leadership.

As per the author, “The Way’s crime is not unorthodox teaching; it’s murder of the mind. The Way erases people’s identities and gives them new ones. It takes away everything they believed previously and replaces it with what The Way wants them to believe.”²⁰

Kahler summarizes: “Dr. Wierwille was a spiritual quack whose doctorate came from a degree mill and whose ordination was revoked by the church that gave it to him. He liked to be called ‘the man of God,’ though after his death he would be called ‘egomaniac,’ ‘paranoid’ and ‘sex addict.’ He claimed that God audibly promised to teach him the Word as it hadn’t been known since the first century, yet he was a renowned plagiarist and a laughable Greek scholar.”²¹

Kahler reasons that Wierwille “found his shtick” in coming to the conclusion that **you** are in control when

speaking in tongues and exhibiting the other gifts, i.e. *not* the holy spirit, but *you*. He applied this false logic to the other gifts, the commonly used phrase being “all nine all the time.”

Kahler says: “I took the Intermediate Class and learned to interpret tongues and prophesy. (The secret, though no one would ever admit it, is you make it all up.)”

Follow the “Man of God,” Right or Wrong

Wierwille and the ‘60s were made for each other. “He had been bucking the establishment his whole life, and now the nation’s young were catching on to what he knew all along: the establishment was one big counterfeit.”²² And so the hippies provided just the audience that he needed, rather like harnessing a tidal wave. He hijacked the Jesus Movement. There would be Bibles on laps, with owners spaced out on drugs. He apparently liked and later used this model of love (!?), sex and drugs, creating “groovy” Christians. The girls were taught to be harlots and the men adulterous.

Many slogans were invented around that time, the creepiest being: “Follow the man of God, right or wrong.” As Kahler says, the kids were attracted by grace but as soon as they were “in” Wierwille pulled it back and put them under the law, in keeping with his megalomaniacal and egomaniacal tyrannical style.

Please know that at this point that I was forcing myself to keep going with this book. It was like a nightmare that I just wanted to be *over*, and I wanted to see our main character out of harm’s way. And also I thought that I should plow through it so that you wouldn’t have to. There are about 300 pages in the book.

After the first 100 pages, I thought, *This is nuts!*

After 200 pages, I thought, *This is sick!*

After 300 pages, I thought, *No, this is really filthy!*

So please do not read this book *unless* you are one who still defends Wierwille or his Way or some part of it that you liked. Remember, even a broken clock is right twice a day. The man apparently had a voracious appetite for flesh, a quality which he recommended for his ministerial leaders. He is described by those who knew him as an unhinged bully with a vastly swollen head, hurting everyone he met.

Did you know that there was a bomb-proof bunker at their headquarters, stocked with gold and silver, “all kinds of survival equipment, armaments you wouldn’t believe, Uzis, various kinds of shotguns, long-range rifles, grenade launchers, plastic explosives, a lot of explosives”²³ Craig Martindale was reported to have said that there were thousands of weapons hidden in stockpiles in Ohio, Colorado, New Mexico and

¹⁷ Karl Kahler, *The Cult that Snapped*, 2010, p. 21.

¹⁸ Judy Galen, *Glamour* mag.

¹⁹ *The Cult that Snapped*, p. 54

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 43

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44

²² *Ibid.*, p. 67

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 111

California. A sort of warfare school was started in order to prepare for the apocalypse.

“Tactics, not beliefs, make a cult a cult. And The Way met every test.”

“Charismatic leader who claimed to have a special connection to God? Check. Blind following who believed his every word was revelation? Check. Drastic personality change in new members, who are then separated from their families and warned against them? Check. Every aspect of followers’ lives directed and controlled by their leaders? Check.”²⁴ And so on.

What Makes a False Prophet?

“On at least three occasions in the late 1970s, Wierwille predicted a national emergency on the scale of a communist takeover — and then claimed the prayer and believing of The Way had averted it.”²⁵ (Clever.)

Also in 1979 he told the Corps to get their guns and prepare to defend against a nuclear attack. When it didn’t happen, he told them that it was the speaking in tongues which prevented it!

How the Cult Dynamic Works

Nine Way Corps members were asked: “If Dr. Wierwille were to hand you a machine gun and order you to kill your fellow members, would you do it?” Four answered yes. Kahler reports that the *Kansas City Star* spoke to “former Way members who say without hesitation they gladly would have killed anyone, including their own parents, if Mr. Wierwille had asked.”²⁶

One of the women involved with Wierwille says that 2 Peter 2 in the Living Bible describes him brilliantly: “They are a disgrace and a stain among you, deceiving you by living in foul sin on the side while they join your love feasts as though they were honest men. No woman can escape their sinful stare, and of adultery they never have enough. They make a game of luring unstable women.” She continues: “Forget the spiritual side—he was sick...He was a male nymphomaniac.” It is said that he died a tormented man.

Kahler quotes John Lynn as saying: “More than one woman has personally told me that Dr. Wierwille taught her, verbally and by example, that sex outside of marriage is not only permissible, but profitable.”²⁷

Lynn continues in an *Overview of Events*: “There’s no way I could begin to remember 10 percent of the horror stories that I have heard about him...I’m talking sexual abuse...Hollywood would not believe it...I know he was perverted...an insatiable sex addict.” (And there are other mentions of leaders with similar perversions.) Toward the demise of the Way, some in the leadership

actually began looking into whether adultery was forbidden in Scripture. Seriously? (I couldn’t make this stuff up!)

A Sordid Way

I knew that this had to be coming and I can’t begin to tell you how I dreaded it. But with the multiple thousands of cases of approved and recommended adultery, the Way insisted that abortion was not murder. I wept as I read about this. It is truly heartbreaking. Abortion was a way of life, routine and common in The Way. *The leader and his disciples were monsters in advocating the dismemberment or poisoning of an innocent and vulnerable child.*

A Vile Way

Kahler has woven his own personal story into his description of The Way. I wish that he had not included his own sexual exploits. He comes out of The Way as an unbeliever, in my view scarred and defiled by all that he saw and experienced. He is certainly a bright journalist. Perhaps he has performed a service in informing all those who didn’t know. He has certainly revealed the grotesque and revolting behavior of the leaders. If only one fraction of it is true...

And where was Mrs. Wierwille in all this?! Had she only shouted and screamed and blown the whistle, she might have saved thousands of women from abuse! (Extracts from the book show that she knew; indeed, Kahler says, everybody knew.) What a ghastly tragedy that she failed to save so many from the horrible pain they endured. Any attempt to defend this depravity becomes as the depravity itself. So says Proverbs 17:15: “He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.” Good people are not allowed to remain silent in the face of evil. I am so very, very sorry for all who got caught up in this, who have suffered so terribly. Some committed suicide; others left with agonizing memories. There were good, naïve people who became embroiled in this. My heart breaks for them — they were tormented, abused and defiled. And I grieve for all those who have been put off any nuggets of truth they might have learned by the disgrace and ill repute that this charlatan has brought, and for any truths that were sullied by contact with this group.

A Depraved Way

What went wrong? I humbly suggest that what was missing was *conversion*. I am not sure that the word was ever mentioned. Yes, they *worked* the Word but they *perverted* it. The Word was not sacred, not holy, but a thing to be *used*. There was no repentance! There was just license to sin. Instead of victory over sin, sin was indulged in. As the saying went, they “sinned up a storm.” All the crassness, filth, vulgarity and immorality of the culture was incorporated into the foundation of this movement. Their devotion to the false notion of

²⁴ Ibid., p. 137

²⁵ Ibid., p. 143

²⁶ Ibid., p. 144

²⁷ John Lynn *Dearest Way Believer*

“once saved, always saved” blinded them to the Scriptures. Their denial of baptism blinded them to repentance.

To have created a church without repentance and conversion is to have created something foreign to Scripture, with the exception of the Matthew 7:21 false variety. And according to the pattern in Romans 10:14 — how could the members repent and be converted without this message being preached to them?

The spiritual darkness present in The Way makes the current sexual harassment accusations in the media, in Hollywood and in Congress look almost Pollyanna-ish. “If the light in you is darkness, **what awful darkness that is!**” (Matt. 6:23b).

Addendum

While I have reviewed what is written in this book I cannot corroborate those allegations. It appears, however, that the leaders chosen by Wierwille have, in fact, written very similar stories, as have other former members. I am happy to report that The Way currently is only a shadow of its former self.

Another book describing life in The Way comes highly recommended: *Losing the Way: A Memoir of Longing, Manipulation, Abuse and Escape* by Kristen Skedgell. An excerpt follows:

“I remember one incident vividly in which I questioned ‘the Doctor,’ the leader of the group, about the ethicalness of his behavior. He quoted Scripture and explained that I needed to be ‘spiritually mature’ to understand. The Doctor taught that if one’s mind was pure enough, one could do anything with one’s body. God did not care about the flesh. The sexual needs of the leaders were to be satisfied by females who were submitting to ‘the will of God’. He commanded me to keep our sexual encounters in the ‘lockbox of my soul’ — never to be spoken of or revealed to anyone else. ‘What if someone finds out?’ I asked naively. ‘Why, I’d lie,’ he said.

“Trauma experts have long advocated the necessity of ‘bearing witness’ to one’s abuse. Why? Because truth is acknowledged and affirmed in the context of community. Personal truth becomes understood when it is spoken.” ✧

Comments

“I am reading your book on the Trinity and get a lot of help in understanding the truth. I sent copies to my friends also, so we’re learning. I sometimes felt like I was losing my faith (and mind too!) while discovering that Jesus can’t be God. I doubted Jesus’ equality with the Father since maybe 3 years. Then I saw more and more clearly that He is the image of the invisible Father and that He received both power and authority from

God. Reading the history of the dogma helped me to see the truth.” — *Sweden*

“I am inspired to email you today after re-watching the Trinitarian vs. Unitarian debate on YouTube where you and another gentleman defended your position — fascinating debate. I have this year hit a huge milestone in concluding in my mind that Hell in the traditional understanding is a false and demonic doctrine. I am now an annihilationist. Your videos were a great help to me in my studies so I thank you for creating them. Another book which helped was Mr. E. Fudge’s book *The Fire That Consumes*. Interesting that it all comes down to the false doctrine of the immortal soul — again demonic no doubt as it is very similar to the Devil’s original lie in Eden.” — *England*

Dallas Meeting

My name is Robin Todd. I am the U.S. Home Missions Coordinator for the Church of God General Conference. You may also know me as the administrator of the website scatteredbrethren.org which is an ongoing work to bring together scattered brethren of the faith into local fellowship with one another.

The Church of God General Conference is sponsoring a meet-and-greet event with Sir Anthony Buzzard in the Dallas/Fort Worth area on Saturday, **February 3rd from 1-5 p.m.** The purpose of this event will be to briefly introduce you to the Church of God General Conference and to give you the opportunity to hear from Anthony Buzzard and from Kegan Chandler, author of *The God of Jesus in Light of Christian Dogma*. Also, some have indicated a desire to start a fellowship in this part of the country, and we will be happy to discuss this with those who have an interest, and facilitate that effort. There will be plenty of time for questions and personal interaction.

This event will take place at the Courtyard and TownePlace Suites, near the DFW Airport North. The address is 2200 Bass Pro Court, Grapevine, Texas. You are heartily invited to attend! There will be snacks and beverages available at the event.

On behalf of the Church of God, and Anthony Buzzard, we look forward to meeting you and sharing our common faith. Please tell your friends and family. If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to send me an email at robinsings4u@comcast.net

Save the Date!
2018 Theological Conference
May 3-6, 2018
Hampton, Georgia