

# Focus on the Kingdom

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## Was I Truly a Follower of The Way?

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

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In October of 1972 I became personally involved with The Way Ministry in Dallas, Texas, shortly after my dynamic, life-altering introduction to “The Jesus Revolution.” On June 17th of that same year I had stood up in a large crowd in downtown Dallas, in response to Billy Graham’s “altar call,” in order to accept the essence of John 3:16. This downtown gathering was the last day of a massive, week-long event called Explo ’72 (due to its intention to have an *explosive*, evangelical impact). Months later, I was still giddy from the overwhelming excitement of having gone quickly from holding vague agnostic beliefs — and a negative outlook on life — to exuberantly embracing a form of Christianity within a handful of different groups, mostly with a Pentecostal-Charismatic focus. One such group was known as “The Way International,” in which I would eventually participate enthusiastically for decades.

Perhaps a tiny bit of historical background concerning the Way’s powerful growth near that time (the late sixties and early seventies) in close conjunction with “The Jesus People Movement” (or “The Jesus Revolution”) will be of interest. In a meticulously detailed analysis titled *God’s Forever Family (The Jesus People Movement in America)* by Larry Eskridge, one can see the roots of The Way’s dynamic growth, beginning as a relatively small, local ministry in western Ohio. On pages 50-52 (subheading: *Pastor Wierwille Comes Calling*) and pages 106-109 (subheading: *The Way West and East*) one sees the eventual impact of Victor Paul Wierwille’s 1968 visit to early leaders (like Ted Wise) of the Living Room and the House of Acts centers in the Haight Ashbury district of San Francisco. Two key couples, Steve and Sandi Heefner and Jim and Judy Doop (pronounced “Dopp”) became increasingly influenced by Wierwille’s systematic Bible teachings, as compiled in a class called Power For Abundant Living (PAL or PFAL). Extremely rapid outreach through “The Way West” (in California) and “The Way East” (in Rye, New York) quickly sparked a nationwide growth of mostly young people, avidly receiving and promoting Wierwille’s recorded, 33-hour package of PFAL instruction.

The name of “The Way” (used since the 1950s) was derived from the basic concept (as indicated in Acts 9:2

and other references), that believers in the Messiah were called “the Way” before being called “Christians” (Acts 11:26). It was all because first-century believers considered themselves to be followers of Jesus, who was designated as “the way, the truth, and the life” in John 14:6.

### Sincerity vs. the Truth

I now repeat my title, a somewhat rhetorical question: **Was I truly a follower of The Way?** Or, considering my close association with fellow colleagues for decades, were *we* truly followers of The Way? To lucidly approach such a challenging question, of course, means assessing some of our basic “Way Ministry” beliefs and practices in light of a humble, panoramic view of the Scriptures, which we ardently professed as our sole standard for determining what is important and true.

Before delving into a few biblical, logical, and historical factors, I would like to simply mention that I am not in any doubt about the strong degree of **sincerity** among the devoted folks from my background! Nevertheless, I freely remind *us*, as a dedicated group, of an old “Way” proverb, used quite boldly by Victor Paul Wierwille in his 1967 recording of the PFAL class: **“Sincerity is no guarantee of truth.”** So, instead of settling for a comfortable, sincere set of convictions we must always challenge ourselves to stay **truthful**. I can certainly recall that **now** — having come to the stark realization that I had been badly **mistaken** about key, vital, biblical truths for three or four decades!

I can certainly be thankful for many good aspects of learning and for fond friendship memories throughout the years, while at the same time becoming **discerning** about **misleading influences**. Many times, I have had to ask myself quite frankly: Did I ever go with the flow of questionable doctrines, habits, and examples due to coercive pressure to conform to a group-think mentality?

### Dispensationalism

Now I would like to address a system of beliefs about salvation on which I formerly staked my life. This highly condensed presentation of what took me several years to unravel might be a real challenge to assimilate in one sitting!

The underlying assumption which is basic to Way theology (and many of The Way’s continued, modern splinter groups) is that the four Gospels are **not**

**addressed** to Christians, but they were written **to** Jews only in an “administration” (a period of time) **before** the Day of Pentecost (this teaching is really an adaptation of the “dispensational” theology of E.W. Bullinger, who wrote the extensive notes for *The Companion Bible*). We even gave practical examples of how Jesus’ teachings in the Gospels were not relevant for Christians (as seen on pages 207-225 of the book: *Power for Abundant Living* by Victor Paul Wierwille). So “salvation” for those becoming Christians, according to fundamental Way theology, was not based at all on Jesus’ words and warnings, nor on his repeated plea for **repentance** from sinful or ignorant behavior.

We in The Way based salvation on sincerely **confessing Jesus as lord** (according to a formulaic usage of Romans 10:9) and believing in Jesus’ resurrection. We embraced this simplistic system joyfully, while failing to see the stark irony of professing Jesus’ lordship **without** being committed to following and obeying his teachings. For example, in Luke 6:46 Jesus asks, “Why do you call me ‘lord, lord,’ but don’t do what I tell you to do?” We, as a group, missed Jesus’ point very badly!

Historically, “dispensationalism” (the theological distinguishing between strict time periods) is a fairly “new” theoretical model which was developed in England among the followers of Edward Irving and, more famously, among the Plymouth Brethren (under the leadership of J.N. Darby) in about 1830, many centuries after the New Testament was written. Later on, the Scofield Bible (with dispensational study notes) became quite popular in the U.S.A. A key component of this theology is the idea of a *pre-tribulation rapture* (or a “gathering together” of Christians before the “great tribulation” begins). This “rapture” would **not** be preceded by any signs. This is a very popular but highly misleading idea which contradicts Matthew chapter 24, 2 Thessalonians chapter 2, and many other relevant passages, showing Jesus’ return to be **after** the “great tribulation.”

However, despite the faulty dispensational assumptions in The Way, the new covenant writings themselves never, ever downplay the vital importance of believing and practicing Jesus’ direct words (John 12:44-50). New Testament documents don’t deal with Jesus’ words as if they belonged to an outdated era. Paul asserted many years **after** Jesus spoke, “If any person advocates different teachings and refuses to agree with the correct teachings of our lord Jesus the Messiah, that is, those teachings which promote a godly life, they are arrogant persons who understand nothing”

(1 Tim. 6:3-4a). Obviously, Paul was not a **dispensationalist**, exalting his own words as a new standard which had **replaced** Jesus’ sound and reliable words! Also, as 2 John verse 9 states, “Everyone who goes beyond the Messiah’s teaching, and doesn’t continue in it, doesn’t have God. Everyone who continues in that teaching [of Jesus himself] has both the Father and the Son.”

On top of personally having been “**an arrogant person**,” “**understanding nothing**,” I had wrongly assumed that Jesus’ Kingdom preaching was relevant only to Israel (at certain, special times), and that this Kingdom message was quickly **rescinded** when Israel, as a whole, failed to respond to Jesus’ offer to bring it about. How wrong I was! **Repentance** in light of Jesus’ Kingdom preaching (Heb. 2:3; Mark 1:1 and 1:14-15; Matt. 13:19) is dynamically developed in the newness of Jesus’ teaching efforts (Luke 4:43; 22:28-30) and **then continued** throughout the whole book of Acts: very clearly in Acts 1:3, 6-7, 8:12, 14:22, 19:8, 20:24-25, 28:23 and 28:30-31. All of these emphatic passages in Acts, which display an extended Kingdom Gospel focus for many years after the Day of Pentecost (in Paul’s ministry, and among others), point boldly to the ongoing relevance of “the Gospel of the Kingdom of God,” as taught initially, according to hundreds of verses, by Jesus himself!<sup>1</sup>

In my very recent studies, while comparing some interesting aspects of “The Jesus Movement” to “The Way International” (both blossoming since the late sixties), I have noticed an overall **dearth** of genuine Kingdom of God preaching, understanding and teaching. Such is sadly the case, even though Jesus clearly anticipates (Matt. 24:14) the Gospel of the Kingdom being proclaimed throughout the whole inhabited earth, as a testimony to all nations! Nowadays, there is a vast lack of the fervent, biblical expectation of a worldwide Messianic reign on earth (Rev. 5:9-10 and 11:15-18). Nevertheless, fortunately, I have also found that it is not too late to **repent** (devote oneself to true **change** in mind and heart), upon truly grasping authentic Kingdom priorities.

### Once Saved, Always Saved?

Among my zealous Way ideas, heartily embraced over 50 years ago, “salvation” (through confessing Rom. 10:9), involved exuberantly latching onto an automatic, “done deal” status. To be “born again” meant acquiring “holy spirit” in an irrevocable way. We used a phrase in 1 Peter 1:23 to infer that we had received “holy spirit” as “incorruptible seed”; in other

<sup>1</sup> For more pertinent details, please see *The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus: What you didn’t learn in church* by Sir Anthony F. Buzzard.

words, a spiritual seed had **already** been placed inside each of us, individually, which could never perish. Some folks refer to this doctrinal concept as “once saved, always saved.”

Furthermore, if we (in The Way) followed systematic instructions to move our mouths and vocalize syllable-like sounds, it was assumed that we were “speaking in tongues” as an undeniable **proof** that we were permanently “born again” of God’s spiritual, implanted seed. “Tongues” were very confidently assumed by us to be real **languages**, even when failing terribly to sound like genuine languages.

I will now simply challenge this assertive complex of salvation-related ideas which I sternly held onto for decades. As you know, I have already dealt briefly with the underlying dispensational mindset which erroneously relegates Jesus’ all-important words (including his central heralding of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God) to an outdated time frame. Jesus’ words, in reality, are vital to salvation.

To relegate salvation to a matter of acquiring a “done deal” status, one has to badly ignore the following Scriptures. Jesus’ key parable of the sower (Matthew 13:18-23/Mark 4:13-20/Luke 8:11-15) and the four categories of “soil” (meaning the varying responses to the Gospel of the Kingdom in different hearts) show that only the last soil category is successful: the one who **understands** the message, who **produces fruit**, and who **holds on to it with an honest and good heart, and through steadfast perseverance** produces fruit. To believe temporarily and then stop believing is not an adequate response!

Similarly, in the parable of the true vine (John 15:1-17), one must **abide** or **remain** in the Messiah’s **words** and in his **love** to produce fruit, but to be **disconnected** from the true vine means drying up, being gathered, and being burned. Paul uses a parallel plant analogy in Romans 11:13-24, in which Israel is a metaphorical olive tree into which folks (branches) from a Gentile background have been grafted (by becoming Christian believers). Such real believers must continue to be in awe and not be arrogant; they must continue in God’s kindness in order **not to be cut off** (11:22). No “done deal” salvation status is implied in these significant records!

I know very well how we cleverly dodged such meaningful, **conditional** declarations during my former Way indoctrination, either by explaining away such vital passages, dismissing the Gospels and other new covenant books (as if they were not really addressed to Christians), or simply ignoring certain Scriptures. Nevertheless, dozens of other truths paint this same picture of keen “**if**” factors. We must strive, making a continuous effort, to enter through the narrow gate (Luke 13:23-24). (We must persevere.) “And we

are His house **if**, indeed, we hold tightly to our confidence and sense of triumph in our hope” (Heb. 3:6b). According to Colossians 1:22b-23a, “you” (as Christians) are reconciled by Messiah’s death “in order to bring you holy, blameless, and irreproachable into His presence. **This is conditioned upon you remaining in the faith**, securely grounded and established, and **not drifting away** from the hope of the good news.” Hebrews 3:14 succinctly declares, “We have become partners with the Messiah, **if** indeed we keep a tight grip on our original confidence firm to the end.” Other Scriptural realities heartily concur with such **conditions**.

On top of such parables and statements, one can see the Luke 12:42-46 picture of a believing servant (with genuine free will) who: (A) might stay faithful and eventually get rewarded, or who: (B) potentially becomes abusive and ends up getting condemned as an unbeliever! **Both** possibilities are open to **the same servant**! Many other passages reiterate this same theme of the **need** for persistent, faithful obedience, such as Hebrews 5:9 and Romans 1:5/16:26, bracketing the whole book of Romans with the concept of “the obedience of faith”! We should not be gullible and **take God for granted** in a flippant way!

Perhaps the most solemn warning in the Bible about the failure to truly heed and obey Jesus’ powerful words can be gleaned by reading Matthew 7:21-27. Personally, some thirty years or so after having adopted an extremely cavalier attitude about my salvation status by Way norms, I found that I needed to openly confess my perpetual sins of adamant arrogance, humbly reevaluate my whole relationship to God (while embracing Kingdom priorities), and seriously take the Matthew 7 warnings to heart, instead of being so presumptuous!

### Speaking in “Tongues”?

Now I will briefly touch on The Way’s exuberant emphasis on “speaking in tongues” supposedly **for all Christians**, as proof positive of enjoying a permanent “born again” status. I will simply offer a few observations as heartfelt advice.

I had to vividly notice that a proper study of 1 Corinthians chapters 12, 13, and 14 do **not** fit at all with traditional Way dogma. For example, all of chapter 12, including verses 4-11, deal consistently with God distributing gifts and abilities in very diverse ways, according to His will. According to verses 28-30 (of chapter 12) **not all** are given the ability to speak in foreign languages or to translate languages, just as **not all** are inherently gifted with being Apostles or prophets. It would involve extremely flaky interpretations to contradict that clear passage in 12:28-30 by **literalizing** isolated fragments of a couple of

hyperbolic statements in chapter 14 (such as verses 5 and 18), which, in context, clearly indicate that despite the value of “speaking in languages,” speaking understandable words is of much, much greater value!

Let’s look quickly at the word “**but**” (in the KJV of 1 Cor. 12:7), which we emphasized (in *The Way*) as if “a package of nine manifestations” is given to **all**. We argued that this was in strong contrast to the overall diversity theme of the whole of chapter 12. In the phrase, “**But** the manifestation” (singular), the Greek connective *de* (“but” in KJV) can be rendered “and” or even rendered without a word in English (see any modern translation). No strong **contrast** is ever made. Also, **no translation** of verses 7 to 10 can be twisted to imply that “to one” and “to another” (v. 8-10) really mean “for one *profit*” or “for one *benefit*” (from v. 7). There is absolutely no reason to **confidently infer** that a package of “all nine manifestations” is poured out freely on **all** Christians! Such an **innovative** interpretation involves sheer, misleading, man-made theology!

Also, when folks (in blatant contradiction to 1 Cor. 12:28-30) try to **lead others into** “speaking in tongues” (or perhaps into practicing another “manifestation”), as if **all** these spiritual “gifts” or “manifestations” were authentically given to all believers, a huge amount of false spirituality takes place! If one is systematically teaching folks (according to a very bizarre, man-made method) into moving their mouths, lips, throats, etc., to vocalize random sounds; that method obviously results in gibberish, even if folks are emotionally pumped up into assuming that a real spiritual activity is in place. For years I actually led “practice sessions” to try to help folks **not sound like pure gibberish speakers**, and to help them stop presenting highly dubious “interpretations” of tongues. Nevertheless, such arduous practice sessions never actually helped anyone.

To place absolute confidence in what is most likely meaningless gibberish (and **not** genuine language at all), would be a tremendous tragedy, a great deception. Ultimately, if one simply speaks nonsensical sounds, there is nothing even close to proof of having even received holy spirit! Also, one cannot truly interpret or translate sheer gobbledygook! I recommend staying wary about buying into the modern, easy-going tongues movement! You might want to read about the 1901 history of the “new” concept of “tongues” as proof of being “baptized in holy spirit” (an idea which is **not** biblical) in *Fields White Unto Harvest: Charles F. Parham and the Missionary Origins of Pentecostalism* by James R. Goff, Jr.

## Baptism

Before we close, I would like to comment on **baptism**, another subject about which I have written.

The most complete article I have done is the second article of the December, 2021 issue of *Focus on the Kingdom*, available at [focusonthekingdom.org](http://focusonthekingdom.org)

Maybe it would be helpful to mention that the words “baptism” (noun) and “baptize” (verb) *literally* mean **washing** and **to wash** — by physically dipping into water. Though these terms are used metaphorically a few times, they have a literal meaning in most of their biblical uses. In other words, “baptize” is **never** an ambiguous term meaning vaguely “to immerse” into **whatever**, whether it be water, holy spirit, fire, suffering or something else, according to varying literary contexts. No use of “baptize” or “baptism” term is ever unclear or **iffy** in the whole Bible.

You might want to carefully consider the sentence in Acts 1:5 which says, “John, on the one hand, baptized in water, but you will be baptized in holy spirit not many days from now.” The word “but” is not the strong contrasting Greek word *alla*, but is the weak connective *de*, which is most often translated “and.” This verse does not say or imply that a dispensationally outdated form of baptism (in mere water) will be suddenly **replaced** by the baptism pertinent to a new “administration” (namely, baptism in holy spirit), starting with the Day of Pentecost.

One does not have to read very far into the book of Acts to see easily that water baptism **continued** for many years as a relevant, meaningful practice among knowledgeable Christians! At Pentecost, Peter had called on folks to get baptized (in water) in Acts 2:38 to accompany repentance **before** receiving “holy spirit.” Philip baptized Samaritan men and women after announcing to them the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:12); he later baptized the Ethiopian eunuch (8:36-39). Paul himself was baptized in water (Acts 9:16) to have his sins washed away (Acts 22:16). Very clearly, Peter did in fact baptize the Gentiles of the house of Cornelius, even after they had spoken in bona fide languages miraculously (Acts 10:44-48). Years later, the Apostle Paul baptized Lydia and her household in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15), the jailer and his household (16:32-34) and some people in Corinth (Acts 18:8). Just on the surface, one can see that it would be quite ludicrous to insinuate that Victor Paul Wierwille had “rightly divided” the Scriptures (about the baptism subject) more accurately than Peter, Stephen, Ananias, and Paul!

Keep in mind that Jesus’ solemn commands in Matthew 28:18-19 are absolutely genuine according to **all** textual evidence. Random quotes from Eusebius do not disprove the accuracy of ancient, biblical manuscripts. The Apostles were to: (1) make disciples of all nations, (2) baptize people into the name of the Father (God Himself), and the Son (Jesus, the Son of God), and of the holy spirit (God’s powerful interaction

with us), (3) teaching people to observe all that Jesus had commanded them. Matthew 28:19 is **not** a Trinitarian formula, any more than 2 Corinthians 13:13, which links the gracious favor of the lord Jesus, the love of God, and the participation of holy spirit. Also, “the name of the Father, the Son and holy spirit” in Matthew 28:19 is not a wooden formula which contradicts what is said in references like Acts 2:38, “Be baptized in the name of Jesus the Messiah.” Such passages are in total harmony, as simply saying essentially the same truth in different ways. Since fellow humans here on earth can **only** baptize others in water, and **not** in holy spirit, Matthew 28:19 is obviously a simple command in our age for water baptism. Jesus is the only one who ever baptized anyone in holy spirit. Nowadays, only Jesus, the risen, ascended lord, can baptize folks “in holy spirit.”

Some people from my Way background get stuck with a popular, traditional idea derived from a partial quoting of Ephesians 4:5. They say that the phrase “one baptism” must mean choosing superior spirit baptism over mere water baptism. Nevertheless, in context, the list of seven points of unity already designates “one spirit” in verse 4. This list is not really being redundant! So “one baptism” is clearly water baptism in the Messiah, since “one spirit” is already listed.

Several Scriptures portray how deeply meaningful baptism in water is for those who are becoming Christians. The cleansing efficacy of water itself has nothing to do with the whole matter! Water is symbolic, just as bread and wine are symbolic, being physical elements in the celebration of communion. What is vital is the professed response (as in a pledge) of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet. 3:21) through the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. One in fact identifies himself or herself with Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:12-15) by being plunged into the water and raised up out of it. Thus there is a vivid symbol of putting to death the old, sinful self and making a dedication to live for God according to a new life now — as we eagerly await being raised to resurrection life in the future at the return of Jesus! According to Colossians chapter 2, triumphant victory now over spiritual enemies is also involved! What a beautiful action, publicly declaring our heartfelt, repentant allegiance to the Messiah whom we are dedicated to obey!

I will close by passing along a few thoughts about having dramatically repented (changed) from what I now see as having been caught up in a narcissistic web of erroneous, false religion and oppressive bondage.

- I no longer see a “righteous” identity in the Messiah as something totally divorced from making conscientious choices to do what is **right before God**.

- I no longer see concerted efforts to obey God as an underhanded, sneaky endeavor to supposedly **earn** one’s salvation “by works.”

- I no longer hold a false dichotomy between “grace” and “faith” on one hand, and “works” on the other. I no longer believe that “grace” means either passively doing nothing — or having a built-in safety net for **getting away with** sloppy thoughts, words, and actions.

- I believe that James 2:14-26 is absolutely relevant to all genuine Christian behavior: “Faith without works [corresponding actions] is dead!”

- Clearly, we are **not** saved “by works” done previously in order to somehow **deserve** God’s merciful salvation, **nor** are we saved by the “works of the Mosaic Law” which have been abolished in the Messiah (Eph. 2:13-16; Gal. 3). However, I believe we should be diligent about **doing** the good works which God has definitely called us to practice (Eph. 2:8-10), instead of casually dismissing the doing of good deeds as if it were a matter of irrelevant, “optional” behavior.

- I believe that the Gospel of Grace (in Acts 20:24) is absolutely parallel to the ongoing, repentant-rooted preaching of the Kingdom of God! (v. 25)

- I believe I should proactively confess my sins and errors to God, while trusting in His loving forgiveness (1 John 1:5-2:2), instead of smugly justifying myself (through arrogant, self-righteous assumptions).

- I believe now in truly forgiving, from the heart, any who sin against me (Matt. 6:12, 14-15 and 18:23-35), instead of continuing to hold grudges. **Conditions** for our being forgiven are truly pertinent to us as Christians!

So, “Was I truly a follower of **The Way**?” Undoubtedly, I was a loyal follower of many Way Ministry norms for three or four decades, while being quite dedicated and **sincere**. Like many of my Way companions, I made some good, helpful decisions at times, along with some extremely poor choices, honestly, in sort of a hazy “hit and miss” way. Nevertheless, as long as I blithely disregarded the urgent need to commit myself to **obeying Jesus’ words** (his actual **teachings** in the four Gospels), I **was not**, by any means, a follower of **Jesus**, who is authentically **The Way**, the truth, and the life!

Happily though, biblical **repentance** (a devotion to changed thinking and living) is still possible for one who has suffered debilitating blind spots for decades. For me, the active studying of more biblical details, learning to discern errors, embracing Kingdom truths, and finally getting baptized have been very meaningful steps in moving forward in a godly way. ✧

## How We Are Deceived

by Barbara Buzzard

“Care, no matter what” is the motto of Planned Parenthood. Yes, it may sound good, but it is a lie. Planned Parenthood is lying to itself and to you. The proof: “97.2% of Planned Parenthood’s pregnancy resolution services are devoted to abortions, the purposeful ending of an unborn baby’s life.”<sup>2</sup> They use the words “care” and “choice” — subtle language which manipulates, deceives, and is dangerous. It is, in fact, abuse of language, and a shallow piece of marketing. Abortion is not healthcare and it can never be. It is an evil which to the deceived may look good. Remember when we were told by abortion proponents that it was to be “legal, safe, and rare”? Those were the old days; now we are told to “shout your abortion.” There is even a celebration of abortion.

Currently, *Cosmopolitan* magazine is advocating a “satanic abortion” ritual to *empower* women getting abortions.<sup>3</sup> What, really? Abortion makes women more powerful!? They even give advice on how best to take the chemical version of abortion (available now at your corner drugstore) which starves an unborn baby to death. Not all those seeking abortions would be into that kind of ritual; after all, some would call themselves Christian, but the end result is the same — the death of a child.<sup>4</sup>

I must object. You, as a Christian believer, *must* object. A child’s definition of abortion is stark and accurate: “it’s when a mother kills her baby.” Why will churches not engage on this issue? (Some do as we know, but they are in the minority.) One of the Christian’s gravest responsibilities is to discern when he is being lied to. An evil that looks “neutral” or tolerable or “necessary” should be seen for what it is. We must somberly address Scripture’s emphasis on not calling evil good and good evil.<sup>5</sup> Scripture has much to say here, and it appears that the discernment necessary to judge good as opposed to evil is a required addition to one’s character.

It would be a good exercise to rehearse what might be your answer to Jesus as he questions you about what you did or didn’t say or do on this issue. It would help us to see how extremely feeble our answers might be. And lest we fall prey to the frailest of the frail excuses that we are “personally” against abortion but that we won’t take away our neighbor’s right to his opinion — that is like saying we are “personally” against abuse but if my neighbor abuses his child, I won’t interfere.<sup>6</sup>

Hatred of evil is in fact, according to Romans 12:9 the mark of a true Christian.

May I remind us all that: “Pro-choice” for one means death for another. If you choose “choice,” someone will die. To decide that a child must die so that you can do as you wish is one of the greatest moral evils and human miseries ever perpetrated on our culture. It is a tragedy that many of those supposed to be our “Watchmen” — i.e. pastors — are not teaching and warning and sounding the alarm so as to prevent abortions among believers. Are we in a time like Isaiah’s when “Israel’s sentinels are blind; they are all without knowledge; they are all silent dogs that cannot bark.” (Isa. 56:10a). Or as the New Living Translation renders it: “For the leaders of my people — the LORD’s watchmen — His shepherds are blind to every danger. They are like silent watchdogs that give no warning when danger comes.” This is an absolutely wretched thing for a watchman-pastor to be — a silent dog who does not bark.

I hadn’t intended to write anything further on abortion, having written several articles and presentations. I felt that I had written my heart out, but unbelievably it seems that the subject has been ratcheted up with the celebration, ceremonies and rejoicing in abortions. And still — pastors don’t speak out. **“Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”**<sup>7</sup> ✧

## Jesus said that the Father is the only one who is True God (John 17:3)

Let’s practice some easy language. What part of the word “only” do you not understand? Using the word “only” since you learned to speak, neither you, nor those who heard you, had the slightest difficulty understanding what you are saying. Here are some examples of “only” and “alone” from the Bible:

Deuteronomy 32:12: “The LORD **alone** guided him.”

Nehemiah 9:6: “You **alone** are the LORD.”

Isaiah 2:17: “The LORD **alone** will be exalted in that day.”

37:16: “You are the God, You **alone**, of all the kingdoms of the earth.”

Isaiah 43:11: “I, **only** I, am the LORD.”

Job 1:15, 16, 19: “I am the **only** one who have escaped to tell you.”

Job 9:8: “He **alone** spreads out the heavens.”

<sup>2</sup> SBA Pro Life America, 11/30/23.

<sup>3</sup> “Cosmo Promotes Satanic Abortions,” Stand for Life, 11/30/23

<sup>4</sup> The number of Christians seeking abortions is not dramatically different from non-Christians.

<sup>5</sup> Prov. 17:15, 24:24; Isa. 5:20; Mal. 2:17; Rom. 14:22b; Prov. 8:13; Ps. 97:10.

<sup>6</sup> Credit goes to Ray Comfort for this logic.

<sup>7</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

Psalm 86:10: “You **alone** are God.”

In all of these verses the words “only” or “alone” give you not the slightest problem. “Only,” you know, is a word which excludes all other items. There is simply nothing to argue about in these plain, straightforward utterances.

Having practiced the word “alone,” we can now apply what we have learned to John 17:3. In a solemn final prayer, Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said, “You, Father, are the only true God.” Jesus defined his Father as “the only one who is true God.” For a child of two years old, just learning to speak, these words are unmistakably clear. They tell us with the greatest simplicity and clarity that God is a single divine Person, namely the Father. Jesus in this context formally defined what the life of the age to come means. Here are his words; “This is the life of the age to come: that they know you, Father, the only true God.” Jesus of course added that we are to know him also as the Messiah whom that only true God had commissioned.

The vast importance of Jesus’ definition of the only true God is that millions of Jews and Muslims will be able to understand easily that Jesus shared and proclaimed and taught the same unitary, non-Trinitarian monotheism as they learn in their own Jewish and Islamic traditions.

On the other hand, the mysterious concept that God is both three and one is a later, non-biblical tradition. As the church father Basil admitted, he and his colleagues defined God as one in *nature* and not one in *number*. They chose thus to define God as one essence, that is to say one “what” — three “who’s” in one “what.” This move on the part of the church fathers transferred the all-important definition of God into the language of Greek philosophy. It ceased to reflect the simple language of Scripture. Scripture invariably describes God as one in *number*, one single divine Person who calls Himself “I,” “Me,” “He” and never calls Himself an essence or a “what.” That would be a devastating depersonalizing of the one Father, God, who is “the only one who is true God” (John 17:3). ✧

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**“Truth must not be sacrificed, but rediscovered:**

The Churches cannot be unified satisfactorily on the basis of indifferentist faith and half-hearted allegiances. Diplomatic settlements and compromises in dogma are not the right way. We must be mistrustful of formulas or forms of unity which conceal our differences rather than overcoming them. If unity is to be genuine, dogmatic differences must be settled theologically. They will not be solved by pretending that they are not there or that they do not matter. Unless they are genuinely overcome, they will remain a constant source of infection, the more dangerous for being hidden. We

must reject ‘unity at any price.’ A Church which abandons the truth abandons itself...Our faith must be stronger, not weaker, our judgment must be clearer, not obscurer, our ability to draw distinctions must be truly critical, not uncritical: this must be the basis of our efforts for unity. But this implies that it is not enough simply to repeat the truth. Truth must be rediscovered, reconquered anew in every age. Truths cannot be handed on like bricks, preferably undisturbed. Truth is not like stone; it is a thing of the spirit which is lost if it is allowed to petrify” (Hans Küng, *The Church*, 1968, p. 289-290).

### A Well-Known Truth? It Should Be!

**1 Corinthians 6:2:** “*The saints shall judge the world.* St. Paul treats this as a **well-known truth**. To judge is part of the office of a ruler, and the Jews, who looked forward to ruling the nations at the coming of the Messiah (Dan. 7:18) naturally expected to judge them also (Dan. 7:22). Now our Lord had made use of similar language (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:30); He had taught that His own rule would be shared by His people. At first sight His words might seem to promise no more than a share in His sovereignty over Israel, but as it came to be seen that our Lord’s authority was worldwide (Matt. 28:18-19), it was seen also that the sovereignty of His people, and so their exercise of judgment, must be worldwide also (cf. Luke 19:17, 19; Rev. 2:26-27; 20:4)” (H.L. Goudge, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1903, p. 44).

### Comments

- “We regularly use and appreciate so much of your material. We continue to have opportunity to meet more people who are rejecting beliefs like the Trinity and immortal soul, etc. and it is interesting to see how much the internet impacts that, for good and bad. Your books and resources are so appreciated. I just thought that you would like to know how many people you have helped understand the Bible!” — *Indiana*

- “I would like to thank you for your great work in the Lord’s service via *Focus on the Kingdom* paper. I have been impressed by reading the articles. It is sad that some Lord’s servants have ignored the main message of our Lord Jesus Christ which was the Kingdom of God. To me, the message of the Kingdom of God should be given much priority especially in these last days (Matt. 24:14).” — *Burundi*

- Regarding the article on tithing (November): “The tithing deception is one of the many false teachings in Christianity, even though Creflo Dollar, one of the main proponents of this deception, has now apologised and asked that all his past teachings on tithing be ignored.” — *England*