



# PERSONAL FREEDOM OUTREACH

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## newsletter

# IS THE MORMON CHURCH CHRIST'S TRUE CHURCH?

by Rev. Wesley P. Walters

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints claim that their organization is Christ's only true Church on Earth. They reach this conclusion by means of three errors.

### The Missing Body

The first serious error is the idea that Christ's true Church disappeared from the Earth by the fourth century A.D., and thus had to be re-established. This notion had been taught by others long before Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, was born. Smith's own mother admitted she had adopted this idea long before her son claimed God has revealed it to him.

The teaching of a complete apostasy is in direct conflict with God's word. In Philippians 1:6, Paul wrote that Christ had begun a good work among the Philippians and would carry it on until the day of His return. In Matthew 13:24-30, Jesus taught that His Church's work would continue until Judgment Day. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus assured His apostles that not even the "gates of Hell" would be able to prevail against His Church. In Romans 11:11-36, Paul wrote that even if the Gentile branches of the Church should be broken off, God would graft in Jewish believers so that His tree would continue. Even in the Old Testament, when God said He would cut off the Jews from their special standing with Him, He promised that a remnant still would be counted among His true people. Therefore, the "falling away" that Paul spoke of as preceding Christ's return is not a "total apostasy" of the Christian Church.

Even Mormon literature contradicts LDS teaching that the Christian Church disappeared. *The Book of Mormon*, for example,

regards the Pilgrims who came to America as having the power of the Lord with them (1 Nephi 13:16). It also teaches that three Nephites, who were supposed to be leaders of the church that Christ established in America, are still alive today. Smith claimed to have received a revelation that the Apostle John was still living on Earth. Joseph Fielding Smith, a prophet and President of the Mormon church, wrote that even where one apostle remains alive, the true Church still exists.

### What's in a Name?

The second error on which Mormonism is built is that the LDS church is called "The Church of Jesus Christ," and that they must therefore be the only true Church. However, there is a rival Mormon group, with headquarters in Monongahela, Pa., that also goes by the name "The Church of Jesus Christ." Another rival group in Independence, Mo., goes by the name of "The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." The RLDS teaches that after Smith restored the true Church, it became disorganized within a few years and needed to be reorganized. This group has the advantage of owning an authentic document, dictated by Smith himself, in which he states that God wanted Joseph Smith III to lead his church. Smith III became president of the RLDS and his descendants have occupied that office in unbroken succession. The LDS in Salt Lake City can make no such claim. If Smith was telling the truth when he told his son God had chosen him to head his "restored" church, then Brigham Young must be considered a usurper who stole the leadership of the

church. If Smith was a true prophet, then Young was a false prophet and the leadership of the LDS church has no authority.

Furthermore, it is now admitted that Young taught that the God who made and rules Earth is Adam. After begetting us in the spirit world as spirit children through sexual relations with his wives, Adam came to Earth with one of those wives and began the process of producing physical bodies for us. This "Adam-God" doctrine was condemned by Spencer W. Kimball, the late President of the LDS church, as "false doctrine." Even an LDS doctrinal authority, Apostle Bruce R. McConkie, admitted before his recent death that Young had taught this false doctrine, as can be seen from many references in Young's recorded sermons. McConkie's defense of Young's false teaching was that it was a test given to separate true Mormons from false ones.

McConkie's explanation went something like this: The true saints would recognize that this was a false teaching, reject it, but see through the trick that Young was up to and keep quiet about it. The false ones would follow the teaching of their Prophet, Seer and Revelator, and thus lose their souls.

The difficulty with this improbable explanation is that, judging from the official minutes of the meeting of the apostles in 1860, all the apostles except Orson Pratt defended the Adam-God doctrine, and Pratt was censured for his objections.

Thus, one can conclude that even if the true Church was restored by Smith, it is improbable that the current LDS church

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## THE BIG CHICK ATTACK

Jack Chick titles his latest comic book tract *The Attack*. He advertises it with this slogan: "New! For Christians — Satan has messed with your Bible. Find out how!"

The fact is, however, that Chick has messed with history. He makes some claims that do not stand up to scrutiny. Chick does say his information came from ex-Jesuit Dr. Alberto Rivera, whose credibility is questioned by many (See *Christianity Today*, March 13, 1981, pg. 50).

A look at this tract reveals that Chick plays fast and loose with the facts.

In the opening pages, Chick says "many of the Puritan scholars" who translated the King James Version of the Bible died either "by accident, dagger, poison or strangulation." An accompanying cartoon shows two men watching a Puritan drink a poison mixture they prepared.

A good place to begin investigating this charge is Gustavus Paine's book, *The Men Behind the King James Version*, a standard work endorsed by those in the "King James Only" camp. His sources are unimpeachable. His research comes from primary sources such as books, letters, and personal effects of the translators; the Bodleian Library at Oxford University; the British Museum in London; Lambeth Palace; and Cambridge University Library. He shows that the translating committee consisted of high and low Anglican churchmen (about 50 in all), most of whom believed in the divine right of kings, the succession of Anglican bishops, and baptismal regeneration of infants; and two Puritans. Four Puritans were called, but only two stayed on to translate. (See *The Men Behind The King James Version*, pg. 3).

There is no evidence that Puritan John Rainolds died other than naturally. The other Puritan, Lawrence Chaderton, lived to be 103. This renders Chick's premise that many of the Puritan scholars were being wiped out — probably by Catholics — as utter nonsense.

Another lie Chick publishes is that the Apocrypha (Jewish history and legend dating to 180 B.C.) was rejected through the Reformation as devilish and is accepted by Protestants today because of a Jesuit conspiracy. The fact is, the King James translators included the Apocrypha in the 1611 Version. (See *The Men Behind The King James Version*, pg. 166). The Apocrypha was not dropped until 1827.

They did not believe the Apocrypha was inspired, but included it anyway. Earlier, Jerome had resisted its inclusion in the Latin Vulgate (See *Baker's Dictionary of the Bible*, pp. 54-55). No reputable translation today includes the Apocrypha.

A third false claim is that the Alexandrian manuscripts are "mutilated Old and New Testaments." The Alexandrian manuscripts are Greek manuscripts of the New Testament only. Old Testament studies are done from the Hebrew text that has nothing to do at all with Alexandrian manuscripts. It is also claimed that the Alexandrian manuscripts (they are the oldest and the basis for most modern translations) "down play the deity of Christ." This is fallacious. (See Stewart Custer's *The Truth About The King James Controversy*, pp. 5-9). Christ's death and Lordship are asserted without question throughout the Alexandrian text type. For instance, the New American Standard

version renders John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." No hedging at all here. One of the greatest defenders of the doctrine of Christ's deity was Athanasius of Alexandria! His Trinitarian debates with Anus are a landmark in Church history.

Chick also asserts that Jerome used "Satanic manuscripts to create the Latin Vulgate Bible." This is an incredible charge since the translators of the KJV not only used a text type developed by Erasmus, a Roman Catholic priest, but those same KJV translators claimed dependence on Jerome and the Vulgate for their translation. The preface to the 1611 version mentions Jerome on almost every page.

Chick is either grossly ignorant of history or is willingly distorting it. While no Bible believer can accept the traditions of Rome, there is no need to distort history in pointing out our differences with Roman Catholicism. To do so is dishonest and self-defeating.

One last item that should be addressed is the charge that Wescott and Hort, the men responsible for the Revised Version of 1881, were "closet Catholics." They were Anglicans just like the translators of the KJV. Their books reveal that they stood firm on the side of Orthodoxy. They taught and defended Christ as sinless and His blood as our only atonement. They taught and defended the doctrine of the Trinity and the Resurrection. (See *The Truth About the King James Controversy*, pp. 26-28). Closet Catholics they were not!

The unfortunate byproducts of a booklet like this are confusion and division. The booklet is a gross violation of Ephesians 4:15, "But speaking the truth in love." One wonders where the truth is in this comic and where the love is for Roman Catholics. They can be won by truth, not by distortion and misinformation.

PFO's Kurt Goedelman, in his *Journal of Pastoral Practice* article concerning Chick, has pointed out these issues and states:

"We can see in his recent publications a very judgmental attitude toward both Catholics and Protestants. His publications imply that Protestants who do not believe that the facts support his case are in fact siding with Satan. Those who know Christ share Mr. Chick's concern for Catholics to come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. However, his methods of reaching them through questionable and even false assertions must be challenged. ... Like the church at Ephesus, we need to examine carefully the credentials of those who claim to present God's truth and, if we find them false, our faithfulness to that truth requires that we expose them."

To have a preference for a particular version of the Bible is one thing. To label all who have another preference as Satanic is quite another. This kind of mindless name-calling only divides and confuses. Satan himself profits from the bitter fruit of division.

— GRF



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# NEWS UPDATE

## THE WAY LOSES TAX-EXEMPT STATUS

The Internal Revenue Service announced Aug. 26 that it had revoked The Way International's tax-exempt status retroactive to Sept. 1, 1975. Attorneys for the group are working on an appeal. Rev. Ellen Warga, public relations director for The Way, stated that The Way considers the revocation an attack on its First Amendment rights. Under law, contributions made to The Way before Aug. 27 are fully deductible unless the contributor knew of the IRS' prior correspondence.

The IRS issued two charges as reasons for the revocation:

- The Way participated in political campaigns, namely, the senatorial campaign of Hayes Gahagan in Maine; the mayoral campaign of Lillian Caron in Lewiston, Maine; the state senatorial campaign of Joseph Kaputa in Colorado; and the state representative campaign of Deloris Fischbach in Ohio. The IRS maintains that The Way somehow "controlled" or "directed" Way members who were involved in these campaigns. The Way denies these claims.

- The Way loaned money to individual members for other than religious or charitable purpose. The Way admits that it made loans to members on the basis of their need and that it made loans to businesses run by members. The loans for all the years in question represent 1.575% of the total revenue of The Way International. The Way maintains that the loans were legal.

The ruling offered outsiders a chance to learn a little about the Way's closely guarded financial secrets. The Way reported \$27.1 million in income for the fiscal year that ended in September 1984, with expenses of \$22.7 million and \$4.4 million spent on expansion of the ministry.

— JPJ



## RLDS ORDAINING WOMEN

The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ordained its first women priests Nov. 17, 1985. The 220,000-member group, with headquarters in Independence, Mo., plans to ordain as many as 111 women priests.

The RLDS church's world conference, held in April 1984, authorized the ordination of women by approving a document presented by President Wallace B. Smith. The document, which is considered a revelation from God, states that "all are called according to the gifts which have been given to them. This applies to priesthood as well as to any other aspects of the work. Therefore, do not wonder that some women of the church are being called to priesthood responsibilities. This is in harmony with my will."

— MKG



## BHAGWAN RAJNEESH LEAVES U.S.

Indian guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh left the United States Nov. 15 for India after pleading guilty to charges that he arranged sham marriages to keep aliens in the country. He was

fined \$400,000, which included \$140,000 for government costs involved in his prosecution. Shortly after his departure, followers at his Oregon commune vowed to continue living there, but within two weeks, most either had left or were planning to leave. Meanwhile, Rajneesh's fleet of 92 Rolls-Royce automobiles were sold and other commune property was auctioned off in December. Rajneesh invited followers to join him in India, but at press time, it appeared that few were interested in accepting his invitation.

— KAM



## MORMON LEADER SPENCER KIMBALL DIES

Spencer W. Kimball, 12th president, prophet, seer and revelator of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, died Nov. 5, 1985. He was 90. Kimball had held office since Dec. 30, 1973.

During his tenure, the church grew to more than 5.8 million members, its full-time missionary force nearly doubled and plans for 31 new temples were made.

Funeral services were Nov. 9. Ezra Taft Benson was elected president of the church Nov. 10.

Benson's appointment met with mixed emotions from church members. According to a report in *USA Today*, Peggy Fletcher, editor of *Sunstone*, an independent Mormon periodical, said, "I fear more overt, strong-arm tactics against scholars and thinkers for questioning church history." The report also stated that "some moderates are worried about crackdowns."

— MKG



## KRISHNAS' LEADER IS CRITICALLY INJURED

Members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness recently gathered in West Virginia in a vigil for leader Swami Kirtanananda Bhaktipada, who was seriously injured in an attack by a fellow ISKCON devotee.

Witnesses said Bhaktipada, whose real name is Keith Ham, was walking among devotees in evening prayer when Krishna member Michael Curtis Shockman attacked him from behind with a 3-1/2 foot pole. Bhaktipada was struck once on the head and twice on the back, witnesses said.

Bhaktipada, a charter member of ISKCON's New Vrindaban community in Marshall County, was still in the hospital at our press time. Shockman has been charged with malicious assault.

— MKG



PFO welcomes the submission of cult-related items for possible publication in the News Update section. Please address all correspondence to PFO-Midwest.

# Marjorie Holmes' *Three From Galilee*

## The Fictionalizing of Jesus: Help or Heresy?

by Rev. G. Richard Fisher

Marjorie Holmes' disclaimer in the introductory "Author's Note" of her book ought to alert the astute reader that there may be some unbiblical and extrabiblical material inside. Holmes writes: "This book is a novel, a work of fiction. I do not pretend that this is the way things actually happened; only that, given the facts of Jesus' life and times as we know them, this is the way it could have happened."

Of course, many questions crop up, for instance, why write a fiction about Jesus when we have the facts of the gospels? God has told us all we need to know about Him, and the rest is His business, according to Deuteronomy 29:29. Someone who reads the book and not the disclaimer could end up with a false Jesus. We can stress Jesus' humanity to the point of ignoring or denying his deity.

The dust jacket of this book states, "Marjorie dares to deal with those 'lost years' of Jesus' young manhood — the years the Bible doesn't even mention." Spurious "lost gospels" are a dime a dozen. Has she borrowed from them? In fact, this book ends up with a radical reinterpretation of the gospels and a denial of Bible Truth. It stretches the imagination to be told (pages 38-39) that Jesus' first day at school was shock to him and that he was "anxious," "trembling" and "filled with a nameless fear and dread." However, Luke 2:52 says, "Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man." He was the only perfect child because He was perfection from birth. The book goes on to caricature Jesus in His first day at school as "alarmed," "confused," and "frightened" at the vivid descriptions of the animal sacrifices. This empathy with the slaughtered animals has him so upset that he tells himself he would die for them. Is this why he went to the cross?

The potential this book has for creating misunderstanding grows with each chapter. Throughout His school experiences, Holmes writes, Jesus is "frozen in fear" entering somehow mystically and actually, into the creation account and the later temple sacrifices, coming in and out of what seems like a trance. At 12, Jesus is revolted at the sacrifices of lambs in the temple seeing it as "mass butchery" and is sickened at the smell of the cooked Passover lamb and unable to eat it. On page 96, young Jesus tells the doctors in the temple that Solomon's sacrifices were not right and David and Isaiah deplored the offering of animal sacrifices. This fictional Jesus doesn't make the distinction

between God-ordained Old Testament sacrifices and the attitudes and motives of those who offer them. One wonders about the author's view of Old Testament inspiration. It was meaningless ritual that God condemned, not the ritual per se, but this fictional Jesus doesn't seem to know that.

Holmes' Jesus turns 18 and is having sawdust fights in the carpenter shop with His brothers while Joseph is getting concerned that Jesus isn't getting married. Holmes then comes very close to the ancient heresy of adoptionism. She gets even closer to it as the book progresses. The adoptionist view of Jesus is that He is only a man endowed with special powers from God. Harold Brown, in his book *Heresies*, contends that "much contemporary Christianity is in essence adoptionistic." Where the deity of Christ is not properly viewed and His humanity is overstressed, adoptionistic ideas always arise. Adoptionists teach that Christ became Messiah only at His baptism or shortly thereafter.

In Holmes' fiction, Joseph begins to press for Jesus' betrothal. "He is a man — he should live like a man," Joseph says on page 125. His Aunt Salome tells him, "You will never know what human happiness or pain is until you've known that kind of life." As Jesus strikes out on his own, he is confused, dreaming about needing and taking a wife. The Father seems to tell him he will have a seed, but what seed without marriage? And so the confusion continues.

More confusion develops when Jesus is unable to heal Joseph and Joseph dies. (Mary says, "he couldn't, not yet," on page 164.) The adoptionistic view becomes more apparent. Jesus begins to struggle with the fact that he thinks of himself as a deliverer. Some time later, he spies on a girl bathing in a pool, consumed with a longing to throw himself in with her. He dreams of her, saving her from drowning, "kissing her lips to revive her" and calls on the Father to send her back to him. For page after page he struggles with passion for Tamara, remembering and quoting the Song of Solomon to her. In one scene she is embarrassed and tries to run away, but Jesus physically restrains her and confesses his love for her (page 175). On and on this nonsense continues as they tiptoe through the blossoms (page 177). All this banal foolishness reads like a cheap romance novel. It is almost too ridiculous to warrant rebuttal.

Jesus makes the customary proposal for marriage and Tamara accepts. Jesus, in a lovesick fashion, floats along dreaming of his wedding night, but in a long dialogue, Mary talks him out of the impending union. Jesus objects, "But I am human, mother. I am torn, I am tempted! I love Tamara. I want to be with her and love her and give her a son." However, Mary convinces him that he is not as other men but is destined to be rejected and denied, but she is still not sure of what choice he'll make. Jesus is still confused and unsure but breaks it off with Tamara, wanting her to suffer with him and for him.

Somehow, Jesus now knows he is the Messiah and tells Tamara. He begs for one last kiss so he can have "just one moment as a man." On page 208, the adoptionist heresy is readily apparent when Jesus says, "Right now I am only a man." Tamara and Jesus finally, reluctantly, separate.

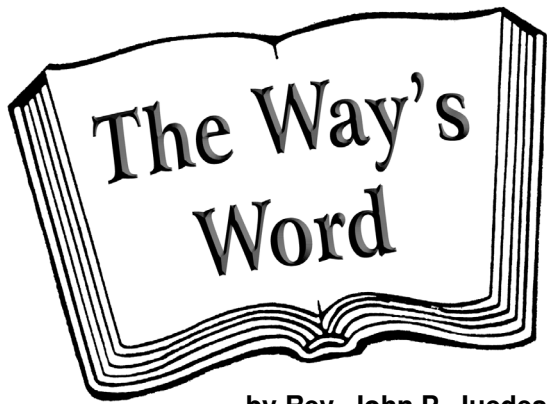
Holmes gives no bibliography and one can only wonder how much she borrowed from arch-liberals and adoptionists like Schleiermacher, Ritschel, A.T. Robinson and Von Harnack.

The final stroke is put to the adoptionist picture on page 217. John is refusing to baptize Jesus saying, "You have no sins to be forgiven." With Jesus' fictional response, Holmes dismisses the doctrine of Christ's sinlessness as taught in II Corinthians 5:21. Her Jesus says, "How do you know the secret torments of my heart? How do you know my doubts and my desires? All this must be washed away, John."

Revelation 22 warns against adding to God's Word. Holmes violates this over and over. On page 219, Jesus prays that he might now be raised up to fulfill John and Mary's faith in him. In other words, he's almost there!

The dove that came at his baptism leads him around in the wilderness while Jesus makes bird sounds and fantasizes about a carnal relationship with Tamara. Somehow baptism hadn't taken his lust away (page 220). After 40 days of this, he is then elevated to being a beloved son of Yahweh and the adoptionist picture is complete. The mission of Jesus in the book falls short of His redemptive mission in the New Testament. Page 229 says, "He must show them that the kingdom of heaven exists right here on earth, if we simply love the Father enough to love each other, and to live by the Father's rules." No repentance, no faith, no acceptance on Jesus. In

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by Rev. John P. Juedes

# Which Way Does it Read?

## Victor Paul Wierwille's Erroneous Translation of Hebrews 1:2

A "trump card" Trinitarians have long used in their case for the deity of Jesus Christ has been Hebrews 1:2, which reads:

"[God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."

Trinitarians reason that since the worlds were made "by him," namely Jesus, He must be the creator, co-existent and co-equal with God the Father.

### Hebrews 1:2: "Erroneously Interpreted"?

Victor Paul Wierwille, the late founder of The Way International, wrote in his book *Jesus Christ is Not God* that this passage is "erroneously interpreted" and offered another interpretation. He stated that the word "by" (in Greek, *dia*) should be translated "for":

"The Greek word "by" is *dia*, and, in the genitive case, is translated "on account of" or "because of" or, according to current language, "for."<sup>1</sup>

If *dia* does mean "for," then the worlds were made for Jesus, not by Him, and Hebrews 1:2 squares with his teaching that Jesus Christ is not God. Wierwille based his argument entirely on his definition of the Greek word *dia*, and it appears convincing.

### What Does *dia* Mean?

The late E.W. Bullinger contradicts Wierwille in his *Critical Lexicon*, stating that *dia* means "by," not "for," just as the King James Version and every other major English New Testament translates it. Bullinger writes that *dia* means:

"(a) with Gen. through, as proceeding from; by means of, denoting the instrument of an action."<sup>2</sup>

Every other Greek lexicon states the same meaning.

Wierwille contradicted himself on the meaning of *dia*. Only 29 pages earlier in *Jesus Christ is Not God*, he translated *dia* correctly. When he commented on John 1:3, "All things were made by him," he wrote:

"The phrase 'by him' further corroborates this. The word 'by' is the Greek preposition *dia*, which, when indicating instrument or means, is translated 'by,' the cause of the action. God was the cause of the creation."<sup>3</sup>

Both John 1:3 and Hebrews 1:2 use the word *dia* with the genitive case; as such, both must be translated "by." This indicates that, indeed, the worlds were made by Jesus Christ.

Why did Wierwille translate *dia* two ways? If it was an accident or typographical error, then his production and research team — which he thanked in the preface for checking the Greek and proofreading — must have overlooked it, too. But this seems unlikely. It could be that he intended *dia* to mean "for" in this verse and his desired interpretation dictated his translation.

Why did Wierwille translate *dia* two ways? If it was an accident or typographical error, then his production and research team — which he thanked in the preface for checking the Greek and proofreading — must have overlooked it, too. But this seems unlikely. It could be that he intended *dia* to mean "for" in this verse and his desired interpretation dictated his translation.

### What Do the Ancient Manuscripts Say?

Perhaps Wierwille was convinced that his definition could not stand, for it does not appear in the second edition of his book. Although he dropped the faulty evidence, he kept his conclusion that Hebrews 1:2 is erroneously interpreted and should read "for whom" instead of "by whom."

In the second edition, Wierwille argued that the original Greek text must have read "wherefore" (*dio*) or "for whom" (*di' hon*) instead of "by whom" (*di' hou*).<sup>4</sup> He does not specify which reading he favored, only which one he did not favor:

"The Greek words for 'by whom' are *di' hou*. Some manuscripts have one word *dio*, which means 'wherefore.' Scholars have suggested an older reading *di' hon*, which means 'because of whom' or 'for whom.' These texts and suggestions indicate the ages were structured around or for Jesus Christ rather than by him."<sup>5</sup>

Wierwille appeared again to have an imposing case, stating that several manuscripts and scholars supported him.

However, Wierwille raised more questions than he answered by never naming his supporting manuscripts, or specifying

their quantity, age or quality. The best case would be built on many, old, high-quality manuscripts.

In an attempt to root out some answers, two questions were directed to The Way International's headquarters in New Knoxville, Ohio: Which manuscripts read "wherefore"? Who are the scholars who suggest *di' hon* as an older reading?

### New Knoxville Scholars Reply

Walter Cummins, chairman of The Way's Research Department, referred this request to Jon Nettle, who noted, "my specialty on the research team is in the one God field."<sup>6</sup> Nettle's letter had all the appearances of an official reply by The Way International, since it was typed on The Way's letterhead and signed "Jon Nettle, Research Department."

Nettle replies:

"...text #109 reads *dio* as well as there were indications of a textual problem by Origen and Basil. It is true that the 13th century text 109 reads *dio*, 'wherefore,' though it is possible the scribe simply omitted the 'u' when he wrote '*diou*.' Accidentally omitting letters or words, or substituting one vowel or vowel combination for another was not unusual among scribes."<sup>7</sup>

Although Nettle implies that Origen and Basil support Wierwille, the opposite is true. Origen and Basil quote Hebrews 1:2 with "by Him" (*di' hou*) just as do the King James Version and Trinitarians.<sup>8</sup>

Nettle's letter also claims that two authors recommended an older reading, "for whom":

"1. Hugo Grotius, 1583-1645 (mentioned in Alford's *Critical Greek text, The Greek Testament*, Vol. 4 pg. 5, and also in *The Expositor's Greek New Testament*, Vol. 4, pg. 250).

2. Fausto Sozzini 1539-1604."

Nettle did not specify where to look in books by these men to find their comments on Hebrews 1:2. It is likely he neither looked them up himself, nor knows where

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has any rightful claim to being the true successor of Smith's "restored" church.

The fact is that when the "restored church" was established by Smith in 1830, it was called "The Church of Christ." This was a name adopted by a denomination, founded by David Millard, that settled in western New York in 1817 and exists to this day. If calling a church by Christ's name establishes it as Christ's true Church, then Millard's group should claim the authority by virtue of its prior existence. This should be especially so since four years after Joseph Smith established his "Church of Christ," he dropped the name of Christ entirely and went only by the name of "The Church of Latter-day Saints." In 1838, he combined the two names into the current "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Smith's revelations were published under all three names as evidenced from the copyright page in the current American editions of *Doctrine and Covenants*.

In fact, it was this changing of the name of the church in 1834, dropping Christ's name entirely, along with the many alterations of Smith's revelations at that time, that led David Whitmer to claim that after 1833 Smith became a false prophet. Whitmer was one of the three witnesses to *The Book of Mormon* and a member of the original church. He left the church in 1838 and claimed that God had personally spoken with him instructing him not to join either the LDS or RLDS. He was so insistent about the falseness of those two groups that he rested his testimony to *The Book of Mormon* on it. He said that if anyone believed his testimony to *The Book of Mormon*, they would also have to believe that God spoke to him a second time and told him not to join the LDS. Therefore, for Whitmer, one of the key witnesses to whom the Mormon church appeals to establish *The Book of Mormon* as divine, the Mormon church is not the true, re-established Church.

#### Authority of Offices

A third error Mormons rely on to support their claim is their appeal to the authority of church offices. Mormons claim that only their church has all the offices of the biblical Church. These offices are supposed to include an Aaronic priesthood with deacons, teachers and priests; a Melchizedek priesthood with elders, seventies and high priests; and additional personnel such as bishops, patriarchs, high counselors and presidents. The fact is, when Smith established his "restored church," it did not have all these offices: it had only deacons, priests, teachers, and elders. It had no high priests, high counselors, Melchizedek priests, or president. These were all added later and written

back into Joseph's original revelation on how the church was to be organized. It was this drastic and deceptive alteration of the structure of the church that Whitmer cited as evidence that Smith had departed from the truth. There is much to be said for Whitmer's point, for if it takes all the present offices to prove that the Mormon church is the true Church, then the church that Smith established, which lacked many of these offices, was certainly not the true, restored church.

More important is the fact that a number of these so-called "offices" are not really offices of the Church at all. For example, the Church as set forth in the Bible has no priesthood of Aaron in it. One cannot read the book of Hebrews without seeing the fact that the whole Old Testament Aaronic priesthood was done away with by the establishment of what it was intended to point forward to, the New Covenant in Christ. The purpose of the Aaronic priesthood was to offer blood sacrifices (Heb. 8:3; 10:11). But once Christ had come and offered Himself as the one and only sacrifice for sin forever (Heb. 10:12), there was no more need for the offering of annual sacrifices. Therefore, the entire Old Covenant and its ordinances and priesthood were of no more use, and were about to vanish, Hebrews 8:13 tells us. It then did vanish with the destruction of the temple by the Romans in A.D. 70.

The Mormons also misread the book of Hebrews by creating an entire order of Melchizedek priests. The Old Testament had only one Melchizedek priest, Melchizedek. God later declared in Psalm 110:4 that the Messiah would be a priest "according to the manner of Melchizedek." The words used in the New Testament when quoting this verse also bear the same meaning, one saying Christ was priest "after the manner of Melchizedek" (6:20), the other that he was a priest after his "similitude" or "likeness" (7:15). Unfortunately, the King James Version in the first instance translated it by the word "order," leaving the false impression that there was an entire group of priests bearing the "rank" or "order" of Melchizedek. Having only this faulty translation to guide him, Smith established an order of priests called Melchizedek priests and wrote this into his *Book of Mormon* (Alma 13:14-19). He then expanded this further in his *Inspired Version of the Bible* into an elaborate story of how they were all caught up to heaven.

Smith cannot be blamed too much for misreading the book of Hebrews. Long before his time, the Masonic Lodge had instituted a degree in which men were made Melchizedek priests. Since Joseph's brother Hyrum was a Mason, he may have picked up the idea of a Melchizedek priesthood from him. Joseph, after all, did borrow all his temple signs, grips and penalties from Masonic rituals. The

Masonic handshakes and the penalties pictured by drawing the hand across the throat, heart and stomach — signifying a willingness to have one's throat slashed, heart cut out, and bowels ripped open for revealing secret rites — all came into the temple ceremonies directly from Freemasonry. However Joseph got the idea of a Melchizedek priesthood, both he and the Masons were misled by the King James Version's translation into thinking that there was an entire rank of priests known by the name of Melchizedek and that all these were "High Priests."

Even in the Old Testament Aaronic priesthood, there was only one high priest at a time. When the high priest died, only then was another from Aaron's family called to take his place. By contrast, however, Christ being resurrected lives forever, and therefore no one else will ever take His place. This is why the writer can say that he has an "unchangeable" or literally an "untransferable" priesthood (Heb. 7:24). In the New Testament's teaching, only Christ is a high priest like Melchizedek. No one else has that position and there has certainly never been such an office in the Church as there now is in the Mormon church, in which there are thousands of men ordained to the Melchizedek priesthood. To claim to have such an office is one of the surest ways of proving that a group is not a true successor of Christ's Church. In Christ's true Church, only Christ holds the honor of being a priest like Melchizedek.

Thus while a novice unacquainted with the Bible might be misled by someone pulling names and titles from the Bible and saying that the LDS church is the only church that has all those offices of the early Christian Church, anyone who reads the Bible with seriousness and honesty can easily see that the present Mormon church does not match the Church that Jesus Christ established during His ministry on Earth. Far from being Christ's one true Church on Earth, the Mormon church is probably the farthest from any resemblance to the New Testament Church both in its organization and in its teaching.

People who come in contact with Mormon missionaries should not be fooled by verses pulled out of their settings. Rather, if they take the time to patiently and carefully examine the Bible's words about Christ's true Church, they will find that it consists of all true believers of all the ages, that it will contain false members who parade about as true believers although they are not, and that it will continue on Earth until Christ returns to be forever united with His true followers. It will cling to the true faith taught in Scripture by Christ and the Apostles who heard him, and it will reject others who claim to be apostles but are not. The Mormon church in no way matches that picture given us by God Himself. ✨

## THREE FROM GALILEE

(from page 4)

short, no Gospel!

This is a very unfortunate and confusing book. We should ponder the sobering words of Paul:

“Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought to the obedience of Christ” (II Corinthians 10:5).

”...but thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside into vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm”

(I Timothy 1:3-7).

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they hear to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables” (II Timothy 4:3-4).

Note: A far more factual and dependable source for the Jewish background of Jesus' boyhood can be found in A. Edersheim's *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*.



## WIERWILLE

(from page 5)

to look. Sozzini — also known as the heretic Socinus — was antitrinitarian, and one of his disciples snapped up Grotius' idea, which is quoted in a footnote of a revised version of the Racovian Catechism. But Sozzini never suggested that *di' hon* (“for whom”) is an older reading, as Wierwille does.

Grotius, better known for law and politics than Bible research, also never suggests (as Nessle implies he does) that “for whom” is an older reading. Instead, he suggests that *di' hou* could be translated “for whom” rather than “by whom.”<sup>9</sup> Can it be translated “for whom”? Nessle noted that two books mention Grotius, but he did not say that the books mention Grotius only to point out how wrong this theory is. For example, Alford writes:

“The idea of Grotius, ... is only worth recording, to make us thankful that the labors of the great scholars of Germany have brought in a day when it no longer needs refutation.”<sup>10</sup>

Qualified scholars have shown conclusively why Hebrews 1:2 must be translated “by whom.”

The Way's letter was supposed to explain which manuscripts read “wherefore.” It offered only one that did, and two Church Fathers who actually said the opposite. The Way was asked to give the names of the scholars who suggest an older reading *di' hon* (“for whom”) and came up with none.

A letter then was sent to Wierwille himself in February 1983. John Crouch answered it, giving the same erroneous formation Nessle did.<sup>11</sup> However, he cited texts 109 and 460, which appear to support Wierwille's claim of more than one text. However, 109 and 460 are just two different numbers for the same text. No. 109 is from Tischendorf's numbering system which is largely outmoded. No. 460 is of the Gregory-Aland system.

Hoping that The Way International could yet produce evidence to support Wierwille's bold claims in his book, three more letters were sent to the Way research department over a three-month span.

## Way Scholar's Final Response

Nessle provided a final response to the requests for evidence to support Wierwille's interpretation of Hebrews 1:2.

“My letters have in no way reflected the ‘Official Position’ of The Way Ministry. ... I alone cannot speak for Dr. Wierwille and I do not have access to his research files. ... I assure you that there is more than one text that reads “dio” in Hebrews 1:2. But judging from the deceit demonstrated by your wording and definitions in your pamphlet, ‘The Integrity and Accuracy of The Way's Word,’ to communicate further with you would be ‘casting my pearls before swine.’ Thus having deduced your genus, I can say with certainty that someday one of us is going to fry. I'm betting my life it's you! Jerk file 00112.”<sup>12</sup>

Letters to The Way's Research Department politely requested simple documentation for claims made in The Way's book *Jesus Christ is Not God*. Nessle's first letter had all the appearances of an official response. Why he later said the reply did not represent The Way's official position is never explained. It could be he realized the serious errors in the first response and wanted to protect the organization. Perhaps Nessle did not reveal the other texts that support Wierwille's claims because he knew of none. Producing evidence to support Wierwille would be more convincing than resorting to name-calling.

## What Does Hebrews 1:2 Say?

Leaders of The Way International would prefer that Hebrews 1:2 say, “for whom also he made the worlds.” However, *dia* with the genitive cannot be translated “for”; “wherefore” is supported by only one questionable text and therefore is unacceptable; and no scholars suggest or have found an older reading “for whom” *di' hou* is clearly a genuine part of the text and must be translated “by whom” just as it is in Hebrews 2:10, 6:7, and John 1:3 and other passages. It is apparent to anyone who can follow the pronouns — a method of interpretation emphasized by The Way — that verse 10 and the context of chapter one leave no doubt that the Son is superior and active in creation.

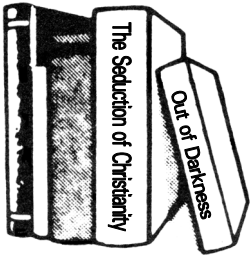
Jesus Christ must be revered as one who was actively increasing all that exists, and as one who is co-existent and co-equal with the Father, for Hebrews 1:2 clearly reads:

“[God] hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, **by whom also he made the worlds**” (KJV).

## ENDNOTES:

1. Victor Paul Wierwille, *Jesus Christ is Not God*, American Christian Press, New Knoxville, Ohio; 1975; pg. 121.
2. E.W. Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament*, Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, Mich., 1975; pg. 125.
3. V.P. Wierwille, op. cit., 1975; pg. 92.
4. Wierwille's treatment of Matthew 28:19 was similar: He published several different versions of it but never identified one as best. He appeared more concerned that the verses do not read in a trinitarian way than he was about what the verses actually say.
5. Wierwille, op. cit., second edition, 1981; pp. 122-123.
6. Letter to Douglas Morton from Jon Nessle, Research Department, The Way International, dated Feb. 17, 1983.
7. Bruce Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, Oxford Publishing, Oxford University, 1968; pp. 186-195. Faulty eyesight, hearing or thinking could cause accidental errors. This text was found in Sicily and was written in the 13th century in three languages: Greek, Latin and Arabic. Hence, it may be that the scribe was less versed in Greek, making the omission of a “u” more likely. No modern Greek text has considered it significant enough to systematically cite it, partly because of its 13th century date. The Latin portion of the manuscript reads “through whom.”
8. Origen, *Comment, in Joan Thomus II*, 59:9 and Basil, *Mexameron*, 87:70. Other early churchmen also quote Hebrews 1:2 with “by whom.”
9. Hugo Grotius, *Annotations in Novum Testamentum*, Vol. III, Lipsiae, 1755; pg. 839.
10. Henry Alford, *The Greek Testament*, Vol. 4, Lee & Shepherd, 1877, pg. 5. D.C.T. Kuinoel, Daniel Whitby and others show conclusively why Grotius is wrong and why Hebrews 1:2 must be translated “by whom.”
11. Letter to Douglas Morton from John Crouch, Research Department, The Way International, dated Feb. 6, 1984.
12. Letter to Douglas Morton from Jon Nessle, dated June 9, 1983. We have reports of other Way leaders using similar abusive language in such situations. Morton received only a photocopy of this hand-written response.





# BOOKS IN REVIEW

## THE SEDUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY

by David C. Hunt and T.A. McMahon  
Harvest House Publishers, 240 pages, \$7.95

Dave Hunt and T.A. McMahon do a commendable job of exposing several philosophies that have become fashionable among some Christians — possibility and positive thinking, positive affirmation, self-help philosophies and holistic medicine — for what they are.

Christianity can be undermined by such side tracks and this book alerts its readers to the “smorgasbord of confusion” out there among the “Christian” books and the “Christian” television shows with their “Christian” personalities. The reader meets Robert Schuller, Norman Vincent Peale, Norma Grubb, Mother Teresa, C.S. Lovett, Shirley MacLaine, Morton Kelsey, Agnes Sanford and many more in a kind of “Who’s Who” and “Who’s Where.”

Hunt and McMahon show that the idea of the perfectibility of man through his own efforts originated in Eden just before The Fall and that the doctrine is a foundation of Eastern mystical philosophy. The authors also show how the idea has infiltrated Western society and Christian teaching.

A word of caution on this book is in order. Anything with a scent of “self-help” is identified as “New Age” without any clarification or discussion of nuances in organization, direction, goals, methods, etc. Some may see this as a simplistic reduction. Secondly, the “New Age” movement is seen as an all-powerful, all-consuming force poised to take over the world. The authors state this clearly in the book’s introduction on page 9.

Given the number of born-again Christians worldwide, along with 15 million Jews, 800 million Moslems (both of which religions are theistic and not “New Age”), the millions of atheistic Russians, neo-Nazis and other cults that do not base their doctrines on man’s perfection into godhood, the authors may be overstating the case.

They may be correct as to the errors, but not the immensity. Apart from these objections, *The Seduction of Christianity* is informative and worthwhile reading alerting us to trends and the

people who are promoting and following them. It is a book that has been needed for a long time on the Christian scene.

Something that would enhance the book is a glossary. Going back to retrieve specific information is difficult and requires much scanning.

— GRF



## OUT OF DARKNESS INTO LIGHT

A Jehovah’s Witness Finds The Truth in Jesus Christ  
by Peter Barnes  
Equippers, Inc., 138 pages, \$4.50

Peter Barnes’ account of the conflicts he felt as a 30-year member of the Watchtower Society and their resolution in his discovery of Jesus Christ is an insightful book aimed at both Witnesses and non-Witnesses alike.

Barnes appeals “to Jehovah’s Witnesses to go to their Kingdom Hall libraries, study the old textbooks and compare the Bible interpretations of Charles T. Russell and Joseph Rutherford with today’s leaders.” Then, he advises, ask: “Are the leaders of my organization completely reliable as interpreters of Scripture? Can I be sure that they won’t steer me wrong? Can I safely base my religious beliefs on what they tell me?”

Barnes is asking Witnesses to do what he did. His inquiries led him and his wife out of the Watchtower Society.

The book is easy to read and understandable to those not steeped in Watchtower terminology. Yet his anecdotes lend an air of authority that should touch even a seasoned Jehovah’s Witness. For example, Barnes tells of a disfellowshipped woman who continued to attend meetings to show her loyalty. One night after a meeting, she found her car with a flat tire. She was unable to change it herself and no one in the congregation would help her since she was disfellowshipped. Finally, a man living nearby, one whom the Witnesses would regard as “a worldly person,” helped her.

Barnes concludes his work with some tips for Christians to use when reaching out to Jehovah’s Witnesses. This book gives good insight for Christians seeking to reach those in the Watchtower Society and an excellent challenge to current Jehovah’s Witnesses.

— MKG

**Editor’s Note:** *The Seduction of Christianity* is available from PFO Midwest for \$8.60 postpaid. This book also is offered as a gift to those who help support us financially this month. Please see the “Helping Us Help You” flyer for details.

*Out of Darkness into Light* is available for \$5.00 postpaid from Peter Barnes, 4560 Miami Way, San Diego, Calif. 92117.



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## NEWSLETTER

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