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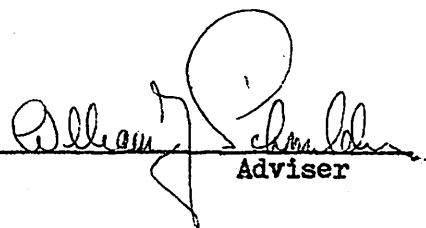
THE WAY INTERNATIONAL, ITS HISTORY, THEOLOGY
AND IMPACT ON THE CHURCH

A Research Paper Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for elective
S-200

by

Douglas V. Morton

February 1979


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INTRODUCTION

We live in a day and age which can almost say it has seen everything; men on the moon, heart transplants, nuclear energy. Man has never before been so blessed with so much material wealth; yet he still comes up empty-handed.

The reason is that man is a religious being. He is deeply religious; and no matter how much he surrounds himself with material goods he cannot escape his need for religion.

Being spiritually dead toward the true God has not helped matters either. No matter how hard man tries by himself to come to grips with his religiousness he will always come up missing the truth about the God of the Universe. The results of this self-made quest for religious fulfillment is false religions of every description. Religions which miss the God Who Is There and follow their own paths to destruction. Religious cults can be numbered among these false religions.

This paper deals with one such cult. Its founder is a man named Victor Paul Wierwille. The name of the false spiritual movement connected with this man is The Way International. This is a name that I am sure the Church will be hearing more of in the future. It can be classified among the new cults which have sprung up in America during the last few decades.

This paper will, in only a brief way, give the reader a look at this group. The hope is that the paper will give the reader a look at the insides of this group: its history, theology and the threat and challenge that it presents to the Church today.

I. HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

Victor Paul Wierwille was born December 31, 1916 in the kitchen of a farm house near New Knoxville, Ohio.¹ His ancestry dates back to the Huguenots who traveled from France to Germany in the 1600's and then to New Knoxville Ohio in the 1800's.² Victor Paul himself was the youngest of six children.³

His early life is one which most people would consider a normal farm life. He was baptized in his parent's farmhouse into the German Reformed Church.⁴ When he was around eight or nine years old he remembers that he mentioned that he wanted to be a minister.⁵

According to Victor Paul himself, he grew up like most of the children in his area. He went to a one-room school house until sixth grade and then went to New Knoxville school where he graduated.⁶

Wierwille, who loved to play basketball, was then offered a scholarship to play it at Ohio State University, but because of his father's wishes he chose to attend Mission House College and Seminary in Sheboygan, Wisconsin.⁷ The College was affiliated at first with the Evangelical and Reformed Church, but when the Evangelical and Reformed Church became a part of the United Church of Christ it was renamed

¹Elena S. Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, 2nd ed. (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1972), p. 171.

²Victor Paul Wierwille, "Our Times," The Way Magazine, January-February 1978, p. 22.

³Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 76. ⁴Ibid., p. 172.

⁵Ibid. ⁶Ibid. ⁷Ibid., p. 174.

Lakeland College.⁸ It was here where Wierwille received his Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Divinity degrees.⁹

In 1937 during his school years he married a long time friend named Dotsie.¹⁰

In 1940 Wierwille moved to Princeton, New Jersey in order to get his Master's Degree in Practical Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary.¹¹ Wierwille claims he had as professors men such as "...Dr. Blackwood, Dr. Loetcher, Dr. Homrichhauser, [sic], the Niebuhr brothers, Richard and Rhinehold."¹² In his own words concerning these men and Princeton Theological Seminary..."I heard them all, had the full seminary trip."¹³ His dissertation was done..."on Peter as a young man of promise, Peter as evangelist and pastor."¹⁴

Other institutions that he claims to have studied at are the University of Chicago¹⁵ and Moody Bible Institute where he says he took everything he could "...through their correspondence courses."¹⁶

As far as taking courses at Moody Bible Institute Correspondence School, this can be disputed. Wierwille may have started taking courses from Moody, but if he did he never finished. According to a letter from the Director of the Moody Correspondence School, Moody has no records of

⁸Ibid.

⁹Victor Paul Wierwille, Power for Abundant Living (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1971), p. 369.

¹⁰Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 174.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 174-175. ¹²Ibid., p. 175.

¹³Ibid. ¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 369.

¹⁶Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 175.

Wierwille ever completing a course at Moody Correspondence School. The director writes that it may be possible that Victor Paul Wierwille enrolled in a course at one time, but according to their records he could not have completed the courses as they only keep record of students who complete the courses they take.¹⁷

Wierwille also remembers that he taught homiletics at Gordon Divinity School.¹⁸ In 1948 he received his Th.D. from Pikes Peak Bible Seminary.¹⁹ Wierwille admits that the school is not recognized by many seminaries; therefore they don't recognize his Doctor's Degree.²⁰

Herbert Diamond in Christianity Today writes:

In a letter from the Colorado Commission on Higher Education, a state official says that Pikes Peak Seminary had no resident instruction, no published list of faculty, and no accreditation, and no agency of government supervised it. It offered its degree programs by "extramural" methods, involving the sending of book reviews and papers by mail. The degrees, the official says have no status except with the institution that conferred them.²¹

Again Diamond writes:

The institution itself, say state authorities, consisted only of a single residence that doubled as the headquarters of the operation. Pikes Peak changed its name several times after its incorporation in 1927. Following the death of its president, Fred E. Stemme, in 1965, it became Colorado Bible College and Seminary. In 1969 it was moved to Chicago under a new name, Evangelical Bible College and Seminary.²²

¹⁷This is taken from a letter from the Director of Moody Bible Institute's Correspondence School to a Mr. Jack M. Roper of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. The letter is dated April 15, 1977.

¹⁸Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 175.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 189. ²⁰Ibid.

²¹Herbert Diamond, "A Degree From Pike's Peak," Christianity Today, November 21, 1975, p. 20.

²²Ibid.

Wierwille was ordained June 29, 1941 in the First Evangelical and Reformed Church in New Knoxville. Following his ordination he served St. Jacob Evangelical and Reformed Church, Payne, Ohio.²³ It was during his ministry at St. Jacobs that Wierwille had a deeply moving experience that changed his life.

Wierwille admits that for years all he had done was read around the Word of God through reading many theological works.²⁴ After going through all this confusion it happened. According to Wierwille, it was around September 1942 and he was sitting in his office in Payne, Ohio. He states:

I was praying. And I told Father outright that He could have the whole thing, unless there were real genuine answers that I wouldn't ever have to back up on.

And that's when He spoke to me audibly, just like I'm talking to you now. He said He would teach me the Word as it had not been known since the first century if I would teach it to others.²⁵

According to Wierwille he couldn't believe that God talked to him then, so the next day he asked God to give him a sign by making it snow.

According to Wierwille the sky was "crystal blue and clear." The snow came in the next moment.²⁶

1944 saw Wierwille moving to Van Wert, Ohio where he stayed for fourteen years.²⁷ According to Wierwille, when he got to the congregation in Van Wert there were approximately twenty-one people, but by the time he left it had grown into a full house.²⁸

It was during these years that Wierwille quested for the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. Wierwille states:

²³Taken from a letter addressed to the author from the Association Minister of the Northwest Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ. The letter is dated December 26, 1978.

²⁴Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 120.

²⁵Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 178.

²⁶Ibid., pp. 178-180.

²⁷Ibid., p. 188.

²⁸Ibid., p. 203.

I had been searching for years for more understanding of the Word, of the power we have in Christ Jesus. I'd tried all kinds of denominations, all kinds of trips. I'd gone to Pentecostal groups, to all kinds. I can't remember them all.

I had worked all 385 verses in the Bible that spoke of the Holy Spirit. I knew every verse from memory. I had seen in the book of Acts how they spoke in tongues, and I'd gone to every group I'd heard of that I thought might give me more light on it.

I'd seen them rolling in the aisles, you know. I'd seen them lying on the floor, jumping up and down, running, crawling on their hands and knees to catch the Holy Spirit, throwing books to hit the Holy Spirit. Oh, I don't know what else. I saw everything.

I'd asked the greatest minds, theologians, in the country about receiving the Holy Spirit. No one could help me. I just knew all I was seeing was flesh, not spirit.²⁹

As it happened to turn out after his long search, Wierwille finally spoke in tongues in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at 3 P.M. after he had been ministered to by a man named J. E. Stiles.³⁰

The rest of Wierwille's life is history. In October of 1953 he began teaching his "...very first 'Power for Abundant Living' Class."³¹ In 1954 he wrote his first book on the Holy Spirit. It was the forerunner (early edition) of his present book, Receiving the Holy Spirit Today,³² According to Wierwille, this book in the Holy Spirit field "...is the most thorough and original coverage of the subject."³³ As a matter of fact the Holy Spirit field, according to Wierwille, is the field that God raised up for him.³⁴

Other highlights of his ministry move rapidly over the 50's and 60's. According to the records of the Northwest Ohio Association of the United Church of Christ, Wierwille "...resigned his ministerial standing in the

²⁹Ibid., p. 196.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 199-200.

³¹Ibid., p. 207.

³²Ibid., p. 209.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid., p. 201.

Northwest Ohio Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church on May 23, 1958."³⁵

According to The Blade Sunday Magazine of Toledo, Ohio:

Mr. Wierwille's resignation came a few months after the northwest synod had, on Feb. 13, 1958, authorized appointment of a judicial committee "to investigate and bring forth recommendations for actions," about him. However, the records do not specifically mention charges.

But, it is eminently clear that if Mr. Wierwille had not resigned, or "voluntarily withdrawn, his dismissal would have been forthcoming on the basis of a judicial council, "according to a former E and R president, Dr. Emil Bassler."³⁶

Again The Blade writes:

Dr. Bassler, now paster at First Congregation of Wauseon, O., and another former E and R Synod president, the Rev. Harvey Zuern, formerly of Toledo, (Grace E and R) concur that the controversial minister created embarrassment to the church while he was on an unauthorized visit to India.

Mr. Zuern, reached at Christ Church, in Louisville, Ky., recalls, "We just invited Mr. Wierwille to dismiss himself from the E and R Church, which he promptly did. We were reluctant to say that we excommunicated him because he did it voluntarily."³⁷

Other matters that seem to have set the E and R church at odds with Wierwille were that he "insisted on being something of a loner, theologically speaking, and bringing some criticism to bear on liberal theology."³⁸

Not only this, but Dr. Bassler states that Wierwille had brought into his church the "altar call, which isn't bad, but he was speaking in tongues and doing faith healing and these were not compatible with the E and R principles."³⁹

Wierwille shrugs all this off by saying, "But that has all passed.

³⁵ Taken from a letter addressed to the author from the Association Minister of the United Church of Christ. The letter is dated December 26, 1978. See also footnote 23.

³⁶ Lee Steele, "V. P. Wierwille Got Out Just Before The Ax Fell," The Blade Sunday Magazine, March 26, 1972, p. 11.

³⁷ Ibid. ³⁸ Ibid. ³⁹ Ibid.

I just needed the freedom to work and teach to whoever was hungry. I didn't need the pressure, the man-made rules."⁴⁰

The Way Ministry itself under Wierwille's leadership was moved to the Wierwille family farm in 1959 with Victor Paul Wierwille and his family moving there to live in 1961.⁴¹

It was in 1961 when the "original part of the Bible Center was completed."⁴² The Bible Center is the building where much of the research work goes on in The Way Ministry.

In 1963 Wierwille had a TV program called "The Teacher" that he had made out of Lima, Ohio.⁴³

In 1962 Dr. George M. Lamsa came to the New Knoxville farm and began teaching classes in Estrangelo Aramaic.⁴⁴

The year 1967 brought[†] in a new phase in The Way Ministry. It all stemmed from an original idea that Wierwille had back in 1961 when he thought about putting his "Power for Abundant Living" Class on film.⁴⁵ The film became a reality when it "was made in the fall of 1967."⁴⁶ This allowed The Way Ministry to cover more ground at one time. More people could be taught in different parts of the country.

The Way Ministry itself took on a new look and tremendous growth in 1968. It seems that Wierwille read the signs well and cashed in on the Jesus Movement that began materializing toward the end of the 1960's.

Jack Sparks in his book, The Mind Benders, writes:

Regardless of what may or may not be the full truth in the matter, 1968 is the year that The Way, now having moved its headquarters to New Knoxville, Ohio began to experience significant growth. As

⁴⁰Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 217.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 218.

⁴²Ibid., p. 115.

⁴³Ibid., p. 82.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 220.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 227.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 230.

with several other struggling offbeat groups of that time, The Way found the Jesus Movement a boon. Capitalizing on the non-discriminating religious interest of many in the movement, The Way picked up a host of young people from those ill-defined ranks. Particularly significant gains were made in terms of capable young leadership.⁴⁷

One of the reasons for The Way's inroads among the youth in the Jesus Movement has certainly been the coverage it was given by the news media. Life magazine, in its May 14, 1971 issue, ran a coverage of The Way's activity in Rye, New York. The title of the article was, "The Groovy Christians of Rye, N.Y." Nowhere in this article did it state the unorthodox beliefs of The Way. It was treated as just another part of the Jesus Movement.⁴⁸

Ronald Enroth, along with Edward Ericson Jr., and C. Breckinridge Peters observed in 1972 that, "The Way, with the help of the indiscriminating media, is riding high on the crest of this revolutionary wave" [see: the Jesus Movement].⁴⁹

The Way has grown steadily since 1968. No one knows for sure just how many people are involved with The Way Ministry. Jack Sparks, in 1977, estimated around 20,000 individual people participated in The Way Home fellowships.⁵⁰

As a very evangelistic organization one can look forward to seeing

⁴⁷Jack Sparks, The Mind Benders (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1977), p. 189.

⁴⁸One can read this entire article in Life magazine. See Jane Howard, "The Groovy Christians of Rye, N.Y.," Life, May 11, 1971, pp. 78-85.

⁴⁹Ronald Enroth, Edward E. Ericson, Jr., C. Breckinridge Peters, The Jesus People: Old-Time Religion in the Age of Aquarius (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 153.

⁵⁰Sparks, The Mind Benders, p. 200.

an increase in The Way's membership in the coming years. Victor Paul Wierwille has foresight; he already has many people in his organization who could keep it going after his death. The Way is a counterfeit spiritual group which the church can look forward to seeing more of in the future.

When confronting The Way one needs to realize that it is a highly structured organization. Its structure is one which makes growth possible, communication easier and efficiency at its best.

The Way sees itself as an evangelistic group of people who seek not just individuals but whole families. This is one reason why they believe that small home meetings, called "twigs," are important.⁵¹

The Rev. John Townsend of The Way writes: "The basic organizational structure of the first century Church was a logical and convenient set-up likened to a tree composed of twigs, branches, limbs, trunks and root."⁵²

Rev. Townsend gives a definition of each section of the tree in order to explain what their functions are:

TWIG: a fellowship of three or more followers in a specific local area who fellowship daily, but not less than once a week. Like the early church, this is where our emphasis is to be. In these family twigs each individual leaf (believer) is ministered to and grows and flourishes.

BRANCH: a fellowship of all twigs in a local community which meets monthly or not less than every three months. Since the needs of every believer cannot be met at the branch meetings, these fellowships are held every so often for a positive, inspirational fellowship where all the believers in that community have a chance to see each other.

⁵¹The reasons for The Way's emphasis on these home fellowship meetings can be seen in the 1974 September-October issue of The Way Magazine. See John Townsend, "The Way Tree," The Way Magazine, September-October 1974, p. 16.

⁵²John Townsend, "The Way Tree," The Way Magazine, September-October 1974, p. 17.

LIMB: a fellowship of all branches in a state-wide area which meets every six months or not less than once every year. Limb meetings are like "Rock of Ages" festivals on the state level--big meetings with great spiritual impact.

TRUNK: a fellowship of limbs in a single country which meets every three years.

ROOT: composed of the Board of Trustees (which is a fellowship of three trustees), the International Headquarters (which is a fellowship of each head presbyter of each trunk), and the Board of Directors (which is a fellowship of all head presbyters of each limb and branch plus selected directors as the Board of Trustees deems necessary). The three segments of the root meet once every five years.⁵³

This system makes it possible for things to be run smoothly and effectively.

What is the appeal of The Way? Why do people join The Way? These are questions which are not always easy to answer. Though there may be many reasons why people join The Way, there is really only one avenue through which people gain entrance into the organization itself. It seems that almost everyone who joins The Way comes through its one main drawing card: the class "Power for Abundant Living," or as it is affectionally called by its graduates, PFAA. This class is The Way's main educational program. It gives people the foundation of The Way's teaching.

The class itself is thirty-three hours long.⁵⁴ It is obvious from the length of the film that it is not all seen in one sitting. According to Jack Sparks, "The course is 12 sessions long, about three hours a crack. There is no note taking, and questions may only be asked at the end--if you remember what you wanted to ask."⁵⁵

⁵³Ibid., pp. 20,22.

⁵⁴Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 229.

⁵⁵Sparks, The Mind Benders, p. 201.

Robert F. Winegarner, a leader within The Way, states what the class does:

The class is not designed to teach the entire Word of God from Genesis to Revelation; it is a class on how to unlock the keys to the Word of God that will give you a clear understanding of God's Will and the principles needed to receive into manifestation the greatness of God's power. Since the first century, man has been totally unaware that ~~true~~ Christianity has at its foundation power for abundant living. The class on Power for Abundant Living teaches the basic keys which enable the student to tap into the unlimited power of an unlimited God.⁵⁶

Another leader in The Way, Walter J. Cummins, says of the class:

This class holds a unique position in our controversial culture because it literally rests on the integrity of God's Word.... Power for Abundant Living teaches the spiritual and natural principles stated in God's Word as the principles for guidance in life.⁵⁷

The class is pushed through the Way's home fellowships called Twigs. As a matter of fact, it is through these Twigs where many people come into contact with the class. The members of The Way are urged to get people signed up for the class as soon as possible. In a letter to Twig leaders from John Lynn (leader of The Way of Indiana in 1976), he quotes Walter J. Cummins in "Guidance to Limbs":

Dr. Wierwille noticed on his recent itineraries that too often people are encouraged to attend Twig fellowships for long periods of time before they sign up for the class. People should be invited to a Twig fellowship where it is always available to sign up for the class. Then after they have had an opportunity to hear God's Word once, they will be able to say "yes" or "no" to Power for Abundant Living....⁵⁸

⁵⁶Robert F. Winegarner, "Power For Abundant Living," The Way Magazine, January-February 1975, p. 19.

⁵⁷Walter J. Cummins, "Powerful Abundant Living," The Way Magazine, September-October 1977, p. 7.

⁵⁸This is taken from a letter addressed to all Twig leaders of The Way of Indiana. It is written by John A. Lynn, the man who was leader of the Indiana limb organization at that time. The letter is dated April 29, 1976.

The letter continues saying that the Twig leaders can make it possible to give "every new guest the chance of his life to sign up for the PFAL class the first night he comes to the decision."⁵⁹

There is a catch to all of this. In order to take the class, one must pay a price, or as it is commonly called, "a donation."⁶⁰ The price of the class has in the past changed greatly as the years went by. The charge for the class in 1968 was \$20.⁶¹ By 1971 it seems to have jumped to \$45, as we find that price mentioned by Jane Howard in Life magazine.⁶² In 1975, Christianity Today observed that the course was being offered at a "going rate of \$85."⁶³ In a letter addressed to the author from the Way Headquarters in New Knoxville, Ohio, dated August 30, 1978, the class was offered to him for a "minimum \$100 donation."⁶⁴

One of the reasons why The Way charges for its PFAL class is given by David Anderson of The Way:

In January of 1969, we did a class of 175 for free. But that was no good. We just got conned right and left because people kept coming, quitting and not really listening. They simply weren't committed to hear the whole teaching, so they kept copping out.

We did free classes here in Ohio, too, then in Florida. It took us a while to learn we were just burning ourselves out for

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰The idea of making courses available for money has been practiced by many Christian organizations; therefore one can hardly fault Wierwille and The Way for this. The problem with Wierwille's system is that it comes very close to selling salvation (even though Wierwille would deny this) which the Apostle Paul never did.

⁶¹Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 84.

⁶²Howard, "The Groovy Christians of Rye, N.Y.," p. 82.

⁶³Joseph M. Hopkins, "The Word and The Way According to Victor Wierwille," Christianity Today, September 26, 1975, p. 40.

⁶⁴This is taken from a letter to the author from The Way Headquarters after he had sent an inquiry to The Headquarters of The Way asking for information on The Way Ministry. The letter is dated August 30, 1978.

nothing. We wanted to make it available. The film had already been paid for. But we've learned that people have to commit themselves, make an investment, to get something out of it. You've got to give to get. Ever heard that? It's in the Word. The law of giving--and people that didn't give anything, didn't get anything out of it, so it just wore out the film.⁶⁵

After one has taken the "Power For Abundant Living" class, he may then go on to more advanced classes to learn more of The Word according to V.P. Wierwille. After completing the PFAL class one can become eligible, with the completion of a few other details, to take the Advanced Class on Power For Abundant Living. One can also take a class called "Basic Keys to Research," "Christian Family and Sex class," along with others to help one get a better grip on the Word.

Jack Sparks, after speaking of just a few classes that a Way follower can take, writes, "That's only the beginning of things. And they all come for a price."⁶⁶

Victor Paul Wierwille is one who looks ahead into the future. At the date of the writing of this paper, The Way owns and operates two colleges: The Way College of Emporia located in Emporia, Kansas and The Way College of Biblical Research located in Rome City, Indiana.

The Way College of Emporia opened its academic program on January 3, 1974 with nineteen students.⁶⁷ It had at one time been a college related to the United Presbyterian Church but was forced to close in 1973 due to financial trouble.⁶⁸

⁶⁵Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 85.

⁶⁶Sparks, The Mind Benders, p. 201.

⁶⁷"A New Kind of College," The Way Magazine, January-February 1976, p. 14.

⁶⁸"Way Out In Kansas," Christianity Today, December 20, 1974, p. 28.

Its interesting to note that even though The Way took over the school just recently, its members talk as if it is basically the same school as it was before. The January-February 1976 issue of The Way Magazine, in an article entitled, "A New Kind of College," displays a photograph of the College sign. It reads:

THE WAY
COLLEGE
OF
EMPORIA
FOUNDED 1882⁶⁹

In the same issue, Donald E. Wierwille, Victor Paul Wierwille's son and Dean of the college in Emporia, speaks about the older alumni of the college who went to the college before The Way took it over.⁷⁰ It seems as though Dean Wierwille stretches the point a little too far in the article in hopes of making The Way College look older than it really is.

Several things must be kept in mind about The Way College of Emporia. The college offers only "Biblical Studies and general education."⁷¹ The Emporia Gazette writes that "students interested in subjects such as science, history or mathematics are enrolled in courses at Emporia State College through a reciprocal arrangement that allows K-State students to enroll in Bible courses at The Way College."⁷²

Each student at the college is (or will be after one month at the college) a graduate of the Foundational Class on Power for Abundant

⁶⁹"A New Kind of College," p. 15.

⁷⁰"Dean Donald E. Wierwille Talks About Vision Leadership And Changing Society," The Way Magazine, January-February 1976, p. 23.

⁷¹Brian Heany, "At The Way College of Emporia Learning Is An Exciting Adventure," The Way Magazine, March-April 1975, p. 23.

⁷²"C. of E. Buildings Being Renovated," Emporia (Kansas) Gazette, December 19, 1976.

Living.⁷³ This makes it all the more easier for The Way to achieve its goal. The goal of the college, according to one of its officials, is "to place people in secular leadership positions who, when they reach these positions will be able to make decisions based on the Word of God. That's how we can change the course of a nation."⁷⁴

The Way's other college, "The Way College of Biblical Research" at Rome City, Indiana, opened in September of 1977.⁷⁵ It is the home of what The Way calls The Way Family Corps. This college is geared toward the family whereas the College at Emporia, Kansas is geared for single students.

The Way itself offers many types of outreaches. It seems that everytime one takes a look he finds a new phase of ministry in The Way. It might help to mention that The Way in the past has changed its outreach several times, so the following information is not guaranteed by the author as information which will remain up to date after a few years.

One of the ministries that The Way offers is the W. O. W. Ambassador. Elena Whiteside, in her book The Way--Living In Love, explains that the W. O. W. Ambassadors "are people who have made a one-year commitment to stand forth and hold forth the Word of God. (W. O. W. stands for 'Word over the World.') W. O. W. ambassadors are expected to support themselves by part-time jobs and then witness eight hours a day. Their responsibilities include establishing fellowships and teaching biblical research classes."⁷⁶

⁷³Brian Heany, "At The Way College of Emporia...", p. 23.

⁷⁴Ibid.

⁷⁵Elena Whiteside, "Growing Up Together In The Way Family Corps," The Way Magazine, May-June 1978, p. 21.

⁷⁶Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 14.

These ambassadors are to be "prepared on a day or even on a one-hour notice to move from one city to another as they are needed...."⁷⁷ These people range from the ages of 18 to 53 years old.⁷⁸ On September 1, 1975, The Way sent out 2077 W. O. W.'s to do their missionary work.⁷⁹

Those who are graduates of the W. O. W. Ambassador program can then go on to be Minutemen for God. Wierwille states that these are his "crack troops" who have had at least a year's experience being a W. O. W. Ambassador. These are the ones he sends out to do the "tough" jobs.⁸⁰

Still another missionary group of The Way is The Way Corps. A brochure for The Way entitled, "The Way Corps," explains:

The Way Corps is a four-year work/study program in Christian leadership training developed by The Way International, America's foremost Biblical research and teaching center."⁸¹

This group of people spend four years of their lives training so that they can be better equipped to spread The Way's teachings. Those involved spend their second and fourth years "in residence at The Way International Headquarters in Ohio or at The Way College of Emporia in Kansas."⁸² According to the above brochure, "Graduates of The Way Corps make up the heart of the leadership of The Way International."⁸³

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 19.

⁷⁸ "WOW Notes," The Way Magazine, November-December 1975, p. 27.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Victor Paul Wierwille, "The President's Newsletter," The Way Magazine, May-June 1976, p. 6.

⁸¹ Taken from a Way brochure entitled "The Way Corps."

⁸² Ibid. ⁸³ Ibid.

The first Way Corps graduated nine members.⁸⁴ The 1978 July-August issue of The Way Magazine states that it was expecting approximately 275 people to graduate from The Way Corps in 1978 at The Way College of Emporia.⁸⁵ For those Way members who have families, but yet want to serve. The Way in the same capacity that The Way Corps does, there is the Family Corps. These are the people who can be found at "The Way College of Biblical Research" in Rome City, Indiana.⁸⁶

The July-August 1978 issue of The Way Magazine was expecting approximately thirty-five people to graduate from The Way Family Corps on July 23, 1978.⁸⁷

Along with all of this, The Way has recently taken many of its outreach ministries and, although they "still function independently in their outreach endeavors," they are placed under "one flag called 'Word in Culture.'"⁸⁸ These departments of outreach are:

1. Word in Business and Profession
2. Correctional Outreach
3. Educational Outreach
4. Fine Arts Outreach
5. Healing Arts Outreach
6. Lessons in Living Outreach
7. Military Outreach⁸⁹

⁸⁴"The President's Newsletter," The Way Magazine, July-August 1978, p. 11.

⁸⁵Ibid.

⁸⁶For more information of the Family Corps see Elena S. Whiteside's article "Growing Up Together In The Way Family Corps" in the 1978 May-June issue of The Way Magazine. Here one can see the reason why the Family Corps was formed. The reader can also get a more detailed description of what The Way Family Corps does.

⁸⁷"The President's Newsletter," July-August 1978, p. 11.

⁸⁸Walter J. Cummins, "Word In Culture Services," God's Word In Culture, November 1978, p. 1.

⁸⁹The different Outreaches are dealt with in "Meet Your Word in Culture Staff at The Way International," God's Word In Culture, January 1979, pp. 6-7.

The department of Business and Profession seeks to get the Word of God (according to Wierwille) involved in the business world. John Blake, co-coordinator for "Word In Business and Profession," writes:

Word in Business and Profession fellowships should be gathering in every area in every state. Start one if it is not. It should be a local fellowship focused upon God's Word as it applies to our business and professions. "Imagineer" with other believers on what can be done. Bring in speakers who can impart technical, professional and spiritual wisdom. Believe together! Work together! We are a family and God has no hands but our hands.⁹⁰

The Correctional Outreach is The Way's ministry to those who are in prisons. According to Way sources this work is now being carried on in "40 states and in several countries abroad."⁹¹ According to The Way, it has a good record in working with prisoners. It keeps many of its prison graduates of PFAL out of prison after they have been released. In the March-April 1978 issue of The Way Magazine it is claimed:

Of our 500 PFAL grads, only 13 have ever been returned to incarceration. Thus, our Correctional Outreach figure of those released who stay out is 97%.⁹²

The Education Outreach covers the ministry to high school and college students and also to teachers.⁹³ The emphasis is on getting The Way teaching out to as many people in the different areas of education as possible. The Way named February 1979 as "International High School Outreach Month" in which it would try to emphasize the

⁹⁰John Blake, "Word in Business and Profession Fellowships," God's Word In Culture, November 1978, p. 2.

⁹¹"Meet Your Word in Culture Staff at The Way International," January 1979, p.6.

⁹²"Preaching Deliverance to the Captives," The Way Magazine, March-April 1978, p. 26.

⁹³"Meet Your Word in Culture Staff at The Way International," January 1979, p. 6.

the need to get The Way's Teaching to high school students.⁹⁴

The Fine Arts Outreach has as its goals the following:

...to preserve and retain the knowledge of the mystery by ingraining it into the artist's and so in the arts, to present the foundational principles of God's Word in the fine arts field (including the musical arts, visual arts, dramatic arts and dance arts, literary arts, and all those involved in presenting any of these) and to inspire believing by building vision in each individual to see the utilization of his or her talents and abilities toward the edifying of the Body of Christ.⁹⁵

The Way seeks to influence every phase of the arts. It seeks to have its members predominate in their fields. One can see that The Way itself, not only each of its members, is seeking to move toward having an impact on culture. It already runs its own publishing house: The American Christian Press. It also has its own record company called W. O. W. Records.

Another area of Outreach mentioned is the Healing Arts Outreach. Here The Way really seeks to influence the whole area of medicine with its teaching. Already The Way has both doctors and nurses involved with it. The Way in 1977 placed "54 of its Medical Ambassadors in 16 states in the United States."⁹⁶ Here is just another way that it can bring its message to those in the world.

Since The Way is concerned about man's total health it has set up its "Lessons in Living Outreach." The objectives of this department are:

...to acquire an accurate knowledge of God's Word concerning the

⁹⁴The Way devoted part of its 1979 January-February issue of The Way Magazine to emphasize the importance of this ministry to high school students.

⁹⁵"Meet Your Word in Culture Staff at The Way International," God's Word In Culture, January 1979, p. 7.

⁹⁶The Healing Word, February 1977, p. 1.

total man (physical, mental and spiritual wholeness); to apply the Word in our daily lives so as to think health; to manifest and teach others the balanced walk as healthy sons of God; to train God's people in the practical application of these principles in daily life; and to so live the Word that The Way believers manifest total health.⁹⁷

This can cover even things such as natural childbirth, raising children, feeding children, and areas such as food preparation.⁹⁸ It might even be noted that The Way itself has become involved in such things as organic gardening and even owns its own farm.⁹⁹ Along with this, The Way publishes its own cookbook entitled, Happy Eating.¹⁰⁰

Finally, The Way operates a Military Outreach. Its goal is to work with the military personal in order to bring them The Way's teachings. According to its coordinator, the Military Outreach's goal is "to open every service academy in the country. Everywhere we have gone for Word in Culture Outreach days and weekends we have opened up a new military installation."¹⁰¹

These are just a few of the many ministries in which The Way is involved. The Way never seems to fail to open up new areas to work in. It provides new functions for its people. The Way not only wants to touch lives in the United States, but seeks to influence

⁹⁷"Meet Your Word in Culture Staff at The Way International," p. 7.

⁹⁸Ibid. See the whole section on page 7.

⁹⁹The details on this can be found in the article "Organic Gardening," The Way Magazine, May-June 1976, pp. 22-23.

¹⁰⁰Happy Eating (New Knoxville, Ohio: The Way Inc., International, n.d.)

¹⁰¹"Meet Your Word in Culture Staff at the Way International," p. 7.

the world as well. They have people working throughtout both the Western and Eastern Hemispheres to bring the teaching of The Way to as many people as possible.

II. THEOLOGY

The Way is growing. It is growing under the guise of Christianity. The question is whether it is Christian or not. For this reason we must analyze its theology. Does its theology really line up with the teachings of the Holy Scripture? Is it safe for Christians to become involved in it?

Prolegomena

To begin with, The Way is probably the most dangerous cult among the new cults. One of the reasons for this is that it uses the same terminology that Orthodox Christianity has been using in the past. Wierwille makes this plain. He writes, "Many people may be misled because while using the same language or words, we don't mean the same thing."¹

When carrying on a conversation with a member of The Way, the Orthodox Christian will find that what they have in common is the use of the same terminology. However, this is as far as it goes. Wierwille has emptied these terms of their original meaning and has put his own new meanings into them. The theology behind these terms is totally different from the faith once delivered unto the Saints in the Historic Christian faith.

Wierwille, in an interview with Art Toalston of the National Courier expresses his disagreement with much of Orthodox Christianity. He has taken it upon himself to disagree with the total Christian Church.

¹Victor Paul Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God (New Knoxville, Ohio: The American Christian Press, 1975), p. 4.

Wierwille says, "I make this statement publicly: About 85 percent of what is believed as being Christian is not Christian if the Bible's right."²

So Wierwille has waged a campaign against the whole Christian Church. He himself claims to be an ex-liberal turned conservative. At one time he didn't even believe in the Second Coming. The Bible to him was "full of myths."³

Now, having turned around, he can say that the Bible is "all true, all inspired by the Spirit of God."⁴ He offers continual praise to the "wonderful Word of God," the "matchless Word," along with other catchy phrases which are meant to show his utmost respect for the Word.

He sees Christianity as the absolute religion. Other religious movements and spiritual personalities such as the Hare Krishnas and Jeane Dixons are spoken of as selling America down the river.⁵ Jesus is spoken of as the only way that one will ever come into the possession of life and be saved.⁶

Yet, Wierwille does not mean the same thing as the Orthodox Christian Church teaches. He looks upon the Historic Christian faith as wrong.

²Art Toalston, "Way Leader rejects deity of Christ," National Courier, April 1, 1977, p. 4.

³Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 105.

⁴Victor Paul Wierwille, "The Spirit and The Word," The Way Magazine, January-February 1975, p. 23.

⁵Victor Paul Wierwille, "Our Times," The Way Magazine, July-August 1975, p. 30.

⁶Victor Paul Wierwille, "Born of Incorruptible Seed," The Way Magazine, July-August 1978, p. 23; Victor Paul Wierwille, "The Limitlessness of the New Life," The Way Magazine, September-October 1977, p. 5.

He has nothing but scorn for the Church that exists today. Not only are the Hare Krishnas and Jean Dixons selling America down the river, but also "the so-called 'Christian' Church, which purports to teach truth but instead stumbles along in the darkness of its man-made religion."⁷

As a matter of fact, according to Wierwille, the present day Christian Church is really one of the major villains which keeps the Word from the people. Wierwille states, "Most of so-called Christianity has devitalized the greatness of God's Word to being nothing but religious formalities or emotionalism."⁸ Christian denominations, according to Wierwille, are "built essentially on man-made doctrine, tradition, confusion, bondage trips and contradiction to the Word as it was originally 'God-breathed.'"⁹

Division in the Christian Church comes "from the unbelief of those who refuse to believe the integrity and the accuracy of God's Word."¹⁰ These denominations wrongly divide God's Word and do not study the Word from its inherent accuracy.¹¹

This leaves The Way in the position of being the "Christians" who are ^{on} the right path. With distrust in the Christian Church, The

⁷Wierwille, "Our Times," p. 30.

⁸Victor Paul Wierwille, God's Magnified Word, Vol. IV in Studies In Abundant Living (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1977), p. 156.

⁹Victor Paul Wierwille, "The President's Newsletter," The Way Magazine, September-October 1974, p. 7.

¹⁰Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 115.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 119, 146.

Way sees itself as God's real vanguard of soldiers bringing in a reformation of Christianity in this day and age. One follower of The Way put it very plainly. He states, "You see, denominations are man-made.... Here we learn what God says and we do things according to His Word. This is the closest thing you'll find to the first century Church anywhere in the world."¹²

The whole idea behind this verbal attack against the Historic Christian Church is meant to set the stage for the prospect to accept Wierwille's teaching without any questioning. Wierwille can now give his people the "real" message of Scripture, the "real" reason why Scripture was written.

Through a reading of Wierwille's books one comes to the conclusion that Wierwille sees the real purpose of Christian teaching as making it possible to lead an abundant life. Wierwille does speak of the death of Jesus for one's sins, but throughout all his books this takes second place to the abundant life. A theology of glory takes preeminence in Wierwille's system rather than a theology which is based on the cross.

Wierwille also has his own formal and material principles. Whereas the Lutheran Confessions has as its formal principle, the Scripture alone and as its material principle the doctrine of justification by faith, Wierwille joins many distorters of the Gospel in going beyond this description.

¹²Whiteside, The Way--Living In Love, p. 30.

Although he gives lip service to the Scriptures as the Word of God as the only rule and norm for one's faith,¹³ Wierwille goes beyond letting Scripture speak on its own and applies his own human reason. This shall be dealt with later on in this paper.

Wierwille's material principle is certainly not justification by faith. Anyone doing just cursory reading of Wierwille's books can see that he interprets the Scriptures in view of the "Abundant Life." Man needs to have an abundant life. This causes Wierwille to draw every doctrine through this belief. If it doesn't fit with the abundant life Wierwille reinterprets it or eliminates it completely. In this way he has much in common with the liberal theology which he repudiates.

In charging many in the Church with using their own "private interpretations" Wierwille is actually leaving himself open to condemnation for the same reasons.

Wierwille lets his people believe that they, too, can study Scripture and come up with the right theology if they use his methods. They are even given helpful ideas in how to study the Scriptures in the original languages. Walther Cummins, in a Way booklet entitled Fundamentals of Greek Research, explains to followers how they, too, can, with a minimum knowledge of Greek (taught by The Way), an interlinear Greek text, and a few other Bible helps, "learn how to research the Bible for truths."¹⁴ All along the person is being molded into one who accepts without reservation what Wierwille says.

¹³Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 19, 61, 82, 114, 145; Victor Paul Wierwille, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today 6th ed. (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1972), p. 55; Dorothy Owens, Keys To Spiritual Light (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, n.d.), p. 2.

¹⁴Walter J. Cummins, Fundamentals of Greek Research (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, n.d.), p. 2.

The Doctrine of Holy Scripture

At first glance Wierwille's view of Scripture sounds almost orthodox. He sees the Bible as inspired by God. He writes:

The Holy Spirit¹⁵ is the author of the Holy Scriptures. He has spoken, and we know Him by what He has spoken. The words used in the Word are from Him. He takes the avenue of human language and through it conveys the divine thought; thus it is God speaking to us through His Word.¹⁶

Dorothy Owens, a teacher in The Way, writes, "The Bible has many writers but only one AUTHOR--GOD--breathed. Man did the speaking in his own vocabulary but what he spoke was what God wanted spoken."¹⁷

Wierwille goes to great lengths in order to make it clear that he is not talking about mechanical inspiration.¹⁸ What really happened was that God spoke to the spirit¹⁹ which was upon the men of God and told them what He wanted said. These men then put this in their own vocabularies "in speaking what God had revealed."²⁰

¹⁵Wierwille, when speaking of the Holy Spirit does not mean the third person of the Trinity. Rather the Holy Spirit is just another name for God the Father. See Victor Paul Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 127.

¹⁶Wierwille, "The Spirit And The Word," p. 23.

¹⁷Owens, Keys to Spiritual Light, p. 4.

¹⁸Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 75-76.

¹⁹In Wierwille's theological system God can only communicate to that which He is. Since God is Spirit He can only communicate to spirit. Therefore God placed spirit (notice the small s) on man and communicated to it. For more information on this subject see Victor Paul Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1971), pp. 78-79.

²⁰Victor Paul Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 79. Wierwille himself comes very close to a type of thought inspiration rather than verbal inspiration. This was a belief common to liberal theologians at the beginning of the 20th century. These theologians held that God inspired the thoughts of the writers but not the very words.

Wierwille can thus say that the original Word, the autographs, "literally contained no errors or contradictions."²¹ But we don't have the "original" manuscripts which were inspired by God. This is where Wierwille comes to the rescue. Never mind the scribes who carefully copied the manuscripts. Most of these scribes are described by Walter Cummins as "more interested in church doctrine being stated in the authoritative MSS of the New Testament."²² Therefore you have many errors in the present day manuscripts. In translating the Scriptures from one language to another "much of the original meaning was lost."²³ Here is where Wierwille and his Biblical Research Center come into the picture. They are going to give the world the correct scripture which the Apostles and Prophets wrote.

Wierwille and The Way hold to the idea that the original language of the Bible was Aramaic. This idea he gets from George Lamsa and others.²⁴ Later the Aramaic was translated into Greek and then into other languages where "much of the original meaning was lost."²⁵

According to The Way, it is good that Wierwille and his Biblical Research Center are around. They are checking over the thousands of different manuscripts to find out the original Word. That is why Walter J. Cummins, a leader in The Way, went to the Institute for New Testament

²¹Ibid., p. 79.

²²Cummins, Fundamentals of Greek Research, p. 14.

²³Ibid., p. 1.

²⁴Cummins, Fundamentals of Greek Research, pp. 12-13; Walter J. Cummins, "In Search of the God-breathed Original," The Way Magazine, March-April 1976, p. 10; Bernita Jess, "The Language of The Lord," The Way Magazine, January-February 1975, p. 24.

²⁵Cummins, Fundamentals of Greek Research, p. 1.

Text Research at the University of Munster in West Germany from September 1, 1974 to June 6, 1975.²⁶

One of the tasks of the Biblical Research and Teaching Center (the New Knoxville headquarters) is to take a look at all the thousands of manuscripts and "to find our way past each of these to the original God-breathed text as holy men of God spoke and wrote it."²⁷

The Way Research then uses its so-called scholarship to come up with its own translations of the Scriptures. To give an example of this we need to look at Matthew 27:46 where Jesus cries out, "ἤλι ἤλι λεμὰ σαβαχθάνι; τοῦτ' ἔστιν, θεέ μου θεέ μου, ἵνατί με εγκατέλιπες ."

In The Way's theology they place fear as^{being} all of the devil. Fear is something that only defeated people express. Jesus was our example of living above fear; therefore he never experienced it.²⁸ This Greek verse in Matthew is wrong because it expresses fear on the part of Jesus. To The Way, the writer who translated it from the original Aramaic misunderstood it and made an error. The Way would rather go to the Aramaic and George Lamsa's translation of it: "My God, my God [Eli, Eli] for

²⁶For information on this see: Victor Paul Wierwille, "The President's Newsletter," The Way Magazine, September-October 1974, p. 6; Victor Paul Wierwille, "The President's Newsletter," The Way Magazine, May-June 1975, p. 9; Walter J. Cummins, "The Integrity of the God-Breathed Word," The Way Magazine, May-June 1975, pp. 6-8; Cummins, "In Search of the God-breathed Original," pp. 8-11.

²⁷Cummins, "In Search of the God-breathed Original," p. 11.

²⁸For a good explanation of this see: Craig Martindale, "Freedom From Fear," The Way Magazine, July-August 1976, pp. 11-14, 26, 27.

this purpose [lmna] you spared me [sabachthani]."²⁹ Now, according to Wierwille, you have the right translation. The Word must fit like a hand in a glove. Jesus was not uttering a cry of despair, God forbid that. Rather he was uttering a cry of victory.³⁰ Now Wierwille can use this verse to support his abundant life theology.

Wierwille has managed to skirt around the text by his "Biblical Research." To use a favorite phrase of his, he has rightly divided the Word of God.

In another instance, Wierwille needs to support his idea that the dead in Christ are not with the Lord until the return of Christ. So he blames bad punctuation on the translators of the King James Version where it is translated that Jesus said, "Verily I say unto thee, today thou shalt be with me in paradise." Wierwille changes the comma to, "Verily I say unto thee today, thou shalt be with me in paradise."³¹ He then feels that he has now rightly divided the Word. It also now fits his theology.

Wierwille also, by way of his translation and interpretation of the Bible text, comes up with four men crucified with Jesus. One of the reasons he sees four others besides Jesus is because Matthew records that two thieves [duo lēstai] were crucified with Jesus, while Luke records two malefactors [ka'kourgoi]. According to Wierwille the two could not

²⁹Victor Paul Wierwille, The Word's Way, Vol. III in Studies In Abundant Living (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1971), p. 272.

³⁰Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 151-156; Wierwille, The Word's Way, pp. 267-273; Cummins, "In Search of the God-breathed original," p. 11; Craig Martindale, "Freedom From Fear," The Way Magazine, July-August 1976, p. 26.

³¹Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 134-135.

be the same. Therefore there must have been four crucified with Jesus.³²

Wierwille does these types of tricks with many more Bible passages. What he doesn't like he makes fit his theology.

He and his colleagues speak much of the "inherent accuracy" of God's Word. What it basically means is that it must fit into Wierwille's preconceived theology.

An example of the flexibility which Wierwille and his colleagues use in interpreting the Word can be seen in the following paragraphs written by Walter J. Cummins:

One of the more difficult passages which I have been checking in the MSS is John 21:18, 19. It says, "Verily, verily I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdest thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me." This passage does not flow in harmony with the rest of the Word nor the first-century tradition. First of all, there is no glory in death, neither for the first-century Christians nor for us as is evidenced by the rest of the scripture. Secondly, this passage does not make sense. If someone carries you when you're dead, how could you glorify anyone? Thirdly, the argument that John lived and wrote during the persecutions holds no water because there is nothing else in his writing (which is really God's writing) to indicate glory in death. Rather there is much glory in the resurrection and the gathering together (Lazarus, Christ, I John 3:2, etc.). In MS 31 (a 13th century cursive text) I made an interesting discovery. The phrase "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this," is deleted, in this manuscript. Leaving it out, the text flows in alignment and harmony with the rest of God's Word.

At the bottom of the page in MS 31 another hand wrote that other texts insert the following: "this he said signifying by what he should glorify God." The word "death" is deleted from this secondary reading in MS 31. It also flows with the rest of the scripture and explains the context better than the total omission. Christ was telling Peter that when he was young he did as he wanted to, but when he would grow up (spiritually) he would depend upon another (God) to gird and bring him where God willed, not

³²For the full details on this see: Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 157-169; Wierwille, The Word's Way, pp. 235-247.

Peter. This He said signifying by what means Peter would glorify God by walking with Him, not dying for Him. There is no glory in death. Christ's next phrase is, "Follow me." Peter would glorify God by following His son Jesus Christ. It is easy to see how the word "death" was added to the text from second century tradition and the persecutions. Therefore, the correct reading of John 21:18, 19 according to the margin and text of MS 31 is: "But when you are old, you will stretch forth your hands, and another shall gird you and shall bring you where you do not will. This he said signifying by what means he should glorify God. And this saying he said, Follow me."³³

Although The Way praises the Scriptures, it is only an outward praise. What Wierwille and his colleagues really do is interpret the Scriptures to fit their own theological position. When he needs to, Wierwille can twist the Greek and Hebrew words to mean what he wants and not necessarily what good grammar calls for. Wierwille is very good at making the Bible say what he wants it to say, but after all, every other false teacher can do the same thing.

In the words of Jack Sparks:

Word and grammar games with the original languages of the Bible are a pet pastime for Wierwille. He speaks as if he were an authority on Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic. No doubt he makes an impression on some who have no knowledge of any of those languages. To those who do, his games are little more than comedy relief. He arbitrarily makes up rules for grammar and assigns meanings to words with caprice.³⁴

Knowing in advance that Wierwille can, and does, twist both individual words and whole passages of scripture by his own private biblical hermeneutics, one can be prepared for his unorthodox doctrines. Through his own way of interpreting the Scriptures Wierwille can now bring in his very own doctrines.

³³Cummins, "The Integrity of the God-Breathed Word," pp. 7-8.

³⁴Sparks, The Mind Benders, p. 210.

The Doctrine of God

Wierwille is anti-Trinitarian. He sees God only as the Father. Jesus Christ is not God, he's the Son of God.³⁵ To Wierwille the Trinity is a doctrine common to many pagan religions.³⁶ The concept of the Trinity came into being through Christians converted from paganism even as early as the first century.³⁷

Wierwille mistakes the triads of other religions with the Trinity of the Christian religion. Wierwille states: "Although many of these religions had many minor deities, they distinctly acknowledged that there was one supreme God who consisted of three persons or essences."³⁸

Again he writes:

The Hindu trinity was made up of the gods Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. The Greek triad was composed of Zeus, Athena and Apollo. These three were said by the pagans to "agree in one." One of the largest pagan temples built by the Romans was constructed at Baalbek (situated in present-day Lebanon) to their trinity of Jupiter, Mercury and Venus. In Babylon the planet Venus was revered as special and was worshipped as a trinity consisting of Venus, the moon and the sun. This triad became the Babylonian holy trinity in the fourteenth century before Christ.³⁹

One of the worst things that happened according to Wierwille is that the Trinity became an established doctrine at the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D. According to Wierwille, Constantine was persuaded by his ecclesiastical adviser, Ossius, Bishop of Cordova, to accept the trinitarian doctrine.⁴⁰ Constantine called a council at Nicea⁴¹ in Asia Minor. This council was attended by "approximately 220

³⁵Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 36.

³⁶Ibid., p. 11. ³⁷Ibid., p. 14. ³⁸Ibid., p. 11.

³⁹Ibid., p. 11-12. ⁴⁰Ibid., p. 23.

⁴¹Wierwille displays a slight discrepancy on the place of the Council of Nicea. In an edition of the book Jesus Christ Is Not God, copyrighted in 1975 and published in 1975, Wierwille states that the Council was held in Nicea "which is now Nice, France." Obviously he is wrong here. Jack

bishops who were almost exclusively from the Occident.⁴² Constantine brought political pressure to bear on the bishops to accept the position of the Trinity. He writes that 218 of the 220 bishops signed the creed "although it was truly the work of a minority."⁴³

Walter Cummins states that "only one Eastern bishop participated in the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D."⁴⁴ According to Sparks: "apparently Wierwille wants the doctrine of the Trinity to be a Western invention."⁴⁵

Wierwille writes:

Trinitarianism then was confirmed at Nicæa in 325 by Church bishops out of political expediency. Its reaffirmation was thereafter needed and received in Constantinople in 381. Since that time the "God-in-three-persons" doctrine has been adhered to as though it were divine revelation.⁴⁶

He can write: "Clearly, historians of Church dogma and systematic theologians agree that the idea of a Christian trinity was not a part of the first century Church!"⁴⁷

Sparks writes concerning Wierwille's mistake: "First of all, just for the record, Nicæa isn't the present Nice, France. It was just a few miles from Constantinople. Today that is the site of Istanbul Turkey! O well, France, Turkey, what's the difference? It's only history." Jack Sparks, The Mind Benders (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers, 1977), p. 192.

Yet in another copy of Jesus Christ Is Not God that has the same copy-right date and same publishing date as the one mentioned above, Wierwille has changed the wording from "Nice, France" to the words "which is now in Asia Minor." p. 23

It is obvious that Wierwille has corrected the error without giving any type of notice to the change in the book.

⁴²Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 23.

⁴³Ibid., pp. 23-24.

⁴⁴Cummins, "In Search of the God-breathed Original," p. 11.

⁴⁵Sparks, The Mind Benders, p. 192.

⁴⁶Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, pp. 25-26.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 25. Note: Nowhere does Wierwille back up this statement with facts. He does quote from Church historians who speak of the Church formulating its doctrine over the centuries. One must realize that these doctrines were inherent in the Scriptures already in the first century. It

Wierwille has been quoted as saying: "Christianity is going down the drain...losing, has lost and will continue to lose until they come back to the one true God and worship Him."⁴⁸

Worshipping a triune God, to Wierwille, is idolatry. It is not worshipping the one true God. One can guess where that leaves the present day church. Since it believes, (or at least the conservative elements of it) believe in a Trinity they are worshipping idols.

One might argue that Wierwille doesn't look at the scripture passages stressing the Trinity. What one needs to remember is Wierwille's own special hermeneutics. He knows how to do away with these verses. I John 5:6-7 he throws out because these verses do not appear in any of the early manuscripts.⁴⁹ Matthew 28:19 is thrown out, not because it is not found in the earliest manuscripts; it is well attested by every manuscript. What Wierwille does is ~~to make use of~~ the church fathers such as Eusebius (d. 340 A.D.) who, when quoting this verse used "in my name" instead of the Trinitarian formula. Wierwille concludes that these fathers must "have had earlier manuscripts than are now in existence."⁵⁰ With this sweeping blow he does away with this very well-attested verse saying, "It was not difficult for fourth century scribes to change the words 'in my name' to 'in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost' in the few existing manuscripts, since the Godhead was gradually taking on a triune nature in their religious environment."⁵¹

should be noted that Wierwille on page 177 states that there are 428 other books in a bibliography. He urges the reader to write to The Way International headquarters and request a copy of these if one so desires.

⁴⁸Toalston, "Way Leader rejects deity of Christ," p. 4.

⁴⁹Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 18.

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 19-20. ⁵¹Ibid., p. 21.

So, God is the Father. One in essence and One in person. From John 4:24 Wierwille reminds his reader that God is Spirit.⁵² He is also Holy and therefore can be called the Holy Spirit. One must recognize that when Wierwille speaks of the capital H Holy capital S Spirit he is speaking of another name for God the Father, just as Dick is another name for Richard. This Holy Spirit is not to be confused with holy spirit (small h and s) which is the gift which the Holy Spirit gives.⁵³ The gift of holy spirit is not God but "an inherent spiritual ability, dunamis, power from on high."⁵⁴ It's holy and spirit because the Giver of it is both Holy and Spirit and God "can only give that which He is."⁵⁵

The Doctrine of Creation

Now that one has come to grips with Wierwille's Doctrine of God, he can more easily understand The Way's doctrine of Creation.

God, who is the Father, is the Creator of the world. Since Wierwille has done away with the third person of the Trinity he does not have to worry about the Holy Spirit in the creation of the world, because that Spirit is the Father. Jesus Christ is not seen as God the creator.⁵⁶ Neither could all things be created by Jesus Christ as Ephesians 3:9 states in the King James Version. Walter J. Cummins writes that the words "by Jesus Christ do not appear in all the Greek texts and rightfully so. God could not have 'created all things by Jesus Christ' since Jesus Christ

⁵²Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 78.

⁵³Wierwille, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today, p. 4.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 5. ⁵⁵Ibid., p. 4-5.

⁵⁶Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 36.

did not exist (except in the foreknowledge of God) until He was born in Bethlehem."⁵⁷ It was God the Father, who created the world and no one else since He is, according to Wierwille, the only true God.

Wierwille goes on to say that sometime after God created the heavens and the earth in Genesis 1:1 something happened. A catastrophic event happened. The earth became without form and void.⁵⁸

Wierwille translates the Hebrew וַיִּבְרָא in verse 2 of Genesis 1 as became. He writes:

First of all, in examining verse 2 a student of the Word must be aware that in the original Estrangelo Aramaic and Hebrew there was no verb "to be," although there was the verb "to become."... The first word "was" should have been translated "became." "And the earth became without form and void...." The earth was not created in Genesis 1:1 formless and void, but it became that way.⁵⁹

It should be noted that וַיִּבְרָא comes from the root בָּרָא meaning to fall out, come to pass, become, be. It can be translated as become but this does not need to be the case.⁶⁰ Wierwille does not know how many years elapsed between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2; it could have been trillions of years.⁶¹

⁵⁷Walter J. Cummins, Fundamentals of Greek Research, p. 17. It should be noted that the United Bible Society's The Greek New Testament leaves these words out of the text as well. In its A Textual Commentary On The Greek New Testament it gives the reason for its omission as better manuscript support on the side of its omission. The "Committee preferred to read simply ΚΤΙΘΕΝΤΕ ." see Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary On The Greek New Testament (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), pp. 603-604.

⁵⁸Wierwille, The Word's Way, pp. 3-6. ⁵⁹Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁰For a study of this word see Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew And English Lexicon Of The Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907; reprint ed. 1974), pp. 224-228. Note especially pp. 226-227, section III. C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch when commenting on Gen. 1:2 state that וַיִּבְרָא should be translated was and not became. See C. F. Keil, F. Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, vol. 1: The Pentateuch, trans. James Martin (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 5th printing 1978), p. 48.

⁶¹Wierwille, The Word's Way, pp. 3-6.

The reason why the earth became without form and void is explained by Wierwille as having to deal with Satan being cast out of heaven.

According to Wierwille:

The whole creation was originally perfect. Isaiah tells more about how the earth became without form and void. Isaiah records that in the beginning, sometime before Genesis 1:2, God created angels, spirit beings. When He created these angels, He put all the angels under three heads: Gabriel, Michael and Lucifer. But celestial strife ensued, with Lucifer and a third of the angels, trying to usurp the throne of God. Consequently these spirit beings were dispelled from heaven and became known as the fallen angels, the enemies of God....

What happened between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 was of such a cataclysmic nature that perfectly created earth became tohu va bohu. When Lucifer rebelled in heaven, the whole creation rocked and reeled. Romans 8 says that even until today the "whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain...."⁶²

Gen. 1:2, according to Wierwille, "begins the record of God's putting His creation in order after the first heaven and earth."⁶³ Today we live

⁶²Wierwille, The Word's Way, pp. 3-6; see also Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 241.

In respect to a view such as Wierwille's, which comes very close to the view expressed in The Scofield Reference Bible, Fred Kramer states: "It must, however, be pointed out that the text does not speak of a 'time gap' between Gen. 1:1 and the rest of the chapter. Furthermore, there is nothing in Scripture to indicate that the fall of the angels took place at this juncture. Neither do the passages adduced from Isaiah and Jeremiah 'indicate...a cataclysmic change as a result of a divine judgment' at the time of Genesis 1 but rather the punishment of the Lord upon Israel, for whose sin the land is reduced to a state such as it was in when the earth was 'without form and void' and not yet inhabited by man and beast.

"Eduard Koenig appears to be on firm ground when, after discussing the pros and cons with respect to the two possible translations of Gen. 1:1, he says: 'The restitution hypothesis that is, the hypothesis that Gen. 1:3-27 tells of the re-creation of a world destroyed by the fall of the angels has no basis whatsoever in the text.

"The reader who approaches Genesis 1 without prejudice is not likely to find in this brief chapter anything more or less than an account of the original creation of the universe, its ordering by the creation of light, the firmament, the sea and the heavenly bodies, its adornment by the plant world, followed by the creation of the animal world, including man. If there is a great time interval or gap in the history of the primeval world, it is passed over in Genesis 1." (Fred Kramer, "The Biblical Account of Creation," Rock Strata and the Bible Record, ed. Paul A. Zimmerman (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1970), p. 96.)

⁶³Wierwille, The Word's Way, p. 9.

in the period of the second heavens and earth.⁶⁴ It was after the catastrophic event of Gen. 1:2 that God created the animals of the earth. Wierwille holds that there could not have been an evolution between genera but there could be "evolution or change within a genus."⁶⁵ He states: "All theories of evolution die before they start unless kept within the category of species and not genus."⁶⁶ God then finished creation by bringing man into existence.

The Doctrine of Man

God, Wierwille says, set about making man by forming his body out of the dust of the earth, putting life into him, thus making him a living soul and finally creating in him spirit.⁶⁷ This last item, spirit, is what set man apart from the animals which only consisted of body and soul.⁶⁸

Since God, who is Spirit, can only speak to what He is,⁶⁹ He created within man spirit. This made it possible for God to communicate with man;⁷⁰ something He could not do with animals.⁷¹ This is what Wierwille means by the image of God. Patricia T. Talley, in Jesus Christ, The Last Adam, writes: "God is Spirit, John 4:23, therefore His image would be Spirit."⁷²

God could not communicate to man through the senses, but He could through the spirit in man. Because of this spirit in man he had "perfect

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 5. ⁶⁵Ibid., p. 12.

⁶⁶Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 243-244.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 232-234. ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 247. ⁶⁹Ibid., p. 78.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 239. ⁷¹Wierwille, The Word's Way, p. 19.

⁷²Patricia T. Talley, Jesus Christ, The Last Adam (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, n.d.), p. 1.

fellowship, perfect communion, with the Creator at all times. Adam also had supreme power on earth over that which God gave him dominion."⁷³

Adam though had this spirit on condition.⁷⁴ He could acquire knowledge through his five senses or he could attain knowledge by the spirit which God created inside of him.⁷⁵

Wierwille writes:

...as long as Adam walked by the spirit, he had perfect fellowship with God. But the moment Adam let his senses rule over his mind and body instead of walking by the spirit, calamity resulted. Why? Because he was no longer God-ruled. Adam had the option of walking by his senses or walking by the spirit. He determined by his free will whether to be led by what he could see, hear, smell, taste and touch or to be led by God.⁷⁶

This is what Satan deceived Eve into doing and then also Adam.

Wierwille, in order to show that the sin which Adam and Eve committed was walking by the senses instead of by the spirit, explains:

What ensues is recorded in Genesis 3:6. "And when the woman saw...." Is "saw" in the world of the spirit or the senses? It is in the category of the senses. As long as Adam and Eve lived by God's revelation, life was perfect; but the moment the senses were allowed to dominate over the spirit, calamity resulted.⁷⁷

What happened as a result of this sin was that the spirit, which Adam had only on condition, disappeared. The image of God was lost. Adam and Eve's "entire spiritual connection with God was lost."⁷⁸ They were now just like the animals, body and soul, without the spirit and unable to communicate with God.⁷⁹

⁷³Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 250.

⁷⁴Wierwille, "Born of Incorruptible Seed," p. 23.

⁷⁵Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 250.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 250-251. ⁷⁷Ibid., p. 257. ⁷⁸Ibid., p. 258.

⁷⁹Ibid.

God could no longer communicate directly with man. Now He had to "come into concrete form because men had no means by which to understand spiritual things."⁸⁰

When Wierwille speaks about man being dead in trespasses and sins he means that man has no spirit.⁸¹ Not only did man lose his spirit through which he communicated directly with God, but he also legally deeded over^{to Satan} the rulership, dominion, and the authority and the power which he at one time held. Wierwille writes:

If at one time Adam had all power, dominion and authority, how then did the Devil come to have it? The Devil said, "that is delivered unto me." Who delivered it to him? Adam did. Adam transferred that which God had conferred upon him to God's arch-enemy the Devil. This made the original sin, in legal terms, high treason against God. Adam gave the power which God had given to him to God's arch-enemy.⁸²

Man was now enslaved in the senses world. He had no spirit. "They were without God because when man sinned he lost his spirit, his innate relationship with God. Man, being without spirit, was without God and without hope in this world."⁸³

But man did have a free will. Although natural man of body and soul could not have faith, because faith is "an inner spiritual development," yet he could believe since "believing is an action of the human mind."⁸⁴ All through the Old Testament era, people could believe God, but according to Wierwille, they could not have faith. "Absolutely nobody could have faith until Jesus Christ made faith available."⁸⁵

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 259. ⁸¹Ibid., p. 270

⁸²Ibid., p. 267. Note: When Wierwille uses the term legal he means that man had the right to dominion over all that God had given him. When Adam sinned he gave that right over to Satan so that it was officially Satan's.

⁸³Ibid., p. 269. ⁸⁴Ibid., p. 271. ⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 272-273.

The Doctrine of Christ

Man, having got himself into a predicament, needed someone to save him. This is where Jesus Christ comes in.

God sent forth Jesus Christ into the world to redeem man. It all sounds good until we remember what Wierwille means by "Jesus Christ."

According to Wierwille and The Way, Jesus is the Son of God but not God. He is in his position "second only to God, being God's "only-begotten Son."⁸⁶ Cummins states that those who "say since Jesus Christ is called the Son of God, he is therefore God" must also by the same reasoning conclude that "we must be God because the Word calls us sons of God in I John 3:2."⁸⁷

Wierwille writes, "In the Bible the phrase Son of God, referring to Jesus Christ, is found 50 times. At no place is there God the Son. Without "God the Son," Jesus Christ cannot be God."⁸⁸

Wierwille is so sure of this that on Reformation Sunday October 30, 1977 he posted on the door of the First United Church of Christ in New Knoxville a large proclamation that said:

JESUS CHRIST
IS NOT GOD
never was and never will be.⁸⁹

Wierwille, in an interview with the National Courier, explains that he has an ally in this belief. He says:

⁸⁶Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 58.

⁸⁷Cummins, "Powerful Abundant Living," pp. 20, 30.

⁸⁸Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 27.

⁸⁹"Our Times," The Way Magazine, January-February 1978, p. 22.

If Martin Luther would have had more time, and lived in our culture, I'm confident he would have come up with a far better work on Jesus Christ Is Not God than I did, because he knew it. But he just didn't have time.⁹⁰

The Courier countered this statement of Wierwille's by saying: "Luther, however, did have time to write a catechism, published in 1529, in which he wrote that Jesus is 'true God and true man.'"⁹¹

Since Jesus is not God, this means he was not with God in the beginning. He was with God in His foreknowledge, just as we as believers were "with God in His foreknowledge, but not in existence before the foundation of the world."⁹²

In reference to I Peter 1:20 Wierwille writes:

The word "foreordained" is the Greek word proginōskō which means "to foreknow." God foreknew Christ; Christ was in God's foreknowledge before the foundation of the world, but Christ was manifested when he was born.⁹³

What God did was just at the right time, because Mary was the first woman who "literally and unreservedly believed what God said...."⁹⁴

God then created "life within Mary's reproductive organs."⁹⁵

God had to do this because He needed a sinless person to die for the sins of men. This person had to be one of us and not God.⁹⁶

Wierwille explains why Jesus had to be born sinless and how this sinless birth was accomplished:

⁹⁰Toalston, "Way Leader rejects deity of Christ," p. 4.

⁹¹Ibid. ⁹²Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 29.

⁹³Ibid., p. 28.

⁹⁴Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 286-287.

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 286.

⁹⁶Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 7.

There is no question that the Bible teaches divine conception. The question pertains only to the integrity of the Bible. The Bible also teaches that all men since Adam are born "dead in trespasses and sin," while at the same time claiming that Jesus was a sinless man. Jesus was born sinless, but he also maintained himself sinless as he grew older. How can we account for the original sinlessness of Jesus--that he was born sinless? Hebrews gives part of the answer.

Hebrews 2:14:

Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he Jesus also himself likewise took part of the same....

All children are of Adam, and all partake of Adam's flesh and blood. The word "partake" is the Greek word koinōneō and means "to share fully." So all of Adam's descendants share fully in his flesh and blood, thereby transmitting sinfulness to all Adam's children. But Jesus just "took part" of the same; the Greek word is metechō which means "to take only a part, not all." Jesus took some part, but not all; he did not share fully, koinōneō. According to the flesh, he was of Mary; but the life of the flesh in the blood of Jesus came by way of supernatural conception by the Holy Spirit, God.

If Jesus had been conceived from an ovum of Mary and a sperm of Joseph, he would have been as sinful as any other child and would have shared fully in Adam's flesh and blood. But the genes with the dominant characteristics came to Jesus not through Mary but by way of the creation of a sperm by God and thus he could have sinless blood.

Natural life, called soul-life, is in the blood. Sin is transmitted through the soul-life and not through the physical flesh which is simply the vehicle that manifests sin. This life which is in the blood is contributed by the sperm of the male. Soul-life is carried in the seed. You can understand the important significance of the male's contribution when studying the conception of Jesus Christ.

The ovum has to be fertilized by the sperm to have soul-life. The mother provides the unborn, developing infant with the nutritive elements for the building of that little body within her. All the nutritive elements and even antibodies pass freely from the mother to fetus through the placenta, along with the waste products of the child's metabolism which pass back to the mother. Normally, however, there is no actual interchange of blood. All the blood which is in that child is produced within the fetus itself.

How wonderfully God prepared for the birth of His Son, Jesus Christ, from the beginning. When He formed and made woman, He made her so that no blood should pass directly from her to her offspring.

Adam is the head of all the races of men on earth, and Jesus had to be of the line of Adam in order to fulfill the law. God, to produce a sinless man and yet one who was of the line of Adam, had to provide a way whereby Jesus would have a human body derived from Adam and yet not have soul-life from Adam's sinful blood.

Mary nurtured the embryo of Jesus in her womb, and thus he

was of the line of Adam and David according to the flesh. But the Holy Spirit contributed the soul-life in the blood of Jesus by way of the sperm. In Jesus' arteries and veins there was sinless soul-life. When Judas betrayed Jesus he confessed, according to Matthew 27:4, "I have betrayed the innocent blood." Sin made man's soul-life corruptible, but the soul-life of Jesus was from God.

Luke 1:35:

And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

God cannot be born but His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, was conceived in Mary by God's creation. Thus the conception of Jesus Christ was a miracle by supernatural laws, but the birth proceeded according to natural laws.⁹⁷

Wierwille concludes that in order "to understand our redemption through Christ our passover, we must know that the perfect sacrifice had to be a man and not God."⁹⁸

It was this Jesus, true man but not God, whom God sent to redeem the earth. One must be very careful when studying Wierwille's view of Christ's mission on earth. At first glance it looks almost like the Orthodox Christian belief. Yet if one thinks in terms of Orthodox Lutheran theology, Wierwille's system of redemption falls far short.

Jesus is seen as the one who lived a perfectly positive life. He is the model which Christians are to follow. Jesus, who had that perfect spirit in him, faced all the fears that man could face and he conquered them.

He looked at everyone of them and handled each and every one of them. Jesus Christ proved that God's Word works in every situation in life.... Jesus Christ has already cut through the jungles, the negatives, the frustrations, the disappointments and the sorrows. He looked at every one of them in the eye and proved that the living Word of God works. Now we simply follow in his footsteps.⁹⁹

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 70-73. ⁹⁸Ibid., p. 76.

⁹⁹Craig Martindale, "Freedom From Fear," The Way Magazine, July-August 1976, p. 13.

A person in The Way feels that he can follow in Jesus Christ's footsteps because he has what Wierwille calls "Christ in you."¹⁰⁰

According to Wierwille Jesus did come to die for our sins. He even states that:

The purpose of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, was to fulfill the Old Testament law and to provide a way by which mankind could be redeemed from sin and its consequences. In order to accomplish this, sinless blood had to be spilled.¹⁰¹

Wierwille will even use perfectly legitimate phrases such as:

"Christianity is not what man does; Christianity is what God has done through Christ."¹⁰²

But what Wierwille is really interested in is not the cross of Christ and the fact that God cursed His own Son by turning His back on him.¹⁰³ The cross of Christ does not hold an important position in Wierwille's theology.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰The subject of "Christ in you" will be dealt with in more depth under the head of "The Doctrine of holy spirit."

¹⁰¹Wierwille, The Word's Way, p. 185.

¹⁰²Victor Paul Wierwille, "The Counsel of The Lord," The Way Magazine, July-August 1975, p. 5.

¹⁰³This can be seen by what has already been discussed in connection with Matthew 27:46. Supra pp. 30-31. According to Wierwille God would never have forsaken His Son.

¹⁰⁴What becomes prominent in Wierwille's theology is the Resurrection because he can then exalt the Abundant Life of the believer. Wierwille writes about the cross: "it's the symbol of death and defeat and the Adversary has hoodwinked people into exalting Christ's death so they forget about the greatness of his resurrection.... There is darkness today over all the land where people exalt the cross and sit in the shadow of death." Victor Paul Wierwille, "Our Times" The Way Magazine, January-February 1976, p. 30. Wierwille speaks in half-truths. The Resurrection of Jesus is very important. Yet the suffering of Christ is of vital importance for the redemption of the world. Wierwille exults the resurrection because it fits in well with his theology of the Abundant Life (Theology of Glory). Wierwille will speak very pious sounding words about the death of Christ for our sins, but one will find in reading Wierwille's books, this death seems to be just a step (a major step) in getting the person

Why did Jesus really die? One needs to remember that Wierwille's whole system revolves around the Abundant Life, a theology of glory. So the death of Jesus is seen as making that abundant life available. Wierwille writes, "Jesus Christ came to make the new birth available."¹⁰⁵

What Jesus did by his Death, Resurrection, and Ascension to the Father was to repair the broken line which caused man to be dead in trespasses and sins. Jesus came to make the "proper connection again."¹⁰⁶

Jesus came to make it possible for man to be tripartate again; to gain possession of holy spirit again. This is important because now the death of Jesus in Wierwille's theology can be seen as entirely different from Orthodox theology.

The Doctrine of holy spirit

It is this holy spirit that is important in Wierwille's theology. One needs to remember in his reading of Wierwille that whenever he uses Holy Spirit with upper case letters H and S he is speaking of God the Father. But when he speaks of holy spirit with lower case letters h and s he is speaking of something entirely different.

Wierwille writes:

The gift from the Holy Spirit, the Giver, is pneuma hagion, holy spirit, power from on high, spiritual abilities, enablements. This power is spirit in contrast to the senses. Spirit is holy as opposed to the flesh, which is called by God unholy. God is Holy Spirit and God can only give that which He is; therefore,

"born again."

It should also be noted that Jesus did not die on a cross; rather he died on a wooden stake. Cummins, Fundamentals of Greek Research, p. 11. In this aspect The Way is similar to the Jehovah's Witnesses.

¹⁰⁵Wierwille, "Born of Incorruptible Seed," p. 4.

¹⁰⁶Victor Paul Wierwille, The New, Dynamic Church (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1971), p. 97.

the gift from the Giver is of necessity holy and spirit.

The gift is holy spirit, pneuma hagion, which is an inherent spiritual ability, dunamis, power from on high. This gift is "Christ in you, the hope of glory" with all its fullness.¹⁰⁷

One will need to keep this in mind in his reading of Wierwille or else it will lead to all manner of confusion.

Wierwille states:

The Giver is God, the Spirit. His gift is spirit. Failure to recognize the difference between the Giver and His gift has caused no end to confusion in the Holy Spirit field of studying as well as in the understanding of the new birth.¹⁰⁸

This gift is referred to by Wierwille in many different ways. He refers to it as "power from on high,"¹⁰⁹ as "inherent spiritual power, dunamis, the new birth, 'Christ in you.'¹¹⁰

"The gift of holy spirit equips us with the ability for a life of greater fruitfulness for God. The power from on high is ours to help us to grow more Christ-like."¹¹¹ This power from on high, the holy spirit, was given once and for all at Pentecost. Ever since then it has been around for people to receive when they believe.¹¹²

Salvation--The Doctrine of Being "Born Again"

When one understands Wierwille's doctrine of holy spirit, then Wierwille's doctrine of salvation becomes clearer.

To Wierwille, salvation begins when ^{one} is born again. This new birth is "the crux of Christianity."¹¹³

¹⁰⁷Wierwille, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today, pp. 4-5.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., p. 4. ¹⁰⁹Ibid., pp. 67-69. ¹¹⁰Ibid., p. 87.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 31. ¹¹²Ibid., p. 36.

¹¹³Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 229.

No man before Pentecost could be born again,¹¹⁴ which is to have the spirit in you. To have the spirit in one is to have salvation and eternal life. Every person in the Old Testament was "without eternal life;" they were not born again.¹¹⁵ Even the Apostles before Pentecost were not born again, for "if the apostles could have been born again while Jesus was on earth, Jesus Christ wouldn't have needed to die upon Calvary's cross and God wouldn't have needed to give the holy spirit."¹¹⁶ Thus no one in the Old Testament (including the time of the Gospels) had the spirit inside¹¹⁷ of them; yet they could have at times the spirit upon them.¹¹⁸

In order that the people in the Old Testament do not get left out out of some type of relationship with God, Wierwille explains that the Old Testament believers did have something.

Old Testament believers could not have faith, because to Wierwille, that did not come until Jesus Christ had come, lived, died, and ascended into heaven. Faith came at Pentecost.¹¹⁹ Old Testament people, even though they did not have the spirit inside of them, could at least believe since they still had the five senses.¹²⁰ According to Wierwille,

¹¹⁴Sally Martin, "The Anger of The Lord," The Way Magazine, May-June 1975, p. 23.

¹¹⁵Wierwille, "Born of Incorruptible Seed," p. 4.

¹¹⁶Ibid., p. 4.

¹¹⁷Wierwille is inconsistent here. While emphasizing that no Old Testament personalities could have the spirit in them, he makes the statement in "A Man In Whom The Spirit of God Is," that Joseph (son of Jacob) had the spirit in him. See: Victor Paul Wierwille, "A Man In Whom The Spirit of God Is," The Way Magazine, July-August 1976, pp. 20, 21.

¹¹⁸Martin, "The Anger of The Lord," p. 22.

¹¹⁹Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 272-273.

¹²⁰Ibid., p. 259.

Old Testament people, devoid of the spirit, could not understand spiritual things.¹²¹ This is because the spirit plays an important role in Wierwille's theology of man. It is where man has a direct, immediate communication with God as we have discussed it under The Doctrine of Man and as we shall see later in this paper. It is through this direct communication with God that man learns spiritual things. Since Old Testament people did not have this spirit in them, they could not understand these spiritual matters. So God had to come to them in concrete ways.¹²²

To Wierwille, even though faith (which is a spiritual thing given after Pentecost) could not be given to the Old Testament person, that person could still believe.

Wierwille does not see "faith" in the Bible and "believing" in the Bible as the same thing. Believing is something man can do with his mind because the unspiritual man of the Old Testament still had his five senses, even though he lost his spirit.¹²³

After Pentecost believers could be sons of God through birth by the holy spirit. Old Testament believers could not be sons by birth, but only sons by adoption.¹²⁴

So it seems as though in Wierwille's theology the Old Testament believer does not possess the blessings that come with the indwelling of the holy spirit. This makes The Way more exciting because each member living in this age is assured that he is living in an age where he can have more than the Old Testament believer ever had.

¹²¹Ibid. ¹²²Ibid. ¹²³Ibid.

¹²⁴Ibid., p. 314. See also: Wierwille, The Word's Way, p. 79.

The benefits that the New Testament believer has with the indwelling of the holy spirit are multitudinous.

This indwelling of the holy spirit in the believer is called "Christ in you." According to Wierwille, "Everything that God is in Christ" is in the believer.¹²⁵ This spirit is really seed in you which makes you a son of God by new birth.

Wierwille writes that "when you are born of God you've got His seed in you.... With the second birth I also received one seed, God's seed, '....born of God....' That puts me in God's spiritual family."¹²⁶

The moment the person is born of God and receives this "Christ in you," at that moment he receives the remission of sins.¹²⁷ This "Christ in you" also brings the person eternal life making him belong forever to the family of God.¹²⁸

The person who has this holy spirit inside of him is no longer under the legal control of Satan; he is now legally a child of God.¹²⁹ This is important because it has a great deal to do with Wierwille's success theology. At the fall man legally deeded over all his rights to Satan. But now that man has been born again¹³⁰ he is given back those

¹²⁵Wierwille, "Born of Incorruptible Seed," p. 23.

¹²⁶Victor Paul Wierwille, "The Limitlessness of the New Life," The Way Magazine, September-October 1977, p. 6.

¹²⁷Ibid., p. 7. See also: Randy Anderson, "We Are His Masterpiece," The Way Magazine, May-June 1976, p. 10.

¹²⁸Peter J. Wade, That Ye May Know (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, n.d.), p. 7; Wierwille, "Born of Incorruptible Seed," p. 23.

¹²⁹Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 294.

¹³⁰This person is now a son of God by birth and Satan has no right to have control over him.

legal rights which he once had.

A person who is born again, who has the holy spirit inside of him, is once again a tripartate being, as Adam once was before the fall. He can once again communicate with God.¹³¹ He now has "a point of contact with God."¹³²

Wierwille also speaks of the born again believer as being righteous because of the holy spirit in him. He writes:

At the time of rebirth, the believer is made righteous--as righteous as Jesus Christ himself, having the very righteousness of God. This is given to us by the Father himself.... As believers, we have the righteousness of God. This is too marvelous to comprehend. Our standing as sons of the Father means that we are clothed in the righteousness with which Christ Jesus clothed us, not our own works or merits, but of God's grace.¹³³

One must read Wierwille carefully. It sounds as if Wierwille is saying that righteousness is a righteousness found in Christ. But it can't be an alien righteousness which is Christ's, since Christ is not God in Wierwille's theology. Rather all this righteousness is the holy spirit in the believer.¹³⁴

In many ways Wierwille comes close to the theology of the Council of Trent, with an infused righteousness pertaining to salvation. A good illustration of this can be seen in Wierwille's book, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today. According to Wierwille, "Righteousness is the spirit

¹³¹Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 299-300.

¹³²Wierwille, "Born of Incorruptible Seed," p. 23.

¹³³Victor Paul Wierwille, "Walking In The Light," The Way Magazine, May-June 1975, p. 4.

¹³⁴See: Victor Paul Wierwille, The Bible Tells Me So, Vol. 1 in Studies in Abundant Living (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1971), pp. 25, 67-68, 70-71; Wierwille, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today, p. 29; Wierwille, "The Limitlessness of the New Life," p. 28; Lonell E. Johnson, The Gift (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, n.d.), p. 9.

from God in man, not the goodness of man."¹³⁵

This indwelling of the holy spirit brings not only all that has been mentioned thus far, but it also brings limitless potential.¹³⁶ According to Wierwille, this "limitless potential" is the power which is inside you; but if you don't use it, you will never know that you have it.

In Wierwille's theology, one receives the holy spirit when he does two things. The man or woman must first (1) believe that God raised Jesus from the dead and (2) confess that Jesus is Lord of one's life.¹³⁷ A person who has done this has "instantly changed lords; he is now on the way to heaven and all hell cannot stop him from going because He is a son of God having Christ in him. He has eternal life. He is no longer a natural man (simply a body-and-soul being) because he has received the spirit from God."¹³⁸

A man hears the word of God with his senses, believes (remember this is something a natural man can do¹³⁹) with his heart that God raised him from the dead and thus receives the "faith of Jesus

¹³⁵Wierwille, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today, p. 29.

¹³⁶Wierwille, "The Limitlessness of the New Life," pp. 5-6.

¹³⁷Wierwille, The Word's Way, p. 83. ¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹A natural man, one who is not born again of God's Spirit, can still believe. A man can believe for the faith of Jesus Christ. A natural man receives according to his belief. Wierwille writes that he remembers a non-Christian in India who believed for his healing and received it apart from being a Christian. see Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 29-31. According to Wierwille the law of believing "works for saint and sinner alike." Power For Abundant Living, p. 32. Yet to Wierwille, believing has both a positive and negative side to it. One can have negative believing and reap the results of this type of believing. Wierwille gives an account of a certain mother who feared that one day her young boy would get hurt. According to Wierwille she received what she believed; her son was killed by a car. The mother "reaped the results of her believing." see Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 42-44.

Christ."¹⁴⁰ This faith of Jesus Christ comes in the same amount for everyone.¹⁴¹ Wierwille explains this reception:

Let us say that I am unsaved--a natural man of body and soul. I hear The Word; I believe what I hear. And, when I believe, God implants in me the faith of Jesus Christ, which is "unto all and upon all them that believe." Since He has put this faith in me, I am now of the household of faith. God is my Father; I am His son.¹⁴²

It must be remembered that with Wierwille everything that deals with salvation is internal. It all centers in on this holy spirit of his, which makes the person a tripartate being again.

It is because of this that Wierwille can speak in terms of man being unable to fall from grace because he has been born of the Spirit and has the holy spirit inside of him. Although Wierwille does not like the word "eternal security"¹⁴³ what he believes is the same thing. A man born with God's seed (holy spirit) in him, cannot lose it. "Therefore that Christian can never lose his salvation."¹⁴⁴

Wierwille though would like people to know that not every one who has the holy spirit in him has the reality of life working at that moment in his life. He says that "certain believers do not know that the gift, holy spirit, power from on high, is an individual reality in the life of a born-again believer."¹⁴⁵ The reception of holy spirit in one's life is not "automatically manifested power; it is inherent

¹⁴⁰Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 274.

¹⁴¹Ibid., pp. 276-277; 280-281. ¹⁴²Ibid., p. 277.

¹⁴³Wierwille, "Born of Incorruptible Seed," p. 4.

¹⁴⁴Walter J. Cummins, "The Believer's Rewards," The Way Magazine, November-December 1976, p. 6; See also: Wierwille, Jesus Christ Is Not God, p. 132.

¹⁴⁵Wierwille, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today, p. 25.

power."¹⁴⁶

Wierwille uses word games with the Greek words lambanō and dechomai. For Wierwille, when the scripture uses "dechomai" for receiving the spirit it means "receiving from God spiritually within oneself. This is subjective reception."¹⁴⁷ This means that a person receives the spirit, but does not show forth the reception or power of this spirit. It is there but it is lying dormant.

Wierwille says:

One can spiritually receive a gift from God without its coming forth in evidence in the senses world; for all of God's gifts are spirit, and, as such, cannot be seen, smelled, heard, tasted or touched. To bring God's gift into manifestation; that is, we must operate the gift.¹⁴⁸

A person can have the holy spirit inside of him without bringing it into manifestation and thus receive power for abundant living. To receive this power a person must receive the gift of holy spirit into manifestation.

For this Wierwille uses the word lambanō. It means to receive "the gift into manifestation after having received it spiritually. This is an objective reception to the end of manifestation."¹⁴⁹

This means that a person after receiving (dechomai) the spirit, must also receive it into manifestation (lambanō) by speaking in tongues.¹⁵⁰

Thus, for Wierwille "to 'rightly divide the Word of Truth,' the usage of the word 'receive' is highly important to the proper understanding of the verse of Scripture in which the word appears."¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶Ibid., p. 69. ¹⁴⁷Ibid., p. 260. ¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid. ¹⁵⁰Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁵¹Ibid., pp. 262-263. Note: Wierwille does not totally make up his meaning of the Greek words. He uses E.W. Bullinger's A Critical

The Doctrine of Speaking in Tongues

At this point Wierwille has the person ready to "receive into manifestation" the holy spirit. What he will have the person do is learn how to speak in tongues, or as it is commonly called in The Way: SIT.¹⁵²

A person needs this evidence of speaking in tongues. It does several things. According to Wierwille:

Speaking in a tongue is the believer's external manifestation in the senses world of the internal reality and presence of the power of the holy spirit. Speaking in tongues is a constant reminder even in the hours of bereavement and sorrow, temptation and trouble, that Christ by way of God's power is in you.¹⁵³

What this basically means is that Wierwille and The Way make speaking in tongues an assurance of their salvation, an assurance that they have Christ (holy spirit) within them.¹⁵⁴

Wierwille can say these things because he believes that there is no such thing as a devil-produced speaking in tongues. So if a person speaks in tongues he can be sure that it is the holy spirit within him

Lexicon and Concordance To The English and Greek New Testament for his study of the Greek words. He uses this lexicon in much of his translating work. Yet Wierwille even adds new meanings and interpretations to what Bullinger has in his lexicon. Whereas Wierwille may interpret what Bullinger says in one certain way, others who interpret Bullinger could disagree with Wierwille and interpret Bullinger in a different way.

¹⁵²SIT in The Way stands for "Speaking in Tongues."

¹⁵³Wierwille, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today, p. 41.

¹⁵⁴See: Walter J. Cummins, "No Greater Joy," The Way Magazine, January-February 1976, p. 26; Dave Hagerdorn, "Heaven Bound," The Way Magazine, September-October 1974, p. 28; Wade, That Ye May Know, pp. 13-14; Peter J. Wade, Why I Speak In Tongues (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, n.d.), p. 13; Wierwille, The New Dynamic Church, pp. 124-125.

manifesting itself.¹⁵⁵ A member of The Way will feel that it is impossible for him to curse God when they are speaking in tongues.¹⁵⁶

In actuality this person believes that he is really making Jesus Lord of his life by speaking in tongues;¹⁵⁷ he is really edifying and building up the spirit which is within him.¹⁵⁸ The reason why one's spirit needs to be edified through speaking in tongues is because the spirit in you "is just like a baby which though perfect, still needs nurturing. So it is with the spirit in you, you feed it by speaking in tongues."¹⁵⁹

There are many added blessings in The Way for a person who speaks in tongues. He is offering the only true worship God recognizes.¹⁶⁰

Peter J. Wade, in The Way booklet Why I Speak In Tongues, gives eleven reasons why he speaks in tongues. He writes:

- I speak in tongues because The Word teaches that when I do:
- a. I speak to God.
 - b. I speak divine mysteries.
 - c. I speak praise and prayer.
 - d. I give thanks well.
 - e. I edify my spirit.
 - f. I strengthen the inner man.
 - g. I pray perfectly.
 - h. I worship the Father.
 - i. I make Jesus Lord of my life.
 - j. I witness that I am saved.
 - k. I edify the church when I interpret my message.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁵Wierwille, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today, pp. 47, 48; Wierwille, The New, Dynamic Church, p. 115.

¹⁵⁶Wade, Why I Speak In Tongues, p. 115.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 12-13. ¹⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 5-6.

¹⁵⁹Wierwille, The New, Dynamic Church, p. 112, 160. See: Wade, Why I Speak In Tongues, p. 11; Wierwille, The New, Dynamic Church, pp. 81-92.

¹⁶¹Wade, Why I Speak In Tongues, pp. 13-14.

Speaking in tongues is just one of The Way's manifestations of the spirit. There are really nine manifestations of the spirit and these can be found in I Corinthians 12. One of the important things about speaking in tongues and these eight other manifestations is that the operation of these manifestations is the only way that one can produce the fruit of the spirit found in Galatians 5:22, 23.¹⁶²

Lonnell E. Johnson of The Way, writes:

It is through the operation of the manifestations of the spirit that fruit is produced in the lives of believers. Christians can no more have fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23) without the manifestations of the spirit than non-Christians have the manifestations of the spirit without the spirit. Fruit of the spirit is the result or by product of the operation of the manifestations, the tools which cultivate the fruit.¹⁶³

With all this speaking about edifying one's spirit and bearing fruit of the spirit, The Way acknowledges that in all this the mind is unaffected. Immediately after a person has received the holy spirit a "man has no more character, no more ethical goodness...than he had before, but he now has a source of help and power."¹⁶⁴

The Doctrine of the Renewed Mind

A person must get his mind renewed so that it will think God's thoughts.¹⁶⁵ According to The Way one must adjust his or her life "according to the knowledge addressed to us in God's Word. This we call renewing the mind."¹⁶⁶

¹⁶²Walter J. Cummins, Fruit Of The Spirit (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, n.d.), p. 10.

¹⁶³Johnson, The Gift, p. 17.

¹⁶⁴Wierwille, Receiving The Holy Spirit Today, p. 40. See also page 31.

¹⁶⁵Walter J. Cummins, The Mind of the Believer (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, n.d.), p. 11.

¹⁶⁶Wade, That Ye May Know, p. 3.

Dorothy Owens, in a Way booklet entitled Keys to Spiritual Light, writes:

How do we renew the mind? By studying the Bible. Salvation (new birth, conversion) is God's job as we accept what He made available (Romans 10:9, 10). This is the beginning of the Christian life which climaxes with eternal life. The renewed mind determines how we walk in this world between those two points and this is our responsibility. Many Christians manifest a defeated, miserable life, not a very desirable picture to the unbeliever. As we learn our sonship rights, as sons of God, we can walk without fear and accept the many things God has made available.¹⁶⁷

Wierwille himself says, "The power which Jesus acquired is the legal right of every born-again believer. But for a believer to manifest Christ's power in his life, he must renew his mind according to the Word of God."¹⁶⁸

What is this power and rights that the believer is to be able to acquire with his renewed mind? It covers many things. Through a reading of Wierwille's books one will see that the more one renews his mind the better off he will be healthwise, emotional wise (no fear or negative thoughts) and financially.¹⁶⁹

In The Way, renewing your mind means staying in fellowship with God. Although one cannot fall from salvation, one can fall from fellowship with the Father. Wierwille states:

Fellowship with God as our Father is the secret to spiritual happiness and power in our day-by-day walk on earth.... Fellowship

¹⁶⁷Owens, Keys to Spiritual Light, p. 6.

¹⁶⁸Wierwille, The New, Dynamic Church, p. 47.

¹⁶⁹For a better understanding of this power and rights the author would advise one to read Wierwille, The Bible Tells Me So; Victor Paul Wierwille, Christians Should Be Prosperous (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, n.d.); Victor Paul Wierwille, Studies In Abundant Living, rev. ed. (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1971).

is the one thing that makes for a happy situation both in a human and in a spiritual family. Fellowship with God by way of the renewed mind is the key to power; it is the only way to manifest the more abundant life or to manifest that we are "more than conquerors."¹⁷⁰

When one steps out of fellowship with God, that person needs to confess his sin to God^{then} the broken fellowship is mended.¹⁷¹

The Doctrine of the Church

No study of Wierwille's theology would be complete without coming to grips with his understanding of the church.

Wierwille and The Way are dispensationalistic. The Way sees "life and time divided into seven basic administrations: 1) Paradise, 2) Patriarchal, 3) Law, 4) Christ (Church of the Bride, Kingdom of Heaven), 5) Grace (Church of the Body, man's day), 6) Revelation (Appearing), 7) Paradise (new heaven and new earth)."¹⁷² Wierwille himself seems to have been influenced in some ways by the ultra-dispensationalist, E. W. Bullinger.¹⁷³

¹⁷⁰Wierwille, The New, Dynamic Church, p. 75. ¹⁷¹Ibid., p. 79.

¹⁷²L. Craig Martindale, "The Graceful Gap Of The Great Mystery," The Way Magazine, January-February 1978, p. 8.

¹⁷³Although Wierwille does not copy Bullinger's dispensationalism exactly, his system does resemble it in some ways. This should also be noted since Wierwille himself uses and promotes works by Bullinger. An interesting note can be inserted here. In 1938 H. A. Ironside wrote a booklet against Bullinger entitled, Wrongly-Dividing-the-Word-of-Truth. In this book Ironside writes concerning those who advocated Bullinger's system of ultra-dispensationalism: "Many Bullingerites boldly advocated the sleep of the soul between death and resurrection, the annihilation of the wicked, or, as we have seen, universal salvation of all men and demons, the denial of the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ, and gravest of all, the personality of the Holy Spirit. All of these evil doctrines find congenial soil in Bullingerism." H. A. Ironside, Wrongly-Dividing-the-Word-of-Truth (Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, Inc. Bible Truth Depot, n.d.), p. 11.

It is interesting to note that Wierwille so far has advocated 3 out of 5 of these teachings: soul sleep, denial of the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the denial of the personality of the Holy Spirit.

Out of all these dispensations the most important to Wierwille and The Way is the dispensation or administration of Grace (the Church of the Body).

To Wierwille this is the great mystery which is mentioned in Ephesians 3:2ff, and of which I Peter 1:10-12 says that the prophets inquired and searched diligently for, in order to find out about it.¹⁷⁴

According to Wierwille, the great mystery is "that the 'Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body' (Ephesians 3:6), and that it is 'Christ in you' which is 'the riches of the glory of this mystery' (Colossians 1:27). This is the Church, the called out from both Jew and Gentile, making one new man, a new body in Him."¹⁷⁵

The New Birth by the holy spirit is what brought into being the Church of the body,¹⁷⁶ the Church which is the great mystery. Although this Church of the Body came into being on the day of Pentecost the believers could not explain it. According to Wierwille, "Finally, years later, the revelation to explain the gift that came on Pentecost was given to the Apostle Paul. To Paul was revealed the greatest mystery of the Body of Christ, which is His Church."¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁴Victor Paul Wierwille, The Church (The Great Mystery Revealed) (New Knoxville, Ohio: The American Christian Press, n.d.), pp. 21, 21..

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁷⁶The Church of the Body came into being only after Pentecost. While Jesus was on earth what was in existence was "the Bride of Christ" because the bridegroom, Christ, was on earth. See: Wierwille, The New, Dynamic Church, pp. 6-8.

¹⁷⁷Wierwille, The New, Dynamic Church, p. 11.

Along with all of this Wierwille sees that although the Bible is all divinely inspired, only certain parts of it are addressed to this Church of the body that exists today. The believer needs to recognize which section of the Bible is written for the believer's learning and which sections are written to the Church.¹⁷⁸

Wierwille writes, "There are seven epistles addressed directly to the Church: Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Thessalonians."¹⁷⁹

These seven epistles make up the basic authority of The Way. Although The Way will use the rest of the Bible for their learning, they do not see them as authoritative in their lives. They were written to other administrations (dispensations). But once the person comes to understand the great mystery, this is supposed to become very plain to him.

The amazing thing about all of this is that it was all lost before the end of the first century. For the last 1900 years the Church has been in virtual darkness concerning this until Victor Paul Wierwille was chosen by God to bring it back into the Church.

Wierwille writes:

When the first century believers failed to act in the light of the great mystery as unfolded magnanimously in the epistle to the Ephesians, they lost the true teaching concerning the mystery which is the center of all true Christian faith, the one body of Christ. The immediate consequence of the loss of this truth of the great mystery produced glowing errors. It initiated the different so-called "bodies" with all the subsequent division and schism in the church body. Instead of rightly dividing the word of truth and recognizing the "one body" which God made (Ephesians 4:4), men set about making their own ecclesiastical bodies and sects.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁸Wierwille, The Church (The Great Mystery Revealed), p. 6.

¹⁷⁹Ibid. ¹⁸⁰Ibid., p. 3-4.

But now that the truth about the mystery has been brought back by God through Victor Paul Wierwille, people can once again have the hope of the Abundant Life brought to them. They can now live a life of victory which they are entitled to live as sons of God. After all these years the light, according to Victor Paul Wierwille, has been brought back.

The Doctrine of Baptism ✓

One hardly needs to speak concerning The Way's view of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism itself, to Wierwille, "applies specifically to Israel."¹⁸¹ Since the time of Pentecost we have been living in a new administration and we do not need water baptism.¹⁸² Water baptism is replaced in the time of the Church of the body with being baptized into the body of Christ with the holy spirit.¹⁸³ Wierwille does an amazing job of twisting the book of Acts to prove his belief that water baptism is not to be used in the Church of the body. He explains away part of the baptism texts by saying that they are not referring to water baptism, but to a spiritual baptism into the body of Christ.¹⁸⁴

He entirely passes over Acts 8:28-48, dealing with the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch. He doesn't even mention it.

In Acts 10:47, in the account of the baptism of Cornelius and his household, Peter says, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" We are told by Wierwille that Peter made a little slip up here. Wierwille says that Peter "simply reverted to his previous doctrine and added water."¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹Wierwille, The Bible Tells Me So, p. 133. ¹⁸²Ibid., p. 134.

¹⁸³Ibid. ¹⁸⁴Ibid., pp. 134-137. ¹⁸⁵Ibid., p. 136.

Wierwille goes on to show that Peter got himself back on the right track and, that according to Acts 11:46, Peter "did not baptize the Cornelius household of believers in water."¹⁸⁶

According to Wierwille, we have been freed from the law since the day of Pentecost, and part of that law which we are free from is water baptism.¹⁸⁷ He writes:

Since the day of Pentecost every person who desires to be born again by God's Spirit must believe on Jesus Christ. At that moment he is given something far greater than the benefits of water baptism: righteousness, justification, sanctification and redemption. To be born again is to have Christ within; He is the hope of glory; He cleanses us from all sin. It's a spiritual baptism.¹⁸⁸

When viewing Wierwille's doctrine of baptism in the light of Lutheran teaching, it becomes evident that, as with his other doctrines, he completely misinterprets the pertinent passages.

The Doctrine of The Lord's Supper

Wierwille does not discount The Lord's Supper entirely as he does with Baptism. In understanding his view on The Lord's Supper one needs to know several things.

First, according to Wierwille, Jesus did not eat the Passover with his disciples. What he ate was the Last Supper.¹⁸⁹ Wierwille says that Jesus could not have eaten the Passover because he was "already dead by the time it was eaten."¹⁹⁰ Secondly, it was during the Last Supper that

¹⁸⁶Ibid., p. 137. ¹⁸⁷Ibid., p. 141.

¹⁸⁸Ibid. Note: It is important to remember that when Wierwille speaks about having Christ within, he is not speaking about Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ, according to Wierwille, is not God, he is only man. The Christ within is holy spirit, the gift which is sent from God the Father who is The Holy Spirit.

¹⁸⁹Wierwille, The Word's Way, p. 213. ¹⁹⁰Ibid., p. 209.

that Jesus "instituted what we today call the Lord's Supper. Jesus Christ instituted the bread and cup as a memorial of His sacrifice that night, to be kept by His brethren until He comes again."¹⁹¹

So the members of The Way keep a type of Lord's Supper, although it is difficult to tell how often they practice it. The Lord's Supper is seen only as a memorial of Jesus Christ's death.

Wierwille attempts to show that the elements could not be more than the bread and wine by writing:

"This is my body" is a figure of speech called a metaphor. A metaphor centers on the verb "is" and can never be read, "is changed into." The word "represents" can replace the verb "is" in the metaphor because the verb is only figurative, not literal, and its grammatical meaning is "represents."¹⁹²

In this way Wierwille shows his reformed background in dealing with the subject of the Lord's Supper.

Yet Wierwille goes on to bring in a little more significance to the Lord's Supper. He believes that the blood of Jesus spilled at Calvary was for the remission of sin. The body of Jesus was beaten and scourged to redeem us from sickness and disease.¹⁹³

Therefore, when one receives the Lord's Supper believing that the body of Jesus, which the bread represents, was broken to heal him of his sickness, then that person will be free from the power of sickness.

Wierwille writes:

When you and I believe and know our sonship rights in Christ, and and when we know and believe in the total significance of Holy Communion, we will no longer tolerate sickness. Sickness and sin

¹⁹¹Ibid., p. 214.

¹⁹²Ibid., p. 216. See also Wierwille, The Bible Tells Me So, pp. 86, 91.

¹⁹³Wierwille, The Bible Tells Me So, pp. 89-90.

lose their power over us when we properly discern the Lord's body and blood.

The cup in Holy Communion represents the blood of Jesus Christ; the bread represents the body of Christ. Since Jesus bore my sin and sickness on Calvary's cross, then when I come to the Communion in remembrance of Him and eat of that bread and drink of that cup I have healing and forgiveness of sins because "his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree...by whose stripes ye were healed."¹⁹⁴

In conclusion, after Wierwille has said everything about the Lord's Supper, one can only conclude that to Wierwille this supper is only mere symbolism of the body and blood. The Lord's Supper is only a representation of the body and blood of Jesus, just like a picture of a man is a representation of that man.

The Doctrine of the Last Things

Finally, we must examine Wierwille's eschatology as he interprets it.

The Way sees death as something that happened as a result of Adam disobeying God.¹⁹⁵ "Sin...produces sickness, disease, death; it produces every negative that is recorded after the third chapter of Genesis."¹⁹⁶

Death, for Wierwille, is an enemy. It is so much of an enemy that there is no way that God can use it to glorify Himself.¹⁹⁷

Not only is death seen as an enemy, but it brings with it a type of soul sleep.

Wierwille rejects the belief as "contrary to the teachings in the

¹⁹⁴Ibid., pp. 90-91. ¹⁹⁵Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, p. 265.

¹⁹⁶Ibid.

¹⁹⁷For examples of this type of reasoning in The Way's theology see: Cummins, "The Integrity of the God-breathed Word," p. 7; Wierwille, Power For Abundant Living, pp. 122-123.

Word of God" that when a person dies, he is "immediately received up into glory, commonly called Heaven or paradise, to appear before the Father."¹⁹⁸

He rejects the idea that immediately after death people "are alive and conscious and have a joyous existnece with Him and their loved ones."¹⁹⁹

According to Wierwille, "Thanatos is not merely an instantaneous occurrence when one expires, but a continuing state. Release from this continuing state of death hinges upon the return of Christ."²⁰⁰ Again Wierwille states:

Death would end life forever for all humanity were it not for Christ's resurrection and thus His return to gather and resurrect mankind. It is then--with the return of Christ--that we have victory over death. Then we have immortality and incorruption. Until that time, the dead remain in gravedom in corruption and unconsciousness.²⁰¹

The spirit from God, which was in the believer, at the time of natural death "must return to God to whom it is a part."²⁰²

For Wierwille, "the hope of mankind is in the resurrection of Christ."²⁰³ It is this resurrected Christ that will come again to gather up his people and resurrect those who are unsaved.

Wierwille says that Christ must first return to gather up the born-again people who were in the age of the Church of the Body.²⁰⁴ This is not called a resurrection,²⁰⁵ rather it is referred to as "the gathering together."²⁰⁶

Wierwille writes, "With this coming of Christ for his Church, He will not come on the earth; He will simply gather the dead and living of the Church of the Body."²⁰⁷ This will be followed by a tribulation

¹⁹⁸Victor Paul Wierwille, Are The Dead Alive Now? (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1973), p. 21.

¹⁹⁹Ibid., p. 22. ²⁰⁰Ibid. ²⁰¹Ibid., p. 27

²⁰²Ibid., p. 111. ²⁰³Ibid., p. 31. ²⁰⁴Ibid., p. 33.

²⁰⁵Ibid., p. 34. ²⁰⁶Ibid., p. 16, 33. ²⁰⁷Ibid., p. 34.

period on the earth which the Church of the Body will not have to experience since it has already been gathered together with Christ.²⁰⁸

After this, Christ will come with His gathered saints, at which time there will be two resurrections.²⁰⁹

The first resurrection is for the just.²¹⁰ Cummins speaks of this first resurrection in referring to Revelation 20: "In this chapter the justified ones of Israel are resurrected and are allowed to reign with Christ a thousand years. Satan is bound for a thousand years, loosed for a small season and finally destroyed."²¹¹

After this, there is a second resurrection. This time the unjust are resurrected. Cummins says that these people "are raised and judged at the great white throne to die a second death."²¹²

In The Way's literature there is very little mentioned on this subject of the state of the unbeliever at the end of time. There is the previous quote from Walter Cummins stating that the unbelievers will "die a second death."²¹³

Wierwille himself speaks of the lake of fire but the author has not yet been able to find a reference where any human unbeliever will be cast into it. There does seem to be a slight hint to this type of punishment on page 119 of Wierwille's Are The Dead Alive Now?²¹⁴

Walter J. Cummins speaks of rewards for believers. There are "five crowns" that "are available to all born-again Christians who choose to walk according to the Word today. They will be received at the time

²⁰⁸Ibid., p. 37. ²⁰⁹Ibid., p. 40. ²¹⁰Ibid., p. 41.

²¹¹Walter J. Cummins, "The Believer's Rewards," The Way Magazine, November-December 1976, p. 7.

²¹²Ibid., p. 7. ²¹³Supra, p. 69.

²¹⁴See Wierwille, Are The Dead Alive Now?, p. 119.

of Christ's return before his bema. Those who choose to walk contrary to the Word of God will have no rewards."²¹⁵

According to Cummins there is only judgment for the believer insofar as he has done good works. It is never used in the sense of judgment or condemnation that awaits the believer "since they are born again and their judgment was in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ."²¹⁶

Rather, there are five crowns that await born-again believers at the coming of Christ. Cummins explains to whom they are given:

The crown incorruptable is received for exercising self-control in all disciplined training. The crown of life is received for standing approved before God by rightly dividing His Word in our lives. The crown of rejoicing is received for winning people to the Lord Jesus Christ after we have rightly divided the Word. The crown of glory is received by leaders in the body for feeding God's people with His Word. The crown of righteousness is available to all born-again believers who love his appearing.²¹⁷

According to The Way's view of eschatology, The Way believer has much to anticipate for the future. He does his best to serve God in the manner that The Way tells him because he can see the rewards that await him. The Way believer does not do these good works in order to earn salvation. (This he feels that he has already because the holy spirit dwells in him and he can never lose that spirit.) Yet the rewards are there to incite The Way member to press on in service to The Way.

There is something which we who are in the Orthodox Christian Church need to realize. We need to realize that this incentive of

²¹⁵Cummins, "The Believer's Rewards," p. 9.

²¹⁶Ibid., p. 7. ²¹⁷Ibid., p. 20.

long range blessings, along with the present blessings in this life which The Way promises, are great drawing cards for prospective members. It is also strong incentive for zealotry to The Way Ministry for those who are already Way members.

This has not been an exhaustive Systematic examination of Wierwille's theology. What it has been is a covering of the main teachings of The Way. One can see that The Way's teachings differ a great deal from Christian theology. The problem is that at first glance The Way looks Christian. It sounds like a Christian group. They use the same terminology that the Christian Church does. This has misled many people. There have even been ministers of the gospel who have mistaken The Way's theology as Christian because they did not know what the meaning was behind the words that The Way uses. There is one thing that can be emphasized at this moment: Victor Paul Wierwille and The Way have been weighed in the balance of Christian Theology and have been found wanting. They are not Christian.

III. THE CHURCH CONFRONTS THE WAY

The Way is spreading not only throughout America, but it has its eyes on the world. It can be found in troubled Iran and in India. But to bring the problem closer to home, it can be found in most American cities and towns. It is not uncommon to see The Way evangelize on our nation's college and university campuses.

John Garvey in All Our Sons And Daughters gives a practical warning to those who stand on the outside looking in at the cults. Although he does not mention The Way in his book, his words have direct bearing on cults such as The Way. He writes:

It might be true that the new religions have a direct and lasting effect on only a tiny fragment of our population. It might be true. I have my doubts. I think that as the influence of established religion weakens, the influence of alternative religions will grow.¹

Garvey is really warning the Church; and the Church should heed his warning. Many people each day become members of The Way and cults like it. The Way presents a danger to the Church in that many of The Way's converts are dissatisfied Christians (and there are Lutherans among this number) who are searching for something more than what they are getting in the main line Churches.

There are people in the Churches who are ripe for the teachings of The Way. They are people with high ideals who want to serve God but don't know how. They look to their churches but in many cases, whether it is true or not, they don't see their church as an important guiding

¹John Garvey, "Are the Cults a Judgement on the Churches?" in All Our Sons and Daughters, John Garvey, ed., (Springfield: Templegate Publishers, 1977), p. 116.

influence in their lives.

Along comes The Way with its Power For Abundant Living Classes and all of its answers, plus the promise of an Abundant Life and you have someone who is ready to join The Way. These people see it as a Bible Study group which can help them in their Christian growth. What it does is the exact opposite. It presents the victim (and that's just what they are) with its candy coated false doctrine which can eventually lead to damnation. All this under the guise of Power For Abundant Living and in the name of Christianity.

Many of our idealistic youth are brought in through its promise of power and through the closeness and love that The Way radiates. It may not sound as if the problem is worth worrying about, unless it happens that one member in your church, or in your family, joins The Way. Then the problem becomes real, although it is usually too late.

The Church has a defense against The Way and groups similar to it. The defense is the Church's proclamation of Law and Gospel and the vitality of a congregation that gathers around the Word and Sacraments.

The Way gives answers. As a Church we need to give solid answers; answers that are Biblically sound. The proclamation of God's Law and His marvelous Gospel are being pitifully neglected by so many pastors and congregations. In a day and age when there are many success theologies running rampant in our country, the Church needs to see that it does not buy in on them. Only the preaching and teaching which centers around a proper proclamation of the pure Gospel can light hearts on fire with true love for God.

Along with this the Church needs to emphasize the importance of looking for God to act in the Word and Sacraments; not through some man

who claims to have heard from God personally. A Christian that has come to know that God acts through His Word and Sacraments will have no need to go out into the wilderness to hear one who claims to be sent from God. A person who is growing through the frequent use of The Word and Sacraments will have no need to listen to any self-proclaimed prophet.

Finally, as a defense against The Way, the Church can make use of a strong community life among its members. It is true that all too often Churches are cold and not meeting the needs of people.

Pastors will need to emphasize the value of strong fellowship within the local congregation. The local congregation is where God touches people. Many people join The Way because of the love and warmth that are shown to them by its members. The local congregation can meet that need in people's lives as well. An emphasis on the God who first loved us can bring about a love which flows from the heart to its neighbor. The local congregation is to be a caring community. Any reading of The New Testament will reinforce this fact. When a Church already has the warmth and love which flows from hearts filled with gratitude toward God, then people will not see a need to look for a substitute for this in a group such as The Way.

The important thing is that the pastor will have to take the lead in all of this. He is an example to the flock (I Pt. 5:3). He himself will need to see that the Word and Sacraments are active in his life. If a congregation's pastor is not serious about the things of God, about allowing the Word to work in his life, chances are his congregation will feel the same way. But if the pastor himself is growing and holding fast to the means God has given for the strengthening of his faith,

chances are his congregation will be moving in that direction as well.

Conclusion

There will be no stopping the growth of The Way. There are enough people dissatisfied with their Churches who will be good prospects for The Way's missionary appeals. The Church will always have a mission to reach out in love to the people caught up in The Way. The Church will need to seek to bring these people the truth of the Gospel. Yet the best defense against The Way happens to be the best witness to The Way as well: a strong, vital caring Local Congregation which gathers around the Word and Sacraments given by the Almighty Himself. When a congregation can offer this type of ministry it will act as a good defense against The Way and its heresy. One may even be surprised to find that a congregation such as this will even be able to show someone involved in The Way what he is missing.

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