

Chapter 1

CHRISTIANITY: YESTERDAY & TODAY

AN OVERVIEW

Christianity in general refers to a major religion of the world, the followers of which derive their belief in God based on the teachings of a book called the Holy Bible. The book is thought to contain the inspired word of God. Jesus Christ, the central figure in the book, is accepted as the spiritual savior. It is after Him that the word *Christianity* is derived.

As generally known, Christianity began in the year AD 30 when Jesus Christ started His ministry. Christ's chosen apostles continued the work until the last of them died in the island of Patmos in the year AD 96. This must be the period of pure and perfect Christianity, the kind that will be compared with today's type.

To have a true and a clear view of the subject, that is, the perfect Christianity of AD 30-96 and *Christianity Today*, let us consider the lessons from the popular anecdotes: The Man and the Forest, and The Elephant and the Four Blind Women. The Man, in his excitement to see the forest, went straight into it but was frustrated when what he saw were only the trees. In the latter anecdote, because of overconfidence and imprudence, the four blind women gave different descriptions of the elephant, after each of them touched only a portion of its body. The first woman touched the trunk and described the elephant as a big snake; the second touched the tail and described it as a small snake; the third described it as a wall after touching its side and the fourth one described it as four big posts after touching its legs.

Avoiding the nearsightedness of the man, and the foolhardiness and recklessness of the four blind women, let us now view the spiritual forest from a "strategic distance," and carefully "feel the whole" spiritual elephant so as to avoid the mistakes of the characters in the anecdotes. For a start, let

us compare the works of Jesus Christ and His apostles with their counterparts in Christianity Today:

1. PLACE FOR PREACHING AND WORSHIP AND THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ preferred to bring His “great multitude” of listeners to different public places such as: the mountain¹, by the seashore², in houses³, and the synagogues⁴. Surprisingly, the apostles followed the practice of conducting their ministry in the same venues when they had time to build chapels, churches, and cathedrals: in houses⁵, in the synagogues⁶, and along the riverbank⁷. Never did Jesus or the apostles thought of constructing more appropriate edifices as we find Christians today. Rather, they preferred to use available structures as the temple⁸, and the synagogues. Christ and His apostles concerned themselves more with the “construction of spiritual temples” which are the believers themselves. This is Christ’s way of building a church.

1 Corinthians 3:16 “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?”

Christianity Today takes a contrary stand on the proper venues for preaching the word and places of worship. The religion is now composed of, or rather, divided into religious sects, each trying to outdo the rest in building chapels, churches, and cathedrals. Christianity Today is not only characterized by the building of physical churches, but also by the “construction of human organizations.”

¹ John 6:2-5 “And a great multitude followed him...went up into a mountain...”

² Mark 4:1 “And he began again to teach by the sea side...gathered unto him a great multitude...”

³ Mark 2:1-4 “...he was in the house...many were gathered together...”

⁴ Matthew 13:54 “And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue...”

⁵ Acts 20:20 “...have taught you publicly, and from house to house,”

⁶ Acts 9:20 “...he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.”

⁷ Acts 16:13 “...we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down...”

⁸ John 18:20 “Jesus answered him, I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple...”

As in the other points of comparison, details and an incisive analysis of the differences will be dealt with in the appropriate articles. Regarding the differences in the places for preaching and worship, this will be taken up in Volume 2 on the chapter CHAPELS, CHURCHES, AND CATHEDRALS.

2. IDENTIFICATION OF MEMBERS

Followers of the teachings of Christ during the first century Christianity were known by a common identity. They were simply called *Christians*, and were identified by their respective places of residence, thus: the Christians of Rome ...Corinth ...Galatia ...Ephesus ...Philippi ...Colosse ...Christians of Thessalonica, etc.

Christianity Today can no longer adopt the same common identity of its followers. With the numerous religious denominations composing today's Christianity, the followers of the teachings of Christ are marked by varying identities. Thus, while one would say, "I am a Lutheran," another would profess, "I am a Baptist," still others would declare "I am a Roman Catholic,"... "...a Wesleyan,"... "...a Methodist,"... "...a Pentecostal,"... "...a Pentecostal Charismatic,"... "...a Pentecostal Born Again,"... "...a Catholic Charismatic,"... "...a Greek Orthodox,"... "...a Jehovah's Witness,"... "...a Church of Christ,"... "...a Seventh Day Adventist," among others.

For details on the causes of the differences in the identification of Today's Christianity members, read Chapter 2: THE MEN CALLED CHRISTIANS.

3. THE NUMBER OF BELIEVERS

Jesus Christ, Who showed the way to pure Christianity, succeeded in winning the souls of only one hundred twenty (120) people⁹ during His entire ministry. These were all the faithful disciples worthy of receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Christ's apostles, with the power of the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, never succeeded in winning the souls of the majority. Christians, the faithful followers of the teachings of Christ were known then, were always in the minority. The pattern shown by our Lord was clearly visible in the Acts of the Apostles.

⁹ Acts 1:15 "...Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty)"

Acts 2:2 "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting."

It is a fulfillment of Matthew 20:16 and 22:14 "*For many are called, but few are chosen.*" In fact this pattern had characterized the general message of salvation since the time of the Old Testament: those who made it in the Great Deluge, those who escaped the fire in Sodom and Gomorrah, and those who were able to reach the Promised Land, among many incidents.

Christianity Today seems to defy the pattern. Christianity is clearly in the majority in countries where the Holy Bible is not banned. All Christian sects claim religious perfection among many of their members. And chapels, churches, and cathedrals of different sects of which Christianity today is made up are all teeming with people calling the Lord, performing great miracles in the name of *Jesus Christ*, and praising His glorious name. For details read Chapter 3: THE CHOSEN FEW.

4. THE SIN OF ADAM AND EVE

What really was the sin of Adam and Eve that caused their fall? Some religious sects preach that it was an apple that they ate. However, nothing of that sort is mentioned in the Bible.

How does Christianity Today look at this sin that is believed to have been transferred to mankind? Punishment for the sin is likewise believed to have been inherited. Why can't Christianity today reconcile these beliefs with what is written about the non-transferability of sin?

Ezekiel 18:20 "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father; neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

Deuteronomy 24:16 "The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin."

Why are the two kinds of sin committed by Adam and Eve, *physical* and *spiritual*, not being taught or preached in the pulpits? What then is the *physical* and *spiritual* equivalent of the forbidden "tree of knowledge of good and evil?"¹⁰

¹⁰ Genesis 2:17 "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

Genesis 3:1-3 "Now the serpent...said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? ²And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: ³But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die."

Genesis 3:4 "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: ⁵For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

How could God confirm the falsehood that Satan succeeded in tempting Eve, saying, "*your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil?*"

Genesis 3:22 "And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:... ²⁴So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

If Christianity Today remains ignorant of this great sin can it be also said of the first century Christianity? For the answers read Chapter 13: THE PHYSICAL SIN OF EVE and Chapter 14: THE SPIRITUAL SIN OF EVE.

5. APPOINTMENT OF GOD'S SERVANTS

Jesus Christ chose twelve apostles to compose the inner circle of His ministry. He selected them with His spiritual rather than the rational judgment common to man. This was seen in His choice of the lowly brothers Simon Peter and Andrew, sons of Jonas, and the brothers James and John, sons of Zebedee, all fishermen of the village of Bethsaida near the Sea of Galilee.

His choice of Matthew, son of Alphaeus, was another proof. He was a notorious tax collector whose work was associated with corruption and sin. Another apostle, Simon, had nothing to do with the spiritual for he was a nationalist belonging to the patriotic party called the Zealots. He and the rest – Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Thaddeaus, James the Less, and Judas Iscariot – all showed Christ's preference for the plebeians, rather than being moved by the intellectual, moral, and social elitism of the elect.

Christ's choice of Saul of Tarsus, later known as Paul, challenged His own apostles' criteria for a worthy spiritual servant. As a noted persecutor of the followers of our Lord, including the twelve apostles, Paul could not have lived up to the standard common to man.

Christ chose and appointed Paul when He was no longer physically present on earth. Jesus Christ proved His eleven apostles wrong in their choice of Matthias whom they had appointed earlier as Judas Iscariot's replacement – preempting our Lord in that official act.¹¹ After all, it is Jesus who is the sole authority in appointing His servants.

Ephesians 4:11 "And he (Jesus) gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."

Jesus Christ, the chief corner stone, and His apostles including Paul, minus Judas Iscariot, presented and demonstrated pure Christianity to the world. Jesus Christ appointed the original apostles in His physical presence, and, in the case of Paul, in His physical absence for He had by then ascended into heaven.

Christianity Today pretends to accept Paul's appointment by *Christ in His physical absence*. Can leaders of Christian sects honestly submit to this truth? If so, they should not be appointing their respective apostles. This explains the division of *Christianity Today*, and denominations have their own standard of appointing Christ's apostles. How easy to say, but hard to accept what God said:

Isaiah 55:8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. ⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts."

Christianity Today is similarly identified with the apostles of Christ. However, this time they are known as priests, pastors, ministers, father confessors, cardinals, popes, bishops, archbishops, evangelists, theologians, and Bible scholars, depending on the religious sects they represent. The standards for appointment of present-day apostles varies. They have to pass certain requirements like an aptitude test, fulfillment of academic requirements, no history of mental illness, good moral character. They must be amiable so that

¹¹ Acts 1:16-26 "...And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias...And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles."

they could win more people. To a certain extent, consideration of social position is likewise considered. All these make up today's standards for choosing Christ's apostles. By today's standards, the thirteen apostles appointed by Jesus Christ could not have made the mark. For a more detailed discussion, including the KEY that brought today's practice, read the chapters:

- ORIGIN OF THE PASTORAL SYSTEM
- APOSTOLIC SUCCESSION DOCTRINE
- THE TOWER OF BABEL.

6. BELIEF AND DOCTRINES - FAITH

AD 30-96 Christianity was unified by a common belief. Christians within a certain place, and in different places, were one and united on matters of faith. They were one cohesive unit strictly bound by the teachings of Jesus Christ. Their belief is handed down to them by His chosen apostles, acting only as "speaker system" where Jesus Christ the chief corner stone "speaks over the microphone." This is in analogy to fully grasp our Lord's authority explaining His words and never by His apostles.¹² When many of them were persecuted, and later executed by being nailed on the cross, fed to lions, burned at the stakes, they died with the sweet words of truth in their mouths and in their hearts.

In contrast, *Christianity Today* has lost that precious "unity in the faith."¹³ It is so divided into the varied teachings of religious sects that run to hundreds or even thousands that official records have lost track of the exact number. The tragedy, or, as many see it, the "wonder," is that every religious sect claims knowledge of the truth. The division has turned modern Christianity into an arena of controversies among the many religious sects – the claim on the truth being the source and the cause! Religious martyrdom has not gone out of style in *Christianity Today*. Every Christian martyr still mouths the words of Jesus Christ, but the truth claimed by the particular sect with which the martyr is affiliated is what is ensconced in the heart.

Can we not appreciate the wonderful lessons from the two anecdotes, "The Man and the Forest," and "The Elephant and the Four Blind Women? The four blind women failed to identify the elephant because they did not feel the

¹² Mark 4:34 "But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples."

¹³ Ephesians 4:4-5 "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: one Lord, one faith..."

whole of it; each religious denomination lays claim to the truth without a complete grasp of the total message of the Word. The man failed to see the real picture of the forest because he was too near to it; the individual gets only a muddled view of the truth for being too close to a particular sect. This issue is liberally tackled in the different chapters.

7. UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORDS

"God was manifest in the flesh"¹⁴ in order to show the "way," with Him as the model. He spoke the word and made references to the laws of the Old Testament. In the eyes of the Jews, especially the Scribes and Pharisees who were recognized as the authority of the law at that time, Christ was setting aside and nullifying the law. He however refuted their accusation by saying: "*Think not that I came to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*" (Matthew 5:17) Some laws that were literally followed by the Jews seemed to have been nullified by Him. To cite some:

- a. On the law on "unclean food" like swine, fishes without fins and scales, vultures, owls, bat, fowls that creep (followed to the letter in Leviticus 11:7-8, 10-20), our Lord gave a sweeping statement in Matthew 15:10 "*And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand: ¹¹Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.*" The Jews knew the law on clean and unclean food. Where now is the claim of our Lord's "*I did not come to destroy the law...?*"

It was not only the Jews who could not understand what He was saying, but His apostles as well: Matthew 15:16 "*...Are ye also yet without understanding? ¹⁷Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?*" Christ's own apostles had difficulty understanding that what used to be "unclean" food could now be eaten. This confirms that indeed God is speaking in parables.¹⁵

- b. On the law on restitution governing disputes among God's people in the Old Testament¹⁶ the Jews were startled to hear Jesus completely reversing vengeance into love.¹⁷

¹⁴ 1 Timothy 3:16 [KJV] "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh..."

¹⁵ Ezekiel 20:49 "Then said I, Ah Lord GOD! they say of me, Doth he not speak parables?"

¹⁶ Exodus 21:23-25 "And if *any* mischief follow, then thou shalt give life for life, Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, Burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

- c. The Sabbath law was strictly enforced in the Old Testament by taking the "letter" of the word. The Bible even gives an account of a death sentence for the violator: Numbers 15:32-36 *"And while the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man that gathered sticks upon the sabbath day. ³³And they that found him gathering sticks brought him unto Moses and Aaron, and unto all the congregation. ³⁴And they put him in ward, because it was not declared what should be done to him. ³⁵And the LORD said unto Moses, The man shall be surely put to death: all the congregation shall stone him with stones without the camp. ³⁶And all the congregation brought him without the camp, and stoned him with stones, and he died; as the LORD commanded Moses."*

In the eyes of the Jews, especially the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus Christ disregarded the Sabbath law for He was, on several occasions, seen working on that day. In fact, this is one of the accusations leveled against Him that led to His death on the cross.

- d. The requirement on washing of hands given as a law in the Old Testament (Exodus 40:12-15) was condemned by our Lord as a religious tradition:

Matthew 15:1 "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, ²Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. ³But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"

The Jews cannot understand how Jesus could give fulfillment to the laws, when He was, in their eyes, the exponent of their violations. Jesus spoke a language that was beyond the comprehension of the very people to whom the laws were given. Christ said: John 6:63 *"...the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit..."* Jesus Christ spoke spiritual things that even His disciples

¹⁷ Matthew 5:38 "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: ³⁹ But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have *thy* cloak also. ⁴¹ And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. ⁴² Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. ⁴³ Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"

could not understand. Jesus Christ was speaking the *Spiritual Language* of God:

- a. *John 2:19 "Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. ²⁰Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?"*
- b. *John 9:39 "And Jesus said, For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind."*
- c. Plus many more parables and spiritual things that our Lord spoke which the Jews did not understand.¹⁸The apostles also had difficulty understanding the spiritual language, or the parables,¹⁹ in spite of the personal explanation of Jesus to them. It was only after they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that everything was made clear to them.²⁰

It was prophesied in the book of Isaiah that, "*The Messiah would proclaim liberty to the captives, and open the prison to them that are bound.*"²¹ Not a single prisoner of Herod or Pilate, the Roman governor, was ever set free by Jesus Christ during His lifetime. The Jews did not see the fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus Christ, for they only understood the "letter" of the word and the physical fulfillment of the prophecies. Jesus spoke about the fulfillment of the prophecy on the freedom of the prisoners which the Jews missed: *John 8:32 "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

Jesus Christ spoke the *spiritual tongue*, but the Jews could only comprehend the literal and the physical language of man. But to His disciples, Jesus explained everything:

¹⁸ Mark 4:11-12 "...but unto them that are without, all *these* things are done in parables: ¹² That seeing they may see, and not perceive; and hearing they may hear, and not understand..."

¹⁹ John 16:12 "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

²⁰ John 16:13 "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth..."

²¹ Isaiah 61:1 "The spirit of the Lord GOD *is* upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek...to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are bound*;"

Mark 4:34 "But without a parable spake he not unto them, and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples."

Paul, the apostle appointed by Christ in His physical absence, got the message about the *spiritual tongue* when he wrote the Christians of Rome: Romans 7:14 *"For we know that the law is spiritual..."* and also in his letter to the Christians of Corinth:

2 Corinthians 3:6 "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."

Christianity Today is so confused in the manner of understanding the word of God as written in the Bible. This is the cause of disagreement among Christian sects. What is truly the language of God that should be applied in understanding His words? Is it literal or spiritual? Is it partly literal and partly spiritual? Who can give a more authoritative answer to this question? The Apostles speaking on their own? The preachers? Bishops? Priests? The great theologians? The Bible scholars? Pastors? Ministers? Is it not only God through His words Who reveals proper understanding of the message? Here is one clue for the proper understanding of the word, in contrast with the popular reading several verses and taking the context of the story. Isaiah 28:10 *"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little:"* (King James Version only)

The detailed discussion of the topics mentioned is found in the chapters of Volume 2 of the book.

8. RECOGNITION OF THE ONE AND ONLY GOD

Christ introduced Himself to His disciples. In the beginning, before they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the true identity of Christ and the Father was not clear even to the apostles. That is why Philip and the other apostles wanted to see the Father because Jesus was always talking about the Father: John 14:8 *"Philip saith unto him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us."* It was not only Philip who wanted to see the Father but the other apostles as well. Philip and the other apostles did not know what they were talking about, as gleaned from the reply of our Lord in: John 14:9 *"Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?"*

Another proof showing that the apostles, who composed the inner circle of Christ's ministry, did not fully recognize Him. Our Lord gave them a command: Matthew 28:19 "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." It may be noted that the apostles did not execute the command until they received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. It is not because they were negligent, but rather due to ignorance of the real *name* of the Father and the *name* of the Holy Spirit. They knew the *name* of the Son – Jesus Christ.

It was only after Pentecost that the apostles began baptizing the believers, fully recognizing the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Peter recognized the "three" when he baptized the believers in Acts 2:38. Philip, who acted as the spokesman of the apostles in requesting Jesus to show the Father, clearly identified the "three" in Acts 8:15-16. And Paul, the apostle appointed by Christ when He had physically ascended into heaven, like Peter and Philip, also came to know the name of the "three" when he required the believers to be baptized in Acts 19:4-5.

The Christians in the first century fully recognized the "One Lord and One God." This conclusion is borne by our Lord's own established doctrine stated in Mark 12:29-30.²² The recognition of *the "Lord our God is one Lord"* is a prerequisite to the first commandment of "loving Him." Christ expounded on this when a Scribe, teacher of the law at that time, asked about the first of all commandments.²³ Putting together the prerequisite of loving God and the execution of the command for baptism led to the revelation of the *name* of the "three." Notice now how the promise in the Old Testament regarding the *name of God* was fulfilled:

*Isaiah 52:6 "Therefore my people shall know my name:
therefore they shall know in that day that I am he that
doth speak: behold, it is I."*

The recognition of the one and only God of the early Christians must be underscored. Paul gave a warning, for at a later date, he knew that "another Jesus" would be preached different from the *Jesus* that the *Apostles* preached. Here is the fear of Paul:

²² Mark 12:29 "And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments *is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord.*" ³⁰ And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind..."

²³ Mark 12:28 "And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, *Which is the first commandment of all?*"

2 Corinthians 11:3 "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

Paul knew the sincerity of the people. He, however, feared that they would be deceived by the serpent as Eve was. Here is the basis of that fear:

2 Corinthians 11:4 "For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him."

Note that Paul was merely voicing the earlier warning that our Lord gave to His listeners:

Matthew 24:23 "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.²⁴ For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.²⁵ Behold, I have told you before."

This warning could not have possibly applied to the 1st century Christians. Nowhere in the Acts of the Apostles can we find any debate about the relationship of Jesus Christ with the Father and the Holy Spirit as to make some of them believe in another identity of Jesus Christ. The 1st century Christians who composed the early "household of God"²⁴ knew their God so well that there was no need for any of them to say to the others, "know the Lord."

Hebrews 8:11 "And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."

How the Father and Jesus are one has become a diverse speculation of *Christianity Today*. John 10:30 "Jesus said, I and my Father are one." Theologians of different denominations cannot agree on the meaning of what our Lord said in John 8:24 [KJV] "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall, die in your sins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." This was not so in the AD 30-96 Christianity.

²⁴ Ephesians 2:19 "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;"

To summarize, the 1st century Christians were never in the dark as to the relationship of the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. *Christianity Today* openly admits the great mystery of God, justifying this with a plausible excuse: "God, an infinite being, is incapable of being fully recognized and clearly identified with the finite mind of man."

Christianity Today is totally divided in its recognition of God and Jesus Christ. Many doctrines have been formulated since the 3rd century AD, and creeds are being preached on the "real" identity of Jesus Christ. These are now the visible evidences of the fulfillment of the great prophecy of our Lord in Matthew 24:23-24, and repeated by Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:4 – the introduction and preaching of "another Christ" and "many other Christs." Among these doctrines are the following:

1. The Arian doctrine of Arius (AD 265-356).²⁵ This doctrine denies the divinity of Jesus Christ. Arius taught that Christ was only a messenger of God, a man above men, but never a God. What this doctrine failed to reconcile with what is written in the Scripture is that it was Christ Who commanded that "Only God is to be worshipped (Matthew 4:10 and Revelation 22:9)." Jesus Christ, however, accepted worship from the Wise Men from the East, from His disciples and other people, before and after His death and resurrection.
2. The Trinity doctrine championed by Athanasius (295-373 A.D.).²⁶ Adopted by the first and the largest Christian sect, this doctrine has become the most popular among the many concepts on the identity of Jesus Christ. Athanasius preached that God is divided into three separate and distinct persons, each coequal in power, love, will, and in everything with the others; each is God and Lord, but any one of them is not the other two. Like the Arian doctrine, the Athanasian Creed failed to present a clear identification of God and Jesus Christ as to merit a perfect and total recognition. When presented with this question, the proponents of the doctrine in complete frustration simply say as if to discourage further curiosity: "If you try to understand the mystery of the Holy Trinity, you will lose your mind, and to deny it will mean the loss of your soul." With this therefore, advocates of this dogma unwittingly deny themselves of the truth stated in Hebrew 8:11 that "God's people need not tell his neighbor, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest."

²⁵ Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 2, page 281, 1967 edition

²⁶ Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 2, page 603; vol. 27, page 116-117; vol. 6, page 630, 1967 edition.

3. The Oneness or Sabellian doctrine (2nd century A.D.)²⁷. This doctrine teaches that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have a common name: Jesus Christ. As to how the three became one, the doctrine is short of expectations. The reference of the Son to the Father, and vice versa, and the second coming of Christ, still remain a mystery to the supporters of this doctrine insofar as the claim of their "oneness" is concerned. The profession of this doctrine that Jesus is the God, the *Lamb*, should be related to a warning of the likeness to the "*Lamb*" in Revelation 13:11 "*And I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon."*
4. Many other tenets about the identity of God and Jesus Christ characterize Christianity today, including:²⁸
 - a. Tri-theism - a variation of Trinitarianism of Joseph Smith, AD 1830.
 - b. The one Almighty God and one mighty god doctrine of Charles T. Russell, AD 1870.
 - c. Ritschlianism - teaching that Jesus has the value of God.
 - d. Unitarianism - teaching that Jesus is purely human though possessing "divine" qualities of character, leadership, and heroism.
 - e. Sandayism - teaching that Jesus' relation to the Father existed in his "subconsciousness."
 - f. Heraclianism - teaching that Jesus has two natures, human and divine, co-existing in one person. The two natures have only a single will, the divine. The divine will deprive the human will of all action. Under this doctrine, the Holy Spirit is only a force of God.
 - g. Plus many more doctrines about the identity of Jesus Christ.

Christianity Today is so confused in the recognition of Jesus Christ and God that it is not surprising to find the characters in the

²⁷ Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 24, page 8, 1967 edition

²⁸ Encyclopedia Americana, vol. 19, page 463-465; vol. 16, page 630, 1967 edition

anecdotes: "The Elephant and the Four Blind Women" and "The Man and the Forest."

Jesus Christ must be watching how His prophecy in Matthew 24:23-24 of "*Lo Christ is here, Christ is there,*" is finally fulfilled. Paul must be aggrieved seeing this warning being ignored by the people: 2 Corinthians 11:4 "*For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached...*" All of these point to the confirmation of divine truths, i.e., the preaching of many "different Jesus." Everybody is given the opportunity to see this now!

Who is God of the 1st century Christians? Who is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? Was He clearly identified and recognizable? Our Lord would not have singled out the religious people for their spiritual blindness if His disciples were like them:

John 8:19 "...Jesus answered, Ye neither know me, nor my Father: if ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also."

John 8:54 "Jesus answered...it is my Father that honored me; of whom ye say, that he is your God: ⁵⁵yet ye have not known him..."

Where now is the promised benefit of the New Testament when God no longer is a mystery to His chosen people?

Jeremiah 31:31-34 "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant...³³But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD..."

Peter recognized Jesus not with "flesh and blood" but by divine revelation:

Matthew 16:15 "He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? ¹⁶And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. ¹⁷And Jesus answered and

said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Human wisdom in spiritual matters is condemned for it is the cause of non-recognition of God.

1 Corinthians 1:19-21 "...I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. ²⁰Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? ²¹For after that...the world by wisdom knew not God..."

Divine wisdom and clear recognition of God is possible only by divine revelation and not with man's personal capability, according to God's own words:

Matthew 11:25 "...Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes."

Simon Peter must have been a *spiritual* babe in the eyes of God for having clearly identified Jesus! Truly, divine revelation is needed to clearly identify God and Christ.

Matthew 11:27 "All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him."

John 6:44 "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him..."

1 Corinthians 12:3 "...no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost."

Detailed discussion on the identity of God and Jesus Christ is found in Chapter 5: GOD IS IDENTIFYING HIMSELF! Shall we not listen to Him?

9. A PROMISE FOR GREATER MIRACLES

During His ministry of three years, Jesus Christ demonstrated the work of a servant of God. After all, He was the model Who was to show the way (John 14:6] by example 13:15). He did this to make His listeners believe that He is the Son of God, and was sent by the Father, that He could do the work for Him.²⁹ He preached to the people, performed many miracles, and finally offered His life by shedding His blood on the cross.

In His miracles, He showed that water could be instantly changed into wine, the blind could be made to see again, the lame made to walk, the lepers made clean, the demon-possessed delivered from the power of evil spirits, and the dead made to live again. What is surprising is the promise of even greater miracles for those who believe and trust Him:

John 14:12 "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do..."

The time came for His ascension into heaven and the work was passed on to His apostles. In the book of Acts, nothing could be seen of the miracles performed by His apostles that surpassed those He showed during His ministry.

If that promise was "not visibly realized" in His chosen apostles, could its fulfillment be seen in the modern apostles of Christ? Where are the promised greater miracles? These questions are answered in Volume 2 on the chapter MIRACLES AND WONDERS.

10. ON SALVATION

Has anyone spent some time comparing the way of salvation of AD 30-96 with *Christianity Today*? Reminded of The Man and the Forest, if one were to be asked of his way to the kingdom of God, he would say, it is the "way" that is being preached by the denomination to which he belongs. Thus, just as there are a number of sects spreading the "gospel to all nations," there are as many number of "ways" of reaching the "kingdom of God." The following are some of the ways of salvation preached in today's Christianity:

- a. Some sects preach membership in the organization as the only way to salvation. Bible verses are cited in support of this doctrine.

²⁹ John 17:4 "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

- b. A big religious sect preaches salvation through the so-called seven sacraments that she has formulated. Authorized persons of the sect administer these. Again, Bible verses are given in support of each of the sacraments.
- c. Many denominations preach "accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior" as the passport to eternal life.
- d. A variation to the previous "way" of salvation is the "acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior, and the ability to speak strange words and sentences, not studied before, called "speaking in tongues" as the gateway to the kingdom of God.
- e. Still others advocate "belief in Jesus Christ" as the means to attain eternal life. Bible verses like the following are cited in support of these doctrines:

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

Romans 10:9 "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

- f. Believing in the "name" of Jesus Christ as the way to salvation.

Romans 10:13 "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

John 3:18 "He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."

- g. Believing in the Father, the one Who sent Jesus Christ, as the key to salvation.

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

- h. The popular verse that has caught the imagination of hundreds of millions of people in *Christianity Today* and is now being used as a permit to see the kingdom of God:

John 3:3 "...except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

- i. Some sects advocate literal obedience to the Old Testament law on clean and unclean food, the literal Sabbath, and other rituals as the means of salvation.
- j. Still others preach salvation by obedience to some or all of the Ten Commandments.
- k. Many preach salvation by citing the two great commandments of "loving God" and "love of fellowmen" with some charitable works.
- l. Plus "1001" and more ways of salvation that people of the 21st century are bombarded with, by the many religious sects that make up *Christianity Today*.

What more, salvation is made easy by the loosely understood verses like the following:

- a. The entire household:

Acts 16:30-31 "...Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house."

- b. To ALL people!

Luke 3:6 "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God."

What is salvation preached by Jesus Christ and later continued by the apostles? Again, reminded of The Elephant and the Four Blind Women, salvation in the 1st century Christianity must have been seen in the light of the "whole Scripture and the prophets and apostles."³⁰ In the beginning, "God created man in His image" (Genesis 1:27). The image referred to is *Jesus Christ*, Who is the "image of the invisible God."³¹ This image of God in man,

³⁰ Ephesians 2:20 "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

³¹ Colossians 1:15 "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:"

however, was shattered upon his fall. This could be traced from the Garden of Eden when man was driven out so that he could no longer have access to the Tree of Life,³² symbolic of the Spirit of God. The separation of the Tree of Life³³ from man transformed him into a *natural man* who, from then on could no longer understand spiritual things:

1 Corinthians 2:14 "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."

Ignorance of spiritual things, actually the spiritual language of God, means a void in the relationship between man and God. Therefore, the first step on the way to salvation is the accessibility of the Tree of Life, or the restoration of the Spirit of God in man – that he be reinstated to his original status at creation. Then man could have the mind of Christ, Who is the model and the "Way"³⁴ and the "firstborn with many brethren."³⁵ From Natural Man, ignorant of spiritual things, one should be converted into a Spiritual Man as the disciples were:

1 Corinthians 2:15 "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ."

Man without the Spirit of God remains simply a Natural Man with his selfish soul and his worldly body. In this state, man can never be a "material" for real and total spiritual perfection. The dwelling of the Spirit, Who is the promised Emmanuel,³⁶ God with us, completes man's image that can be formed to the

³² Genesis 3:24 "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life."

³³ Proverbs 11:30 "The fruit of the righteous *is* a tree of life; and he that winneth souls *is* wise."

This is in relation to Galatians 5:22-23 "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."

³⁴ John 14:6 "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth..."

³⁵ Romans 8:29 "...to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

³⁶ Matthew 1:23 "...shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us."

image of Jesus Christ, a spiritual man, and in the image of God. From this, the admonition of our Lord gets clearer:

Matthew 5:48 "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

The apostles echoed this when they spoke to the early Christians:

1 Peter 1:16 "Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."

1 Thessalonians 5:23 "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The foregoing verse reveals the Spiritual Man's dual kind of life:

- *Physical Life* (composed of the body and the soul), and
- *Spiritual Life* (consists of the Spirit of God and the soul).

The soul is synonymous with the spirit of man. Since the Natural Man does not have yet the Spirit of God, his life consists only of *Physical Life*. Human wisdom³⁷ and feeling³⁸ in spiritual matters is just "religiosity" as our Lord saw in the Scribes and Pharisees. Perfection of the "dual life" of the chosen is discussed in detail in Volume 2 on the chapter PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL LIFE.

While people man may be talking of perfection, distinction should be made between *Spiritual* and *Religious* perfection. The verses cited by *Christianity Today* for salvation – John 3:16, 3:18, 5:24, 3:3; and Romans 10:9 and 10:13 – are all part and parcel of the word of God, and are indeed means of salvation. A total "spiritual feel of the whole Scripture and the prophets" will, however, give a deeper and a wider perspective not otherwise available to the natural man. The way of salvation in AD 30-96 Christianity was not the same

³⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:18 "Let no man deceive himself. If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise."

1 Corinthians 1:19 "...I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. ²⁰ Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world...?"

³⁸ Jeremiah 17:9 "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

as the different “ways” preached by the 1001 Christian denominations that make up *Christianity Today*!

It is the purpose of this book to set the line differentiating *Christianity Yesterday* from *Christianity Today*.

CONCLUSION

One thing common to the AD 30-96 and *Christianity Today* is the zealotry of the members. This, however, is not a ground to ignore other factors:

Romans 10:2 “For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.”

Another thing where the minds of the members of the two periods of Christianity meet is their desire to reach the kingdom of God. But the very book, the *Holy Bible*, which is the basis of their beliefs, gives a stern warning in:

Proverbs 14:12 “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.”

How can people be so naive as not to notice the differences of Christianity in these two periods? If people were truly convinced of the veracity of the facts presented, could they possibly have the courage to drop all wrong beliefs that have ruled their religious life all these years? Do they value eternal life as to “to leave one’s house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God’s sake (Luke 18:29)?³⁹ Christ was speaking “spiritual things.” Do they have the strength, not only to leave everything, but also to hate them?

Luke 14:26 “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.”

Can this be literal-physical? If so, this would find contradiction to God’s command on love, and:

³⁹ This cannot be literal, otherwise, it will contradict the other word of God on “love of neighbor.” Details in Chapter 7: THE LITERAL AND THE SPIRITUAL WORD.

Deuteronomy 5:16 "Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee..."

This shows the need to depend on God for exposition of His word and never rely on human wisdom. Do many people have the will to accept the spiritual word of God⁴⁰ which is against one's intellect and feeling, and against facts perceived by the senses?

Jeremiah 22:29 "O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD."



⁴⁰ John 6:63 "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, *they* are spirit, and *they* are life."