

# 'TRUTH SEEKING' ERRORS?

I was recently contacted by a brother-in-Christ who had been stopped by a young man in Great Victoria Street in Belfast. This young man was seeking to witness to the brother-in-Christ about the work of a group calling itself '**TRUTH SEEKING**'. This group clearly view themselves as 'disciples of Jesus Christ' as you can read on their web site located on <http://www.truthseeking.co.uk/>

When asked to explain his understanding of 'the gospel' the young man was apparently vague and evasive and wanted to promote a message of all-embracing '**love**' and again that is reinforced by the web site where on the Homepage we read '**We believe that everyone who loves is born of God (I John 4:7)**'. They also go on to state '**We are interested in building bridges with anyone – no matter what religion or background they are from – in order to inspire one another further along the spiritual path**'.

These statements are I believe significant in the light of what they also state on their FAQ page located on <http://www.truthseeking.co.uk/faq/> and specifically question 7 and the answer given –

## 7. Q) What is your attitude towards other faiths?

A) We believe Jesus and His teachings are the highest revelation of truth that there is, and through Him all might be saved (John 3:17). At the same time, like John said, 'love is of God; and every one that loves is born of God, and knows God' (1 John: 4). We believe that there are sincere people of all faiths who are seeking God and His Love and **by their actions they are building his Kingdom, even if they do not profess to being 'Christians'**, (Matthew 21:28-31). Jesus' parable of the good Samaritan is a good example of this.

This is clearly '**error**' to believe that non-Christians, because of their 'faith' and 'love', are directly '**building his** [God's] **Kingdom**'.

The '**THEOLOGY**' section of the FAQ page provides some 'interesting' information.

## 1. Q) Are you a church?

A) Yes. Christ said, 'For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them'. We believe this embodies what Christ meant by 'church'. There are numerous references in the Bible explaining that God cannot be found in buildings made by men, but rather that **the temple of God is within each of us** (e.g. Acts 7:48; 17:24; Luke 17:21; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

It is an '**error**' to state '**the temple of God is within each of us**'. Both **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 3:16** and **6:19** teach that, as Christians, our physical body is God's "**temple**" and the reason is stated in each verse - "**the Spirit of God dwelleth in you**" (3:16) and "**your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom ye have of God**" (6:19). That last phrase I quoted "**whom ye have of God**" explains what Christ promised to believers in **John 14:23** "**If a man love ME, he will keep MY words; and MY Father will love him and WE will come unto him and make OUR abode with him**".

## 2. Q) Are you 'born again' Christians?

A) Yes. Christ taught that we must be 'born again' if we are to see the kingdom of God. Peter said that we are born again '... by the word of God, which lives and abides for ever.' (1 Peter 1:23). In today's world the concept of being 'born again' has become synonymous with a religious state-of-mind, an emotional or religious experience and a situation where one must at least make the claim in order to be considered a Christian. **Becoming born again usually means following the appropriate rituals** (i.e. water baptism, church attendance, no more drinking, smoking, or swearing, etc).

**However, being born again, as Jesus described it, only happens when we make a conscious decision to change our lifestyle to conform with Jesus' teachings. This decision-making should be happening every day. It is not about one clear moment, but about a process of learning how to live by a completely new set of values every day.** In the process of following these new values/teachings we are filled with (and transformed by) God's spirit - in other words, we are 'born again' (see John 14:21 & 23; John 15:10).

It is an **'error'** to state **'Becoming born again usually means following the appropriate rituals'** and then the statement goes on to list various 'righteous' rituals and changes in life-style. It is wrong to suggest that the 'new birth' is arrived at by what we do. Several scriptures reject that **'error'** – **"Not by works of righteousness which we have done but according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit"** (Titus 3:5) and **"But as many as received him to them gave he power to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name. Who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God"** (John 1:12-13).

In the light of the words just quoted of **John 1:12-13** it is also an **'error'** when they stated **'However, being born again, as Jesus described it, only happens when we make a conscious decision to change our lifestyle to conform with Jesus' teachings'**.

A further **'error'** is then added when they state **'This decision-making should be happening every day. It is not about one clear moment, but about a process of learning how to live by a completely new set of values every day.'** It is important to keep in mind that this whole section deals with being **"born again"** so according to them it is not about **'one clear moment'**. I believe the following scripture rejects that view and confirms that the new birth does happen in **'one clear moment'** – **"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"** (John 5:24). Similarly, the Apostle Paul refers to the moment when people are made 'spiritually alive' in these terms **"And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened"** (Colossians 2:13). The raising of Lazarus and the widow of Nain's son are pictures of what happens spiritually when a person, **"dead in trespasses and sins"** is **"quickened"** (Ephesians 2:1) and those raisings of the dead happened in **'one clear moment'**. Of course spiritually, there usually is a 'process' in the lead up to someone being **"born again"** during which time they come under increasing conviction of their sin but the 'new birth' itself does happen in **'one clear moment'**.

### 3. Q) What is your take on 'salvation'?

A) Paul, in his letter to the Philippians, says that we are to work out our salvation with God 'with fear and trembling' (2:12). We believe that this is a continuous process and is inseparable from the working out of our relationship with Christ. **Christ came to redeem and save us but we believe we have a part to play in this; with our salvation being determined through how we choose to respond to Him, moment-to-moment.**

This particular answer is absolutely riddled with serious **'error'** – **'error'** that for example the Church of Rome and the Mormon Church would be fully supportive of. The truth is we have NO PART in our 'redemption' or 'salvation' – I have already quoted **Titus 3:5** that states clearly that God, **"according to his mercy HE saved us"** and **Hebrews 1:3** is equally clear about the 'redeeming' and 'saving' work of Christ – there we read **"When he had BY HIMSELF purged our sins"**. AFTER we have been truly **"born again"** and so 'redeemed' and 'saved' we are to **"work out"** (not 'work for') the **"salvation"** that we now possess and this relates to the process of 'progressive sanctification' that begins the moment we are 'justified' by God when we are truly **"born again"**. This is crucial **'error'** by this group on the very heart of the Gospel message itself.

### 4. Q) What is your understanding of the Holy Trinity?

A) The word 'trinity' is not found in the Bible, but it is a useful word when trying to describe the concept that God has three different forms while at the same time being One. One form of God is 'God the Father', one is 'God the Son' and the other is 'God the Holy Spirit'. **In some parts of the gospels Jesus clearly distinguishes Himself from God, while in other parts He clearly makes Himself equal to God.** There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that our salvation will depend on whether or not we understand how God is able to be **three and one** at the same time.

The subject of **'The Trinity'** is certainly not an easy truth for mere humans to fully comprehend. This statement has aspects within it that are commendable and although they refer to **'three different forms'** it is evident, I believe, that they are not promoting the heresy of 'Oneness' or 'Modalism' or 'Sabellianism'. However, I do believe they are entering the field of **'error'** when they state **'In some parts of the gospels Jesus clearly distinguishes Himself from God, while in other parts He clearly makes Himself equal to God'**. The truth is that at all times whilst here on earth the Lord Jesus Christ was both 'fully' God' and 'fully man'.

He was whilst here on earth, **"Immanuel... God with us"** (**Matthew 1:23**) and as Paul wrote to Timothy **"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh"** (**1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 3:19**). Dr Harry Ironside in his commentary on this verse puts it simply but succinctly in these words – **'This mystery is that of the incarnation – that God came down to earth, taking into union with His Deity a human body, a human spirit, and a human soul; so that He was both God and Man in one blessed, adorable person'**.

This **'union'** that was referred to is known as the **'Hypostatical Union'** and is defined as follows by Dr Alan Cairns in his **'Dictionary of Theological Terms'** as follows –

**'A term used to denote the union of a perfect human nature with the eternal Logos without confusion of natures in the person of Christ. *Hypostatical* is used to emphasise that it was one subsistence of the divine essence, or, as we would say, one person of the Trinity, namely the Son of God, who took a human nature into union with Himself. The Trinity did not become incarnate; one *hypostasis* did'. – Also, in his dictionary Dr Cairns said this about *'hypostasis'* – 'Theologically, it was used and continues to be used by orthodox trinitarians, as a term to describe any one of the three real and distinct personal subsistencies of the one undivided divine essence. That is its meaning in Hebrews 1:3.'**

Another short and helpful article, this time by John MacArthur, on this subject of the **TRIUNE GOD** can be accessed on this link

<https://www.gty.org/library/Articles/A215/Our-Triune-God>

To state that **'In some parts of the gospels Jesus clearly distinguishes Himself from God'** is I believe an **'error'**. It was certainly clear that Jesus distinguished Himself from God the Father and from God the Holy Spirit but to say that he **'clearly distinguishes Himself from God'** is to fall into and to lead others into **'error'**.

Concerning the statement **'There is nothing in the Bible to indicate that our salvation will depend on whether or not we understand how God is able to be three and one at the same time'** - I believe it is an **'error'** to speak of **three AND one** – the correct terminology should be **'three IN one'**. Let me quote Dr Alan Cairns again

**'Again, the doctrine of the Trinity does not teach that God is one AND three in the same sense. Obviously, that would be absurd. However, there is no contradiction in saying that God is one as to His eternal spiritual essence and that that divine essence exists necessarily in three modes, each of which is spoken of in Scripture in personal terms. Furthermore, we do not hold that God is three AND one, but that He is three IN one, and one IN three'.**

By way of conclusion to this particular subject of whether **'our salvation'** is dependent upon our understanding of God, let me quote the Lord's words as recorded in **John 17: 3 "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent"**. To downplay our understanding of God in the matter of **'our salvation'** is I believe a misleading **'error'**.

**5. Q) What do you believe about divorce and remarriage?**

**A) Most churches adopt the interpretation that Jesus provided an exception to divorce, i.e. in the case of one of the partners committing adultery; but we believe this is not what He taught or meant. Mark 10:11-12 and Luke 16:18 provide the clearest teachings on the subject of divorce and remarriage. In essence, those verses say that anyone, man or woman, who divorces and marries another, commits adultery and causes their spouse to commit adultery as well.**

There is no doubt that over centuries churches have differed in their understanding on this topic of **'divorce and remarriage'**. However, I think the conclusion this group come to is in fact **'error'** and here is my explanation of why I hold that view.

In **Luke 16:18** the Lord said "**Whosoever puts away his wife, and marries another, commits adultery: and whosoever marries her that is put away from her husband commits adultery**" - that verse **TAKEN ALONE** would appear to rule out any 'legitimate' grounds either for divorce and subsequent remarriage.

However, we must always compare scripture with scripture to get the full picture on an issue and so we must also take into account what the Lord said in **Matthew 5:32** "**whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery**".

These words of the Lord are repeated by him [with an important addition that I have underlined] in **Matthew 19:9** "**Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away doth commit adultery**".

It's interesting to read these verses with the portion in red excluded - they then read "**whosoever shall put away his wife, causes her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced commits adultery**" and "**Whosoever shall put away his wife, and shall marry another, commits adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away doth commit adultery**". Without the words of the Lord "**except it be for fornication**" it would appear to be an 'open and shut case' for no remarriage under any circumstances after divorce.

However, those words of the Lord "**except it be for fornication**" are recorded in God's Word and so it seems to me that divorce on the grounds of "**fornication**" makes the divorce 'legitimate' and also makes any subsequent remarriage by the offended party 'legitimate'.

If I may refer to what **John MacArthur** says in his study bible on **Matthew 5:32** he says '**The assumption is that divorced people will remarry. If the divorce was not for sexual immorality any remarriage is adultery because God does not acknowledge the divorce**'.

In relation to the teaching of **1 Corinthians 7:15** it would also appear that if an unbelieving spouse '**departs**' from a believing spouse then the abandoned believing spouse is no longer under obligation to the marriage vows ["**is not under bondage in such cases**"] and so would appear to have 'legitimate' grounds again for divorce and remarriage.

Again, to quote **John MacArthur** from his study bible on this verse he writes '**The bond of marriage is broken only by death [Romans 7:2], adultery [Matthew 19:9] or an unbeliever's leaving...When the bond is broken in any of these ways, a Christian is free to marry another believer**'.

6. Q) What is your view on celibacy?

A) **We believe that to be celibate is better than being married**, but that marriage is not wrong, especially if it safeguards people against sexual immorality. This understanding is based on what Jesus teaches in **Matthew 19:9-12** (that those who can accept the calling of celibacy should do so), and on what Paul teaches in **1 Corinthians 7:1** (that it is better to abstain from sexual relations, unless doing so leads to sin).

I believe the portion highlighted in red is quite simply '**error**'. The state of '**marriage**' is referred to as "**honourable**" or "**to be held in honour among all**" (**Hebrews 13:4**). According to **Vines Dictionary** the Greek word translated "**honourable**" also conveys the meaning of '**precious**' and '**valuable**'.

Certainly, the Lord in **Matthew 19:9-12** outlines a number of situations where men may be in 'celibate circumstances' for differing reasons and He exhorts them to accept those 'circumstances', BUT, in doing so, the Lord is NOT saying '**that to be celibate is better than being married**' – He is simply giving instructions appropriate to the 'circumstances'. **John MacArthur** in his Study Bible comments as follows –

**'Christ is not enjoining celibacy here. Rather, He makes it entirely a matter of personal choice – except for those who are physically unable to marry, either through natural causes or because of the violence of other men. Still others may find there are pragmatic reasons not to marry for the good of the kingdom [1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 7:7-9 - Both singleness and marriage are God's gracious gifts]. But, in no way did Christ suggest that celibacy is superior to marriage [Genesis 2:18; 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy 4:3].'**

There are certainly other statements included on the web site that I would consider to be in **'error'** but I think that those I have identified will suffice for now to show that this group are not 'sound' in the matter of biblical teaching and doctrine.

By way of conclusion I want now to make some general observations based mainly on first-hand reports of those who have encountered them but also again on something on their web site.

As well as the initial information I received from the brother-in-Christ who encountered the group in Great Victoria Street, Belfast, I also received feedback from two brothers-in-Christ who had come across them in Lisburn. The reports from all three brothers were remarkably similar. When they asked the members of this group for their understanding of 'The Gospel' they were evasive in their responses. For the brothers in Lisburn, once they had made known that they were 'born again' believers, those witnessing to them refused point-blank to give them one of their tracts and in fact became quite aggressive to the point of rudeness – in my view these are cult-like traits.

Following my initial introduction to the presence of this group on our streets I emailed them as follows – **'Do you have an address for your community in the Belfast area and that can be visited?'** Very quickly I received the following reply **'The team in Belfast don't have a fixed address as they are living in a motorhome which they use as a platform for their street ministry and outreach around Ireland'**. I want in closing to pick up on this reference to **'living in a motorhome'**. On the web site of the group they state –

**6. Q) Is it possible to spend time with your community to find out more? How would I be accommodated?**

**A) Yes, it is possible to spend time with our community. Our 'living-by-faith' lifestyle means that circumstances and situations tend to vary but most likely you would live as we do in the motorhomes, unless we are spending time in a house/flat at the time you request to visit. Single males and females may end up sleeping near to one another within the same motorhome, but not on the same bed at the same time. Privacy will be available for things like showers, changing clothes and other areas where personal space is required. We take great care to maintain a safe and comfortable environment for all our members and visitors. We would also ask that you, with us, put trust in God that He will provide what is necessary for your needs to be met. Act in faith!**

I believe it is **'error'** and unchristian to approve of single males and females sharing the same **'motorhome'**. I recall in the 1990's travelling across Europe to Poland in a VW camper-van as part of a Slavic Gospel Association team. There was a married couple, myself (also married) and two young unmarried people (male and female).

We had an overnight stop en-route at a camping ground (possibly in Belgium) and the sleeping arrangements were that the married couple had sole use of the camper-van whilst the rest of us each had to erect a tent for ourselves ((that was some fun I can tell you!!) The reason was that SGA and those travelling all recognised the inherent dangers of unmarried folks sharing the same sleeping-space, no matter how well it would be 'policed'. It is quite simply cult-like **'error'** to sanction the sleeping arrangements detailed by this group and knowing in particular fallen human nature it would come as no surprise to me if this aspect of their practice were to 'end in tears'.

As a final thought let me repeat what I wrote on page 1 about the encounter in Great Victoria Street - 'the young man was apparently vague and evasive and wanted to promote a message of all-embracing **'love'**. God's **'love'** is by nature beyond human understanding unless revealed by a work of the Holy Spirit.

Why do I say that? Well, in **Romans 5:8** Paul wrote **"God commended (demonstrated) his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"**. The full meaning and ramifications of that redeeming **'love' of God** cannot be understood by the 'natural' (unregenerate) person (1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 2:14) – it requires a work of divine revelation, similar in some ways to that received by Peter in **Matthew 16:16**, for the Lord says to him in **verse 17** **"flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto you, but my Father who is in heaven"**.

Those believers who have been similarly enlightened to the nature of God's redeeming **'love'** know also that from God's perspective our reciprocal **'love'** in His service has parameters – Paul wrote in **1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13:6** concerning **"love"** that it **"rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth"**.

Earlier I quoted part of the group's response concerning 'other faiths' - **We believe that there are sincere people of all faiths who are seeking God and His Love and by their actions they are building his Kingdom, even if they do not profess to being 'Christians'**. This highlights clearly the **'error'** of their all-embracing message of **'love'** as encapsulated on their web site Homepage in these words - **We believe that everyone who loves is born of God (I John 4:7)**.

No doubt those referred to in **Matthew 7:22** are trying to make the case for their **'love'** and relationship to God in these words **"Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?"** The Lord's response is sobering **"And then will I profess unto them, I never knew (savingsly loved) you; depart from me ye that work iniquity"**. A perfect example of claimed **"love"** rejoicing **"in iniquity"** and not **"in truth"**.

This group and those considering their teachings have an urgent need to **"take heed"**.

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 8<sup>th</sup> March 2019