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*"Hereby know we the spirit of truth
and the spirit of error" 1 John 4:6*

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The Discerner

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WITH THIS ISSUE

Our feature article for this issue of The Discerner is by Professor Robert Hill. It is an excellent critique and refutation of the Watchtower's teachings concerning Jesus and Michael the Archangel, a view also held by other cults such as the Seventh Day Adventist (SDA).

Our second article is by Bary Gaudrealt on the Iglesia Ni Cristo, a movement that began in the Philippines and is spreading around the world.

And as always, try our Quiz, this month on Religion Analysis Service.

Steve Lagoon

President, Religion Analysis Service

JESUS AS MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL: IMPLICATIONS AND REPOSNSE

by Robert C. Hill Th.B., M.A. in Theological Studies, M.Div.

Introductory Matters

Charles Taze Russell, founder of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, maintained an Arian viewpoint of Jesus¹ ever since he first began his in-house Bible studies in the early 1870's. That is, Russell denied the deity of the Lord while affirming upon him the status of being God's first creation, Michael the archangel. This same heretical teaching was condemned at the Council of Nicea in AD 325.² The Watchtower adds its name to several other significant religions that deny the deity of Christ including Judaism, Islam, Mormonism, and Christian Science, to mention a few; however, for this paper the focus will be on the Watchtower's teaching regarding Jesus as Michael.

What are some implications for a Savior who is considered a created being? How does the Watchtower's position impact other doctrinal teachings? Does Scripture support Jesus as Michael? These questions will be the driving thrust for this undertaking with explorations into the effects of a Savior who is an angel regarding certain qualitative aspects of the doctrine of Christ (creation, soteriology, anthropology, and eschatology).

Watchtower Material portraying Jesus as Created

Charles Taze Russell, who incorporated the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society in 1886, denied the deity of Christ. Russell wrote, "Our Lord, since his resurrection, is a spirit being; consequently, the same powers which we find illustrated in angels (spiritual beings) should also be possessed by him. And such is the case . . ."³ His brief

¹ An excellent discussion of the early historical views concerning Christ as Creature is found in Jaroslav Pelikan's tome on the Christian tradition. He writes that Arius himself presumably exegeted Proverbs 8:22 ff. to uphold his belief that Jesus as Logos was Himself created and therefore at one time did not exist. Hillary at that time declared that the Arian arguments were an immense threat to the orthodox faith. Of course, Constantine convened a council to intervene in the Arian controversy to settle the matter.

Nevertheless, Pelikan observes that the "Arian vocabulary about the relation of the Son of God as creature to God the Creator was their use of the title 'angel.' . . . The interpretation of Proverbs 8:22-31 could be combined with the words of Hebrews 1:4 to show that the preexistent one belonged to the category of the angels, although, to be sure, he was preeminent among them" (197). See Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Church Tradition*, 5 vols. (Chicago: U of Chicago, 1971-89), 1:191-200.

² Ibid., 1:202. The central core understanding [at the Council of Nicea] was that Christ was the only begotten one from the same ousia of the Father, thus Christ was designated homoousios [from Greek meaning 'same essence, substance.']

³ Charles Taze Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 6 vols. (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1924), 1:184.

comments on 1 Thessalonians 4:16 links the “voice of *the* archangel” as coming from the Lord Jesus. Note Russell’s stacking the deck (*Petitio Principii*: begging the question) linking Jesus to archangel:

The name ‘archangel’ signifies *chief messenger*; and our anointed Lord himself is Jehovah’s Chief Messenger—the ‘Messenger of the Covenant.’ (Mal 3:1) Daniel refers to the same personage, calling him Michael, which name signifies who as God—an appropriate name for him who is ‘the express image of the Father’s person,’ and the representative of his authority and power. The voice of the Archangel represents Christ’s authority and command. This symbol, then, represents Christ as taking control, or beginning his reign and issuing his commands, his official orders, announcing the change of dispensation by the enforcement of the laws of his kingdom.

The same thought is differently expressed by Daniel, when he says [cf. Daniel 12:1], Then shall Michael, the great Prince, ‘stand up.’ To stand up signifies to assume authority, to give commands.⁴

Russell himself has determined that Michael the archangel and the Lord Jesus are the same, when in fact there is no natural apposition between the two. Scripture addresses Michael and who he is as Michael, while Jesus likewise is never referred to as Michael, but rather to whom He is. Even in Malachi 3:1 there are options available that cannot be ruled out as to who is being spoken of.

Ralph L. Smith remarks that the messenger in Malachi 3:1 is not identified at all and that it could be a man or an angel. Numerous theories exist as to the messenger’s identity with a range from Malachi himself, the embodiment of all the prophets, or an ideal figure.⁵ With the shift from first person Yahweh, who will send his messenger, to the third person of the Lord coming into His temple, the messenger of the covenant does not necessarily mean Michael. Smith asks, “What is the relationship between the messenger who prepares the way for Yahweh’s coming, the Lord who comes, and the Messenger of the Covenant who comes?”⁶ This is crucial in understanding the identity or identities. A single being could be in view with three different titles. Lord can also refer to Yahweh (cf. Zechariah 4:14; 6:5 and Ezekiel 43:2–4). The angel could be the *angel of Yahweh*, who not only represents Yahweh but also several times is interchangeable

⁴ Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures* (1908), 2:147.

⁵ Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. D. A. Hubbard (Waco: Word, 1984), 32:327.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32:328.

with him (Genesis 18:1, 2, 17, 22; 19:1). The dogmatic conclusion of Russell is highly suspect and biased.

The Watchtower also relies on the *voice of the Archangel* as proof positive that the Lord is this angelic being. According to Russell, the shout is a symbolic shout that ushers in an invisible presence of the Lord as well. Note these remarks by Russell:

Thus we find the ‘*shout*,’ the ‘*voice of the Archangel*’ and ‘*the trump of God*’ all symbols, and now in process of fulfillment. Note carefully, too, the fact that each of the three prophecies just referred to (Dan. 12:1; Rev. 11:15; 1 Thess. 4:16) declares the Lord’s *presence* at the time when the events mentioned transpire. They were foretold for the very purpose of indicating the manner in which his *invisible presence* would be manifested to those who have faith in the word of prophecy. Paul says, ‘the Lord *shall descend* with [literally *in*, or *during*] a shout,’ voice, trumpet, etc.; John says that the kingdoms of this world become his, during the time of these events; and Daniel says, ‘At that time shall Michael, the great Prince [Christ], stand up’ (be *present*) and take to himself his great power.

If, therefore, we can recognize the shout, the voices and the sounding of the great trumpet, we should accept them as indications, not that the Lord will come soon, but rather that he has come and is now present, and that the harvest work of gathering the wheat and burning the tares is already under way. This we shall soon see is abundantly proved by time-prophecies. Yet it is not to the natural vision but only to the eye of faith, through the sure word of prophecy, that his presence and work can be discerned.⁷

In order to fully appreciate what Russell has discerned, one needs the infamous *eye of faith*. Note well the inclusion of *Christ* bracketed by Russell as if it is part of the text. His eisegesis is obvious, as the imposed apposition would not otherwise be comprehended. A close reading of his doctrinal presentations betrays his mental stamina as a theologian. The text cited is characteristic of many such entries in his otherwise numerically impressive writings.

The second president of the Society, J. F. Rutherford, continued with this Arian teaching. Rutherford equated Michael with the Logos, and the Logos and Lucifer as two sons of God:

⁷ Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 2:149.

“It is recorded in the book of Job (38:4–7) that when God laid the foundations of the earth as a habitation for man the Morning Stars sang together for joy. The Holy Scriptures show that the term Morning Stars refers to two mighty beings of heaven; namely, Michael (the Logos) and Lucifer. Here something is said about Lucifer and later herein something will be said concerning the Logos. Lucifer proved to be the disloyal son of God, while the Logos is the ‘Faithful and True’.”⁸

Rutherford also includes within parenthesis “the Logos” when Michael’s name is used, displaying like his predecessor the act of eisegesis. Even interpreting the *Morning Stars* as Michael and Lucifer is quite a stretch from the actual context, which reads *all* the sons of God shouted for joy at God’s creation of the earth. Yet, Rutherford must establish these stars so that Jesus as an angel can be more palatable. Nevertheless, Jesus is the true morning star (cf. Revelation 22:16), and has nothing in common with the fallen angel Lucifer whom Rutherford establishes by using the King James Version of Isaiah 14:12. However, Jesus is not an angel and this view of Lucifer in the Isaiah context is rejected by most.

Other texts purporting to demonstrate that Michael is the Messiah became and are standard fare for the Watchtower. Take for example Daniel 12:1, “And at that time shall Michael [the Messiah] stand up . . .”⁹ Continuing with Revelation 12:7–9 Rutherford confidently states, “In this great fight Michael, who is Christ Jesus, together with his angels, fought against the Devil and his angels . . .”¹⁰ Rutherford continues by noting that the logos was referred to as an archangel when he was serving in “a certain or specific capacity . . . [and that] One of his titles is ‘Michael’, which means ‘like God.’”¹¹ It is obvious that Rutherford embellishes these texts with his theological views, inserting what he wants Holy Scripture to mean. For example, Daniel 12:1 naturally reads Michael standing up, but Rutherford cannot contend with that—so he adds within brackets *the Messiah*, apart from any scriptural support.

The Watchtower still maintains the belief that Michael is Jesus. It is clearly stated in their publication *Insight on the Scriptures*, “Scriptural evidence indicates that the name Michael applied to God’s

⁸ J. F. Rutherford, *Comfort for the Jews* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1925), 27.

⁹ Rutherford, *Comfort for the Jews*, 45.

¹⁰ J. F. Rutherford, *Deliverance* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1926), 260.

¹¹ J. F. Rutherford, *Creation* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1927), 15. It is interesting to note that *Michael* is applied to several different people in the OT. Using Watchtower logic of names being very significant, one would surmise, to be consistent that each of the other Michaels of the OT would likewise have some bearing *like God* (cf. Numbers 13:13; 1 Chronicles 5:13, 14: 6:40; 7:3; 8:16; 12:20; 27:18; 2 Chronicles 21:2; Ezra 8:8).

Son before he left heaven to become Jesus Christ and also after his return.”¹² The *Watchtower* magazine also teaches this standard fare, “‘Michael the great prince’ is none other than Jesus Christ himself. — Daniel 12:1”¹³

The short history of the Society thus demonstrates that Jesus and Michael are the same beings, yet existing at different times. Their proof is the use of a handful of scriptural support references, preconceived notions, and deductive reasoning(s) based on a stacked deck of theological cards. This type of methodology is highly subjective and wrought with problems; and so, because of this, this teaching must be rejected. Here is a typical example:

At 1 Thessalonians 4:16 the voice of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ is described as being that of an archangel. Suggesting that he is, in fact, himself the archangel. This text depicts him as descending from heaven with ‘a commanding call.’ It is only logical, therefore, that the voice expressing this commanding call be described by a word that would not diminish or detract from the great authority that Christ Jesus now has as King of kings and Lord of lords.¹⁴

This text does not prove anything of the sort and does not even attach the voice of the archangel to the Lord. Even if this could be established, one would wonder in what respect does that voice entail? A voice of authority? What about his descent “from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel, and with the trumpet of God”?

Do these three aspects offer the possibility that they are not necessarily events emanating from the Lord? Couldn’t Jesus descend with the angelic hosts that accompany Him, shout, there could be the archangel’s voice sounding from the archangel and not Christ, and also the sounding of the trumpet of God?

Just one more example. The Watchtower relies heavily on Daniel 12:1. In this eschatological verse, Michael is said to stand up or arise during a time of distress unlike any other time, “Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands *guard* over the sons of your people, will arise.” (NASB)¹⁵ The following methodology utilized by the Watchtower is certainly suspect. Note their understanding of this verse and how they are able to relate it to Jesus. They state:

¹² Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, *Insight on the Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1988), 2:393.

¹³ “Michael the Great Prince—Who is He?” Watchtower (12/15/1984), 29.

¹⁴ Watchtower, *Insight on the Scriptures*, 2:93.

¹⁵ Bible verses taken from *New American Standard Bible*, (1997).

“In Daniel’s prophecy, ‘standing up’ frequently refers to the action of a king, either taking up his royal power or acting effectively in his capacity as king (Dan 11:2–4, 7, 16b, 20, 21). This supports the conclusion that Michael is Jesus Christ, since Jesus is Jehovah’s appointed King, commissioned to destroy all the nations at Har-Magedon.”¹⁶

How standing up can support the conclusion that they arrive at is another hermeneutical stretch. The Hebrew word that is translated as *stand* and *arise* in this verse, also appears in Daniel 12:13 to refer to the resurrection!¹⁷ Furthermore, the standing up here would be more in the sense of judgment within the context of judicial proceedings (cf. Isaiah 3:13).¹⁸ Or, as J. E. Goldingay writes, Michael is taking his stand in the sense of their cause in the court for God’s people.¹⁹

These examples briefly demonstrate the interpretative problems arising from the Watchtower’s methodology. Next, our focus will be on some of the theological problems inherent with the view that Jesus is a created being.

The Validity of Jesus as Michael Regarding Various Doctrines

The Watchtower teaches Jehovah created the Logos, and the Logos created everything else. Jesus whom the Watchtower claims to be *Michael the Logos* was involved with creating angels! Rutherford claims, “Angels are others of God’s spirit or heavenly creatures, made by him through his beloved One the Logos.”²⁰ There is one obvious question that arises from his statement: Why God would even resort to a creature to create his universe in the first place? This is quite remarkable when considering the biblical creation account where nothing at all is mentioned of an archangel named Michael doing the actual work. In fact, Scripture even opens with “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Of course, there are contradictory statements made throughout Rutherford’s writings. On one hand, God creates through his first creation, the Logos, who in turn creates all things. On the other hand, Rutherford calmly writes God created man, “That creature is man, whom the Lord God created.”²¹

¹⁶ Ibid., 2:393.

¹⁷ G. Kittel, “arcangelo” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 1:87.

¹⁸ H. Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Botterweck, H. Ringgren, and H. Fabry (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 11:178–187.

¹⁹ John E. Goldingay, *Daniel*, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. D. Hubbard (Waco: Word, 1991), 30:306.

²⁰ Rutherford, *Creation*, 15.

²¹ Ibid., 48.

Granted the Logos did create the universe! However, not as Michael but as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity within the Godhead. He is the mediator of creation (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:6; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2, 10; John 1:1 ff). H. H. Esser states, “The whole creation was made through him and with him in view (John 1:3; 9–12). It has its basis (Revelation 3:14) and its goal in Him (Hebrews 1:11f).”²²

Read Michael’s confrontation with the devil in Jude 9, where he [Michael] “did not dare pronounce against him [Satan] a railing judgment, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you.’” For Michael lacked any authority to do so. Then read Colossians 1:16–17 concerning Jesus’ role in creation: “For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.”

It is apparent that these two passages are depicting two separate individuals. The latter verses refer to the preincarnate Christ, who has all power and the absolute ability of holding the entire universe together—having created everything within it. The former verse concerns a creature that is limited in power with deference to a Higher Power/Authority, and this weighs in favor that the Logos was not Michael.

Five verses depict Michael in the Bible. Yet Scripture abounds with verses describing Jesus as God. None of which purport Him to be a created being! Only deity can create the immensity of the universe and all the life that it contains. Only deity can hold it together and sustain it, so that its creatures need not fear its decay from the fall. We worship God because he is Our Creator and Sustainer. Other Old Testament Scriptures that support creation by God alone include Isaiah 40 and Psalm 8.

A brief overview of Scripture that portrays Jesus as more than man, and more than archangel, weighs against the Watchtower’s teachings that the Logos was the first creation of Jehovah who in turn created all else. First, Jesus in John 8:58 restates the “I Am” spoken from God in Exodus 3:14. Other examples abound: God is the light of the world (Psalm 27:1) and Jesus is the light of the world (John 8:12); Jesus forgave sins (Mark 2:5) while only God can forgive sins (Mark 2:7); The Messiah is held to be the mighty God (Isaiah 9:6) whose throne is forever (Psalm 45:6, Hebrews 1:8).

²² H. H. Esser, “Creation,” in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 1: 384.

We are to worship God alone (Exodus 20:1–4; Deuteronomy 5:6–9) while angels refused worship (Revelation 22:8, 9), yet Jesus received worship on numerous occasions (cf. Matthew 8:2; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20; 28:17). Jesus wanted people to pray in His name and believe in him (John 14:1, 13, 15; 15:7; Acts 7:59; 1 Corinthians 5:4). Scripture abounds with deep and rich texts that make claim to Jesus as fully God (cf. John 1:1; Zechariah 12:10; 14:9; John 20:28).²³ None of these texts fashion Jesus into a creature known biblically as Michael prior to His incarnation or after His physical resurrection.

Before scrutinizing the resurrection, one major problem exists for the Watchtower. The Watchtower teaches that Jesus rose a spirit being, and argues that His body was laid in some tomb in heaven or vaporized into gases.

Trinitarians maintain continuity for Christ, asserting his full deity in His pre-existence and during the incarnation which is perpetual. In contrast, the Watchtower maintains that the pre-existent Logos was Michael the archangel, and that during his earthly existence Jesus was only human until his death on the cross (torture stake for the Watchtower). Finally Christ left behind his human existence at the resurrection and resumed his identity as Michael the archangel. There is, therefore, for the Watchtower, no continuity in their teaching about Jesus. There is instead, the discontinuity of his personal existence shifting between either angelic or human nature, but never simultaneously. Having denied Christ's physical resurrection, the Watchtower had to explain what happened to His body consistent with its further denial of the physical/ human nature of Christ at His second coming.

Anthony Hoekema poses this dilemma in a series of questions. "Is there real continuity between the Son of God in his pre-human and human state? Was the child born of Mary really the same individual who existed previously in heaven as the Archangel Michael?"²⁴ He realizes that the Watchtower cannot fully answer these basic questions without ambiguity. At times they equate Michael with Jesus in his preincarnate state, while at other times their writings teach 'no continuity' between the two states of existence. Hoekema rightly concludes that the Watchtower does not teach Christ had two natures during the incarnation.²⁵

²³ A very good chapter on these and many other aspects of the deity of Christ can be found in Norman L. Geisler, *The Deity and Authority of Jesus Christ*, in *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), 329–352.

²⁴ Anthony Hoekema, *Jehovah's Witnesses* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 62. Hoekema's treatment of the Jehovah's Witness is excellent.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 63–4.

Therefore, a major factor concerning anthropology is affected with the denial of Christ's human nature in his post-resurrection existence. Of particular concern is the core teaching of a physical resurrection. The Watchtower teaches that Jesus rose from the dead as a spirit creature and became Michael once again. Yet, if one would proof text some of their writings, it could be claimed that they hold to a physical resurrection of Jesus, which of course is not the case at all.

Notice Rutherford's statement, "When Jesus was raised from the dead he ascended into heaven (1 Corinthians 15:4; Ephesians 4:8, 10)." ²⁶ If there is no physical resurrection of Jesus, then how do we know that He was who He claimed to be? The Watchtower had to come up with an answer to this important question. They claim that after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples "in a body suitable for the occasion."²⁷

Russell adds a twist to the normal understanding of Scripture concerning Thomas and the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus. Note his remarks:

When Thomas declared that only the proof which addressed his natural sight and touch would be acceptable to him, the Lord, though he granted that demand, gently reproved him, saying, Because thou has seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are those who believe, not having seen. (John 20:27-29)²⁸

The point here is not a non-physical resurrection, but on those who believe Jesus rose from the dead without having an actual physical sighting. Russell continues:

He thus showed them, not only that he now had the power to appear in a variety of ways and forms, but also that no one of those bodies which they saw was his spiritual, glorious body, though the facts of his resurrection and presence were manifested to them . . . he was now a spirit being, really invisible to human sight, but with ability to manifest his presence and power in a variety of ways at pleasure.²⁹

Rutherford taught that angels were invisible to men, but "have from time to time been granted the power to appear before men in material bodies, and then at the proper and convenient time to disappear

²⁶ Rutherford, *Creation*, 282.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 282.

²⁸ Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 2:125.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 126.

or dematerialize.”³⁰ A more recent statement from the Watchtower Society reads:

Moreover, he was raised to a higher form of life and a higher position than that which he had held in the heavens prior to coming to earth . . . However, for 40 days after his resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples on different occasions in various fleshly bodies . . . Like those angels, he had the power to construct and to disintegrate those fleshly bodies at will, for the purpose of proving visibly that he had been resurrected.³¹

This is pure speculation and interjection of a preconceived theological notion. If the Society did not state this as actually happening, one would be hard pressed to perceive such a fanciful understanding based on biblical texts alone. Therefore, it lacks credibility and must be rejected as false and absurd teaching.

The resurrection was physical because in the beginning God made man and all of creation as physical matter. In fact, we must not lose sight of “and it was good” (Genesis 1:9 ff) in response to this material universe that God created. To deny a physical resurrection is to absolve the goodness of physical matter at the very least, and specifically it would deny the holistic aspects of being human—that of body, soul, and spirit.

The whole purpose of the returning saints and the resurrection of the dead is to reunite body and soul to an originally created intention. R. E. O. White rightly observes the Old Testament understanding of resurrection, “Everyday observation, plus the belief that God made man’s body in His own image, led to the conviction that man was not ‘soul’ imprisoned within a physical frame but embodied spirit, a unity of body and living self.”³²

If Jesus is our prototype, and if the Watchtower’s teaching is valid, then like Him we would lose our humanness. But the apostle John writes in 1 John 3:2, “Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”³³ Note also 1 Thessalonians 5:23, “Now may the God of peace

³⁰ Rutherford, *Creation*, 16.

³¹ Watchtower, *Insight from the Scriptures*, 2:786.

³² R. E. O. White, “Resurrection of the Dead,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 940.

³³ This verse is also problematic to the Watchtower’s teaching that the parousia occurred first in 1874. However, Rutherford changed this to 1914. The problem lies in the understanding of an invisible presence of Jesus, who cannot be seen because he is a “spirit creature” and how that relates to all alive, “We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.”

Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Certainly, this verse leaves open, and powerfully so, the truth of a resurrected material body, albeit glorified at the return of our Lord.

Indeed, according to the Watchtower, the body of Jesus was placed in a memorial tomb or vaporized. And necessarily so, if he was a pre-existed creature, notably Michael. Russell wrote, “We know nothing about what became of it [Jesus’ body], except that it did not decay or corrupt (Acts 2:27, 31). Whether it was dissolved into gases or whether it is still preserved somewhere as a grand memorial of God’s love, of Christ’s obedience, and of our redemption, no one knows, nor is such knowledge necessary.”³⁴

The above statement remains a core theological teaching for Jehovah’s Witnesses despite an abundance of Scripture that fully reveals the contrary as to what actually happened to Jesus after His resurrection. Norman Geisler’s discussion on the matter focuses on several proofs that weigh in favor for a physical resurrection of Jesus.³⁵

In particular Geisler states, “...Jesus was not ‘angel-like’ in his appearances. Rather he displayed a very real body—the same body in which he was crucified.”³⁶ He continues with several definitive categories: Jesus was touched by human hands, including the nail and spear wounds (Matthew 28:9; Luke 24:39; John 20:17; John 20:27–28); His body had flesh and bones. Note Jesus’ own remarks, “Touch me and see; a spirit does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have” (Luke 24:39).

Jesus ate physical food then later physically ascended (Luke 24:30, 41–43; John 21:12–13; Acts 1:4; 10:40). Geisler states this regarding Jesus’ post-resurrection eating, “Given this context, it would have been sheer deception by Jesus to have shown his flesh and bones and offered his ability to eat physical food as proof of his physical body, if he had not been resurrected in a physical body.”³⁷ Geisler continues his categories with Jesus’ body bearing his wounds, “No so-called ‘spiritual’ or immaterial body would have physical scars (John 20:27).”³⁸ Jesus’ body was recognized (cf. Matthew 28:7, 17; Mark

³⁴ Russell, *Studies in the Scriptures*, 2:129–130.

³⁵ Norman L. Geisler, “Resurrection,” in *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999), 644–670.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 667.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 667.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 667.

16:7; Luke 24:24; John 20:1–14; 1 Corinthians 9:1).³⁹ His body could be seen and heard (Matthew 28:17; Luke 24:31; John 20:15–16; John 20:27–28; Acts 1:3; 4:2, 20).

Soma (soma, Greek) always means a physical body (1 Corinthians 15:42–44). The use of “from (*ek*, Greek) the dead” indicates coming from a dead body, and the same words are used regarding Lazarus’ body when he was raised from the dead with a physical body (John 12:1). Jesus’ tomb was empty, “Since it was a literal, material body that was placed there, and since *that same physical body* had come alive, it follows that the resurrection body was that same material body that died” (Matthew 28:6).⁴⁰ The grave clothes were unwrapped (John 20:6–7), giving proof that no immaterial being vaporized through the wrappings.

Scripture is very adamant about a physical resurrection. That we rise in our flesh and not in some other spiritual fashion is a central tenet of The Church. Geisler states, “That Jesus rose from the dead in the essentially same physical body of flesh and bones in which he was crucified is a linchpin of orthodox theology and apologetics. Historic Christianity stands or falls on the historicity and materiality of the bodily resurrection of Christ.”⁴¹ Consider the biblical teaching that leads to the conclusion in favor of a physical resurrection.

The Watchtower must also and somehow have the angel Michael procure the atonement that was necessary for salvation. References are made that an angel could not pay the penalty to release mankind from death, so Michael had to somehow become a man in order to do so. When Jesus was filled with the Spirit, according to Russell’s teaching, he was begetting a new nature that corresponds to the divine nature and was fully manifested when he sacrificed his human nature.

Under the full weight of Scripture, of course this teaching cannot take on theological legs and walk. Jesus was fully God prior to His becoming a man, fully God while also fully man, and God in every aspect and man in every aspect after His resurrection. God is the continuity and our assurance that the man Jesus was able to die for the sins of the world having a physical resurrection as proof of this fact.

³⁹ Ibid., 668. Geisler defends some of the charges made about Jesus not being clearly recognized. He states that some of the disciples were prevented from recognizing him (Luke 24:16) but their eyes were later opened (vs. 31). There are natural factors to consider as well, such as the disciples’ perplexity (Luke 21:17–21), sorrow (John 20:11–15); dimness of light (John 20:14–15), distance (John 21:4), disbelief (John 20:24–5), and so forth.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 668.

⁴¹ Ibid., 669–70.

Note Isaiah 25:9, “And it will be said in that day, “Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.” How could a believer ever feel totally secure with a Savior that was created much like him? It takes God to be able to withstand the punishment due the totality of sin; a creature could not bear this burden. In 1 John 2:2 John said about Jesus, “And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only but also for *those of the whole world.*”

God Himself states in His word, “I, even I, am the LORD; And there is no savior besides Me” (Isaiah 43:11) and again in Isaiah 45:15, “Truly, Thou art a God who hides Himself, O God of Israel, Savior!” Also consider the weight of this passage (Isaiah 45:21), “. . . is it not I, the LORD? And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me.” One New Testament text that supports God and Jesus as One and the same Savior is Titus 2:13, “. . . looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus.”

How the Watchtower understands the two natures of Jesus is also problematic regarding eschatological aspects. With Jesus no longer human having become again a spirit creature in heaven, this places end time events in a different light than what the Bible teaches and the Church has historically maintained—that is, a visible return of Christ for His Church.

A spirit cannot be seen and so the Watchtower had to seek a way out of this theological box. They did this by teaching the return of Jesus Christ is not visible but invisible. In fact, after changing the date of his return from 1874 to 1914, he is already present.⁴² Furthermore, this *return* is viewed as a ruling return and not an actual physical back to earth parousia. Hoekema comments:

“The ‘return’ or ‘second presence’ of Christ simply means that Christ, who had been sitting at the Father’s right hand in heaven since his ascension, now ascends the throne of his kingdom at the Father’s right hand in heaven. The ‘return’ of Christ is, for Jehovah’s Witnesses, an exclusively heavenly transaction, consisting merely in Christ’s exchanging an ‘ordinary’ seat at the Father’s right hand for a throne.”⁴³

⁴² The Watchtower has always relied on ‘date setting methodology’ to arrive at various prophetic dates. The parousia (translated as ‘presence’ in Watchtower literature) is based on the sacking of Jerusalem in 607 BC by Nebuchadnezzar. However, the problem is that this event is historically dated as 587–586 BC. See Edmond Charles Gruss for his discussion on these dates and the problems that occur, making either 1874 or 1914 grave errors. E. C. Gruss, *Apostles of Denial* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, n.d.), 173–83.

⁴³ Hoekema, 91. This return is also expressed in Revelation 12:1–9, where the heavenly kingdom is viewed

It should also be observed that date setting—of any kind—is problematic in that Scripture states no one knows the day or hour but only the Father (cf. Matthew 24:36, 42, 44; 25:13; Acts 1:7).

A denial of an actual visible return of Jesus Christ is to deny clear biblical teaching. One example of Watchtower reasoning concerns Revelation 1:7. This verse indicates clearly a visible return of Christ, “Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see Him, even those who pierced Him; and all the tribes of the earth will mourn over Him. Even so. Amen.” The Watchtower must have Christ invisible because he no longer has a physical body. They state:

“What is indicated by ‘clouds’? Invisibility. When an airplane is in a thick cloud or above the clouds, people on the ground usually cannot see it, although they may hear the roar of the engines. . . . If Christ were to appear visibly in the heavens, it is obvious that not ‘every eye’ would see him. If he appeared over Australia, for example, he would not be visible in Europe, Africa, and the Americas, would he?”

In what sense will ‘every eye see him’? They will discern from events on earth that he is invisibly present. . . . Following Christ’s return, some persons show faith; they recognize the sign of his presence. Others reject the evidence, but when Christ goes into action as God’s executioner of the wicked, even they will discern from the manifestation of his power that the destruction is not from men but from heaven.”⁴⁴

It is evident this Watchtower interpretation has several problems. For one, there is no locative dative case *in* (en, Greek) for *in the clouds* at all. The clause is best translated “with the clouds.” The airplane in a cloud rendering it invisible is therefore ruled out on a purely grammatical base. The clause containing *every eye* concerns an event of universal significance, not one of a specific geographical area as the Watchtower portrays.⁴⁵ The next verse adds to the power and authority of the returning Lord Jesus, for His Deity is described in such words as, “‘I am the Alpha and the Omega,’ says the Lord God, ‘who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty’” (Revelation 1:8). This is not an archangel’s return, as historically The Church awaits the return of a visible Messiah with His saints.

the birth of the man-child.

⁴⁴ Watchtower, *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (Brooklyn: Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, 1985), 343.

⁴⁵ This verse is rich in itself and in context, but for this paper those riches are left for the reader to ponder as it entails a broader scope than needed. For excellent commentary of this passage see David E. Aune, *Revelation 1–5*, vol. 52a, in *Word Biblical Commentary*, ed. B. Metzger (Dallas: Word Books, 1997).

The Watchtower must also interpret the term *parousia* (parousia, Greek) as *presence*. There can be no *coming* in their understanding, because they have a different Jesus whose presence indicates an ongoing rulership. Thus, Jesus' parousia has already occurred beginning in 1874 or 1914.⁴⁶

The standard Greek lexicon does define *parousia* as *presence*; but also validates *coming* in particular contexts. Various nuances include: The word *parousia* having the state of being present at a place (cf. 1 Corinthians 16:17); arrival as the first stage in presence, *coming*, *advent* (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:6f); and as applied to Christ, “nearly always of his Messianic Advent in glory to judge the world at the end of this age” (cf. Matthew 24:3; 1 Corinthians 1:18; 15:23; 2 Thessalonians 2:8) to note a few standard passages.⁴⁷ Therefore, just as the angels told His disciples that He will return the same way as He left—visibly and physically (Acts 1:7)—likewise Jesus will return (Revelation 1:9–11).

Conclusion

The Watchtower's belief that 'Jesus is also Michael the archangel' does not stand up to the full weight of Scripture. This heretical teaching that was condemned centuries ago was done so for a reason. A created being cannot do justice to other doctrinal matters, notably in the biblical teaching of creation, resurrection, redemption, and the return of Christ. A creature involved in the biblical scope of these matters leaves the doctrines defective and untenable. Like the Council of Nicea, which rejected Arius, today it is the Watchtower's teachings that must be denied any theological validity.

⁴⁶ It should be kept in mind that many of the splinter “Bible Students”, who left the Watchtower after Russell died, still maintain Russell's earlier dating of 1874 as to Jesus' parousia.

⁴⁷ Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. By William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, 3rd ed., rev. and aug. Frederick William Danker (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2000), 780–81.

19 BIBLICAL REASONS WHY I CANNOT ACCEPT THE IGLESIA NI CRISTO AS A TRUE CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION

by Bary Gaudrealt

Introduction

The following information regarding The *Iglesia Ni Cristo* (The Church of Christ) is compared with the Word of God to see if what they teach truly lines up with biblical teachings.

Many of the below quotes are taken from their book titled “Fundamental beliefs of the Iglesia Ni Cristo.”¹ Other documentation has been obtained from internet resources as indicated. Lastly, all Bible quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

The biblical view is stated first, followed by the unbiblical claim(s) of the Iglesia Ni Cristo (abbreviated as INC).

I. Bible Creeds

Note: A creed is a set of statements declaring the beliefs of an organization. There are orthodox creeds such as the Apostles Creed (which are supported by Scripture), and unorthodox creeds teaching heretical beliefs contrary to Scripture.

Bible: There are creeds found in the Bible. Some are quoted below.

1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:1–5)

2. “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.” (1 Timothy 3:16)

¹Erano G. Manalo, *Fundamental Beliefs of Iglesia Ni Cristo* (Church of Christ), Second Edition, Quezon City, Philipines, 1998

3. “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, All things were created through Him and for Him And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.” (Colossians 1:15–18)

4. “God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Hebrews 1:1–3).

INC: Creeds are forbidden: “The basis of our faith is the BIBLE. This is where God’s words are written. We do not follow any creeds.”

II. Apostasy

Bible: The church never ceased to exist or experienced complete apostasy.

1. “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

2. “To Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:21)

3. “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3)

INC: The church that Christ founded had ceased to exist until restored by the INC. “The Church of Christ believes that the Church established by Christ in Jerusalem in the first century ceased to exist. It had apostatized. Thus, the Church of Christ in these last days is the restoration of the Church founded by Christ.” (p. 16)

III. God's Last Messenger (Prophet) in these Last Days:

Bible: Jesus Christ was the last and greatest prophet in these last days.

“God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...” (Hebrew 1:1–2)

INC: Felix Y. Manalo was the last and final prophet in these last days.

“God’s messenger in the last days is Brother Felix Y. Manalo. He did not establish the Church of Christ; Christ Himself did that through prophecy.” (p. 148)

“We believe that Bro. Felix Manalo is a messenger of God in these last days. He is the instrument on restoring the true Church that was apostatized.”

IV. There is only One True Christian Church, Established by Christ.

Bible: Christ alone is the founder and Head over the True Church.

1. “looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” (Hebrews 12:2, ESV)

2. “And He put all *things* under His feet, and gave Him *to be* head over all to the church” (Ephesians 1:22).

INC: The Iglesia Ni Cristo is the only true church (founded by Felix Y. Manalo). “We should renounce the common belief that all churches are of God. There is only one true church and that is the Church of Christ. It is in this church that man should perform his services to God so that these services well be made acceptable. Thus, we should value the Church because it is here wherein man can serve God properly and attain salvation.” (p. 11)

V. Was the Church restored In The Philippines in the year 1914?

Bible: The church has always been established since the proclamation of Christ, therefore it could not have been restored in 1914.

1. “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

2. “to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:21)

3. Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.” (Jude 3)

INC: “We believe that the fulfillment on where and when the Church reemerged [was] in the Philippines (a country in the Far East) in 1914 (beginning of the first World War). “

VI. Are all other Christian denominations—apart from the Iglesia Ni Cristo—part of the Body of Christ, or are they of the devil?

Bible: All true Christian denominations have the following characteristics.

1. *The Church was chosen:* “just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4).

2. *The Church was purchased:* “Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.” (Act 20:28)

3. *The church was redeemed:* “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

4. *The church is indwelt:* “In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in who also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13).

5. *The church is empowered:* “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

6. *The church holds to the Apostles doctrine*: “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine...” (Act 2:42a).

7. *The church is a church of intimate fellowship*: “...and fellowship” (Acts 2:42b).

8. *The church breaks bread together* remembering Christ’s sacrifice for them: “...in the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42c).

9. *The church was and is a church of prayer*: “...and in prayers.” (Act 2:42d)

INC: All churches except the INC are of the devil. “We should not be surprised at the number of churches today that are not of Christ. It is not Christ who established them but the enemy or the devil (Matthew 13:24–30, 36–39 NKJV). These churches that do not belong to Christ are the Catholic Church and her offspring, the various Protestant denominations, and sects. Only one Church belongs to Christ, the Church of Christ.”

VII. Is God’s Nature Trinitarian or Unitarian?

Bible: God’s nature is Trinitarian in nature.

1. *God is One*:

a. “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one!” (Deuteronomy 6:4)

b. “Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol *is* nothing in the world, and that *there* is no other God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), yet for us *there is* one God, the Father, of whom *are* all things, and we for Him; and One Lord Jesus Christ, through whom *are* all things, and through whom we *live*.” (1 Corinthians 8:4–6)

2. *Within the Godhead there are three persons—The Father, The Son, and The Holy Spirit.*

a. “When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice *came* from heaven, saying “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” (Matthew 3:16–17)

b. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19).

c. “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit *be* with you all. Amen.” (2 Corinthians 13:14)

d. “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” (1 Peter 1:2)

INC: God’s nature is strictly Unitarian. “Iglesia Ni Cristo believes in the teachings taught by the Bible that the Father who created all things is the only true God. There are not three persons in one God: thus we should reject the belief in the so-called Trinity.” (p. 4)

XIII. Regarding the Nature of Christ: Is He the God-Man or just a man?

Bible: Christ had two natures, one hundred percent deity and hundred percent humanity.

1. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:1, 14)

2. “of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.” (Romans 9:5)

3. “who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men.” (Philippians 2:6–7)

INC: Christ had only one nature, that being mere humanity. “As far as Christ’s nature is concerned, we believe that he is a man and not the true God. The belief that Christ is the true God should be rejected by man because this is against the teachings of the Bible. Man should also renounce the belief in Christ’s alleged dual nature, or that he is both true God and true man.” (p. 68)

IX. Does Christ possess the attributes of deity?

Bible: Christ possessed the nature of God.

1. *He was and is Eternal.*

a. “For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6)

b. “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, *Though* you are little among the thousands of Judah, *Yet* out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth *are* from old, From everlasting.” (Micah 5:2)

c. “of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came*, who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God. Amen.” (Romans 9:5)

2. *He was and is unchanging.*

a. “Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But you are the same, And your years will not fail.” (Hebrews 1:12)

b. “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

3. *He was and is all-present.*

a. “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:20)

b. “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” Amen. (Matthew 28:20)

4. *He was and is all knowing.*

a. “But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, ‘Why do you think evil in your hearts?’” (Matthew 9:4)

b. “But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all *men*, and had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man.” (John 2:24–25)

c. “He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to Him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love you.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep.’” (John 21:17).

5. *He was and is the Almighty.*

“I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the* Beginning and *the* End,” says the Lord, “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” (Revelation 1:8)

INC: God has attributes that only He has. “God has attributes which we do not find in Christ. If Christ can do wonders such as miracles, all these are done by God through Him as God’s instrument.”

X. The Holy Spirit – Is He God or God’s force?

Bible: The Holy Spirit is a Person (not a force) as stated in the following Scriptures.

1. Does a force have an intellect?

a. “But God has revealed *them* to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.” (1 Corinthians 2:10)

b. “The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.” (Isaiah 11:2)

2. Does a force have emotion?

“But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; So He turned Himself against them as an enemy, *And* He fought against them.” (Isaiah 63:10)

3. Does a force have a will?

“But one and the same Spirit works all things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.” (1 Corinthians 12:11)

INC: The Holy Spirit is only a force that comes from God. “We believe that the Holy Spirit is the power that is sent by the Father in the name of Christ.”

XI. Is Salvation by faith alone or by good works?

Bible: One is saved by faith alone apart from works.

1. “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.” (Romans 3:28)

2. “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Ephesians 2:8–9)

INC: Salvation is not attained by faith alone. “We do not believe that salvation can be attained only by faith alone.”

XII. Is Church membership needed for salvation?

Bible: Entry into The Church is by means of the baptism of the Holy Spirit—not church membership.

1. “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.’” “Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (John 3:3, 7).

2. “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all have been made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:13)

INC: Church membership is necessary for salvation. “We believe that membership in the Church is necessary for salvation.”

XII. Should churchgoers question church teachings and administrations or accept them without questioning?

Bible: The Christian must examine church teachings and administrations to see if they are Biblical.

1. “Test all things; hold fast what is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:21)

2. “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1)

INC: Unquestionable submission. “Each member should submit to the Administration placed by God in the Church by means of total agreement with the teachings and rules observed in the Church of Christ.”

XIV. Is persecution a basis for inheriting the Kingdom of God?

Bible: *Persevering in the Christian life does not give one salvation. Rather, it produces character and hope in a Christian’s life.*

1. “And not only *that*, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.” (Romans 5:3–4)

2. “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” (James 1:2–3)

INC: Persecution is the basis for inheriting one's salvation.

"Persecutions cannot be avoided because overcoming it serves as basis for inheriting the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:10–12). Thus whatever kind or extent of persecution a member of the Church of Christ may face, he should not falter or withdraw. He should instead pray to God for assistance in order to overcome religious persecutions."

XV. Do good works gain our salvation, or do they proclaim our salvation?

Bible: Good works (Fruit of the Spirit) proclaim a person's salvation.

1. "that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing *Him*, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy" (Colossians 1:10–11).

2. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law." (Galatians 5:22–23)

INC: Good works gains one's salvation. "We believe that being a member of the church is not enough to be saved. One should lead a new life, and should obey all the teachings of God until the end."

XVI. Is preaching the word solely for the preacher or for the preacher and laymen?

Bible: All believers are called to preach the gospel.

1. "How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good *things*, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'" (Isaiah 52:7)

2. "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Romans 10:14)

3. "Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching." (2 Timothy 4:2)

INC: Only ministers are to preach the gospel. "We believe that ministers are the ones who have the authority to preach the gospel through the guidance of the holy spirit [sic]. We members do not preach."

XVII. Baptism

Bible: Believing in the gospel (Christ's death, burial, and resurrection) is the only means of salvation—not baptism.

1. "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect." (1 Corinthians 1:17)

2. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." (Romans 1:16)

INC: Baptism is a means of salvation. "We believe that baptism by means of immersion is necessary for salvation."

XVIII. Will the End Time judgment be based upon one's salvation, or by attending the "True Church, INC"?

Bible: One's salvation is solely based upon individually accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

1. "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" (John 14:6)

2. "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3)

3. "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12)

INC: One is saved by being a member of the INC at the end times. "Whatever you will experience and encounter in this life, you shall not separate from the Church of Christ. Strive to be found here when the end comes so that you can be assured of salvation on the day of Judgment." (p. 134)

XIX. Concerning offerings or contributions: Will giving financial offerings in the church help lay up a foundation for the attainment of eternal life?

Bible: It is true that one should give free will offerings in the church out of one's heart. But this in no way contributes to the 'attainment of eternal life' (one's salvation).

1. *God loves a cheerful giver.* "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

2. *Being a cheerful giver does not save one.* “But we are all like an unclean *thing*, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away.” (Isaiah 64:6)

3. “not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5).

INC: Giving offerings in church is to lay up a good foundation for attainment of eternal life. “The Church of Christ believes that it is God who gave the command to contribute and give thanksgiving offerings to support the needs of the Church. To fulfill these obligations is to lay up a good foundation for the attainment of eternal life.”

Conclusion

The Iglesia Ni Cristo is far from being a Bible based orthodox Christian denomination. It denies almost every sound doctrine of the Christian faith regarding God in general, Christ, the Holy Spirit, man, salvation, the church, Baptism, and so on. Therefore, Iglesia Ni Cristo should not be accepted as a biblical orthodox Christian denomination.

QUIZ: RELIGION ANALYSIS SERVICE (RAS)

1. : RAS is headquartered in:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| <u>a.</u> Cleveland | <u>c.</u> Minneapolis |
| <u>b.</u> Salt Lake City | <u>d.</u> New York City |

2. : RAS was founded in:

- | | |
|----------------|----------------|
| <u>a.</u> 1874 | <u>c.</u> 1975 |
| <u>b.</u> 1914 | <u>d.</u> 1946 |

3. The founder of RAS was:

- | | |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <u>a.</u> E. B. Jones | <u>c.</u> R. V. Clearwater |
| <u>b.</u> William Bell Riley | <u>d.</u> David W. Cloud |

4. The current President of RAS is:

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| <u>a.</u> Donald J. Trump | <u>c.</u> Steve Lagoon |
| <u>b.</u> Scott Harvath | <u>d.</u> Matt Morrell |

5. The quarterly journal published by RAS since 1947 is:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>a.</u> Sundown on the Cults | <u>c.</u> The Discerner |
| <u>b.</u> The Spotlight on Heresy | <u>d.</u> Truth or Consequences |

6. RAS describes its ministry as:

- a. A Christian apologetics and Counter-Cult ministry
- b. Heresy-hunters extraordinary
- c. Lie-detectors for Jesus
- d. Draining the spiritual swamp

7. Who was not a president of RAS:

- | | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>a.</u> Dr. Gray Barnhouse | <u>c.</u> Dr. William BeVier |
| <u>b.</u> Dr. Ron McRoberts | <u>d.</u> Professor John Dahlin |

8. E. B. Jones, the founder of RAS was:

- a. A former Christian Scientist
- b. A former Seventh Day Adventist
- c. A former Minnesota Viking
- d. A former Mormon

9. Which is not true of RAS's website:

- a. Has a free archive of past articles
- b. Great links page to counter-Cult apologetics ministries
- c. Contains the RAS Doctrinal statement
- d. Great tips on taking care of pets

10. Which is not true of RAS?

- a. Strongly defends biblical truth
- b. Supports the local church.
- c. Exposes false teachers and cults
- d. Committed to reducing traffic jams

Answers:

1. c; 2. d; 3. a; 4. c; 5. c; 6. a; 7. a; 8. b; 9. d; 10. d

Personal Notes on the Articles:

Please feel free to email us at info@ras.org if you have any questions or comments.

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