

– *POSSIBILITIES PHASE TWO* –
A TRUE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

In this Possibility, we propose that the next phase in effecting positive and lasting changes in the Watchtower organization is to allow the development of a true Christian fellowship based solely on the plain and open teachings of Jesus, as described in the drama, **A Prelude to Leadership**. We believe change based on anything else would be short lived, and the brothers and sisters will eventually find themselves in the same situation they currently are in, with nothing more than a new governing body directing their worship.

This has been demonstrated countless times throughout Christian history. Nearly every reform movement eventually reverted back to a type of authoritative religion of priest and so-called reverent men doling out ‘spiritual food’ to a complacent flock of followers. This cycle must come to an end. As has often been mentioned, it is insanity to keep repeating the same thing and expecting a different result. At some point, there must be a return to the religion Jesus practiced and promoted – a true Christian fellowship of brothers and sons of God. This is the best and only way of assuring that the Christ remains the head of the congregation and is never usurped by men.

In order to understand what a true Christian fellowship is, one must first come to appreciate the difference between spirituality and religion. Once that is understood, the identity and purpose of a true Christian fellowship becomes abundantly clear.

Spirituality vs. Religion

Spirituality, in its simplest form, is the relationship one has with God. It is where we build our faith; where we place our hopes; where we consecrate our lives; where we worship and pray. Spirituality is what Jeremiah prophesied about when he wrote:

“For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares Jehovah. **“I will put my law within them, and in their heart I will write it.** And I will become their God, and they will become my people. And they will no longer teach each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, ‘Know Jehovah!’ **for they will all know me,** from the least to the greatest of them,” declares Jehovah. “For I will forgive their error, and I will no longer remember their sin.” – *Jeremiah 31:33-34*

Spirituality is what Jesus had in mind when he said:

“Happy are those **conscious of their spiritual need**, since the Kingdom of the heavens belongs to them. . . . Happy are those **hungering and thirsting for righteousness**, since they will be filled. . . . Happy are the **pure in heart**, since they will see God.” – *Matthew 5:3, 6, 8*

And spirituality is what Paul had in mind when he wrote:

“Now because you are sons, God has sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, and it cries out: “Abba, Father!” So you are no longer a slave but a son; and if a son, then you are also an heir through God.” – Galatians 4:6-7

Spirituality is personal and must be cultivated, nurtured, grown, and evolved over time – time spent in personal communion with God by means of spirit. As Jeremiah wrote, spirituality is not taught by others. It is as Jesus promised:

“However, when that one comes, the spirit of the truth, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak of his own initiative, but what he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things to come. That one will glorify me, because he will receive from what is mine and will declare it to you.” – John 16:13-14

It is as the Apostle John wrote:

“I write you these things about those who are trying to mislead you. And as for you, the anointing that you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to be teaching you; but the anointing from him is teaching you about all things and is true and is no lie. Just as it has taught you, remain in union with him.” – 1 John 2:26-27

Spirituality comes from no man; it comes from the spirit of God that dwells within each one of us (*1 Corinthians 3:16*), and is ignited by the Spirit of Truth given by Jesus as Paul wrote:

“The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God’s children.” – Romans 8:16

From this we know that we cannot gain spirituality ‘in church.’ No priest, pastor, reverend, elder or other spiritual advisor can teach us spirituality. It is a personal lesson given by means of spirit.

On the other hand, religion can be defined as the social expression of our spirituality. Religion is where we demonstrate to others in our daily activities the nature and quality of our spirituality. Religion is where we prove what sort of spiritual persons we are; where we manifest what we believe in; and where we walk the spiritual path we have chosen.

Religion is what Jesus had in mind when he said:

**“You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world.
. . . Likewise, let your light shine before men, so that they may see**

your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens.” – *Matthew 5:13, 14, 16*

Religion is what Jesus demonstrated when he washed the feet of the apostles:

“Do you understand what I have done to you? You address me as ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are correct, for I am such. Therefore, if I, the Lord and Teacher, washed your feet, you also should wash the feet of one another. **For I set the pattern for you, that just as I did to you, you should also do.**” – *John 13:12-15*

And religion is what Paul and Peter had in mind when they wrote:

“So, then, as long as we have the opportunity, **let us work what is good toward all**, but especially toward those related to us in the faith.” – *Galatians 6:10*

“Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, consider what sort of people you ought to be **in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion.**” – *2 Peter 3:11*

In summary, we can say that spirituality is internal; whereas religion is an outreach. Spirituality is where we consecrate ourselves to do God’s will; whereas religion is where we actually do it! These two aspects are defined and enveloped in the two great commandments:

[*Spirituality*] “‘You must love Jehovah your God with your whole heart and with your whole soul and with your whole mind.’ This is the greatest and first commandment.”

[*Religion*] “The second, like it, is this: ‘You must love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments the whole Law hangs, and the Prophets.” – *Matthew 22:37-40*

Thus, spirituality is experienced individually; whereas religion is experienced from the spiritual individual outward. Spirituality **cannot** be taught and religion **need not** be taught since religion is the natural expression of one’s spirituality. And, consequently, the quality of our religious activities in serving others and doing good to our neighbors is a reflection of the quality of our spirituality. If our religion is perfunctory or done begrudgingly, it is a demonstration that our spirituality is weak or non-existent. Conversely, if our religion is joyful and our interaction with our fellow man is genuine, that is a demonstration that our spirituality is alive and well!

We can see that both spirituality and religion can be practiced by an individual who simply goes about his daily activities treating others as he wants to be treated – the so-called ‘Golden Rule’ that Jesus left with his disciples:

“All things, therefore, that you want men to do to you, you also must do to them. This, in fact, is what the Law and the Prophets mean.” – *Matthew 7:12*

From this, we can see that one does not need to join with others in order to be either spiritual or religious. Yet there is great value in joining with others. More good can be done by a community of spiritual people than by one spiritual person. Jesus, being a perfect example of spirituality and religion was not content to practice his religion alone. He sought out others to practice his religion with him. That is the nature of a true Christian fellowship.

The Nature of a True Christian Fellowship

A true Christian fellowship can best be defined as a group of spiritual people gathering together to accomplish a religious purpose. A true Christian fellowship cannot **give** spirituality or religion, though it should be a place where spirituality and religion is demonstrated and encouraged.

The Apostle Paul described a true Christian fellowship when he wrote:

“And let us consider one another so as to incite to love and fine works, not forsaking our meeting together, as some have the custom, but encouraging one another, and all the more so as you see the day drawing near.” – *Hebrews 10:24-25*

Christians should gather together for a purpose – to incite one another to demonstrate love and fine works toward others. It is not merely a meeting of like minded people where they simply discuss the hope they hold in common. It is not merely a lecture or a classroom setting with teacher and pupils. And it certainly is not a place for self-aggrandizing propaganda as a ‘chosen people’ or a ‘chosen denomination,’ nor an occasion to judge the faith of others. Christians are to gather **to do something** – to further the will of God. This ‘something’ could be any number of things, feeding the hungry, tending to the sick, caring for the needs of the poor, and things like these just as Jesus and the early Christians did. And, most importantly, they preach the good news of liberty and freedom to all mankind – the ministry of reconciliation:

“But all things are from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and **gave us the ministry of the reconciliation**, namely, that God was by means of Christ reconciling a world to himself, not counting their offenses against them, and he entrusted to us the message of the reconciliation. Therefore, **we are ambassadors substituting for Christ**, as though God were making an appeal through us. As substitutes for Christ, we beg: “Become reconciled to God.” – *2 Corinthians 5:18-20*

Yes, a true Christian fellowship is a meeting of ambassadors of the Kingdom of the Heavens, doing the will of God and carrying out the ministry Jesus carried out, substituting in his place while he is physically absent until his return.

“Go, therefore, and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, **teaching them to observe all the things I have**

commanded you. And look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things.” – *Matthew 28:19-20*

In this, we must admit, Jehovah’s Witnesses got it right, but their message needs to be corrected and their ministry needs to widen out beyond preaching and teaching, into serving the needs of the communities in which they exist. Christian churches, Kingdom Halls, temples, synagogues, etc., should be community centers for service of all kinds – anything that uplifts the condition of man.

They can also be schools of instruction of ‘the sayings of Jesus’ (*Matthew 7:24-27*) and ‘the things Jesus taught’ (*Matthew 28:20*), but they are not places where the teachings of men are expounded (*Galatians 1:6-9*), nor where one’s spirituality is defined, judged or constrained.

“However, the spiritual man examines all things, but he himself is not examined by any man.” – *1 Corinthians 2:15*

No priest, reverend, elder or leader of any kind is the master over another’s faith, nor are they authorized to interject themselves into the personal decisions of others. Those who take a leadership position in a true Christian fellowship are only administrators organizing a ministry. They can provide personal counsel **when asked**.

“Is there anyone sick among you? **Let him call the elders** of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, applying oil to him in the name of Jehovah.” – *James 5:14*

And they can attempt to readjust others when their conduct interferes with the fellowship’s purpose of carrying out the ministry:

“But now I am writing you to stop keeping company with anyone called a brother who is sexually immoral or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man. For what do I have to do with judging those outside? **Do you not judge those inside, while God judges those outside?** “Remove the wicked person from among yourselves.” – *1 Corinthians 5:11-13*

But such men have no authority over the households of others or over what people do in their personal lives outside of the fellowship arrangement. Those who take the lead are not spiritual police. There is nothing in the Christian writings that authorizes any man to micro-manage the affairs of another. Quite to the contrary:

“Not that we are the masters over your faith, but we are fellow workers **for your joy**, for it is **by your faith** that you are standing.” – *2 Corinthians 1:24*

As Paul explained, no leader, other than Christ, died for us, nor were we baptized in the name of any man other than Christ Jesus. (*1 Corinthians 1:13*) But this folly of taking on the

role of Christ as leader and mediator for a congregation of Christians is the reason why the Watchtower organization has caused so much pain and sorrow and why it is facing so many difficult legal problems.

It should also be noted that a true Christian fellowship should not involve itself in politics. While an individual Christian is free to participate in the affairs of their community, their state, or their nation as a natural part of citizenship, religious collectivism when it is directed toward a political purpose is nothing more than a political party. This is what the Christian writings discourage.

A true Christian fellowship should steer clear of those types of entanglements, and remain true to their ministerial purpose of ‘inciting one another to love and fine works.’ They are ambassadors of the heavenly kingdom, not spokesmen for a political ideology or for a religious organization.

The Error of the Watchtower Congregational Arrangement

The practice of the Watchtower organization to have elders police the affairs of the members of the congregation has resulted in untold distress, humiliation and suffering. Their rules on holidays, education, employment, medical care, entertainment, intimacies of marriage partners, confession of sins, and who constitutes ‘good association’ have not resulted in a ‘clean’ congregation. As did the hundreds of personal rules of the scribes and Pharisees, the rules of the Watchtower organization have provided a breeding ground for hypocrisy. From what we have learned, most Witnesses secretly violate many of these manmade rules but put on a pretense for the elders and overseers. And even though the brothers and sisters are, in fact, free to do many of the things prohibited by the organization, their spirituality suffers because they are not living their lives in truth.

How wonderful it would be if the Watchtower organization could declare a worldwide Jubilee for Jehovah’s Witnesses, releasing them from the many rules, regulations and restrictions that are burdening them! How wonderful it would be if they would ‘send the crushed ones away free’ – those who have been marked, disfellowshipped, or disassociated – so that they can return to their families and friends (*Leviticus 25:10*), and even the congregation, if they so choose! And how wonderful it would be if they would ‘release the captives’ – those who remain in the congregations out of fear of being disfellowshipped – so they can choose to stay or go without any theocratic repercussion!

In most cases, this is quite possible and should be done without haste! However, in some limited cases this is not possible. Because the Watchtower organization has thrust itself into the personal affairs of others, it has unwittingly incurred legal liability that is not so easy to extricate themselves from. For example, ordinarily a Christian fellowship has no responsibility to make sure the congregations are free of those who are considered ‘bad association.’ But when a fellowship has taken on that responsibility, it will be held accountable to carry out that duty without negligence. This is the primary reason the Watchtower organization is being held legally responsible for the actions of certain unsavory members of the congregations.

A true Christian fellowship can avoid that liability by encouraging its members to be responsible for their own conduct. When our brothers and sisters know that they are the faithful sons of God and accountable directly to the Father and Christ Jesus, they are more inclined to live in truth, for they will know that they cannot hide their errors. They will keep in mind that the Spirit is real and the plain and open teaching of Jesus are powerful.

“For the word of God is alive and exerts power and is sharper than any two-edged sword and pierces even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of joints from the marrow, and is able to discern thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is not a creation that is hidden from his sight, but all things are naked and openly exposed to the eyes of the one to whom we must give an account.”
– *Hebrews 4:12-13*

Those who want to ‘practice’ sin to the detriment of others will not last long in a true Christian fellowship. They will become quickly exposed and will flee from you when they realize they cannot prevail over the sons of God.

A true Christian fellowship will also allow our brothers and sisters the freedom and responsibility to report criminal behavior to the appropriate law enforcement agencies, rather than trying to handle these matters internally. Elders are not spiritually authorized nor, in most cases, technically qualified to handle criminal matters or make decisions as to the personal affairs of others. So much pain and heartache could be avoided in the future by establishing a true Christian fellowship that keeps its focus on being ambassadors of the Kingdom of the Heavens.

And when all the mundane rules of men are lifted from their shoulders, what a relief our brothers and sisters will experience! They will be able to exercise the freedom of the children of God and make personal decisions that are best for themselves and their families. Then they will understand Jesus’ promise that his ‘yoke is kindly and his load is light!’ (*Matthew 11:30*)

A New Era

If only the Watchtower organization could follow the example set out in the drama, **A Prelude to Leadership**, and allow the formation of a true Christian fellowship of the sons of God without interference. In a short time, the faith of our brothers and sisters will be revived and joy, rather than distress, will dominate in the congregations. As has already been demonstrated, in congregations where the sons of God are flourishing, there are no judicial matters, the brothers and sisters freely associate and enjoy a meaningful ministry. This can be duplicated across the world in a very short time if the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses have the humility and the courage to act.

A true Christian fellowship would be unique in the world of Christianity and would constitute a return to the religion Jesus practiced and promoted. Such a selfless and humble act by the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses can ignite the world of Christianity to likewise develop true Christian fellowships based solely on the plain and open teachings of Jesus, serving their communities according to its needs and bearing witness to our Lord and Sovereign Christ Jesus, and the wonderful heavenly kingdom that awaits all.

We wonder what our brothers and sisters among Jehovah's Witnesses think of this possibility? Is it a real possibility? Can it be accomplished? We believe so. But if it is to happen, it will take the faith and courage of not only the Governing Body, but each individual Witness. If top down change does not occur, bottom up change is still possible.... if we have the faith.

We welcome your comments.

“Elaia Luchnia”