

Is the Iglesia ni Cristo Teaching the Truth? (Part 1)

By Justyn M.

Comment:

Good day to every one! I am a member of the Iglesia ni Cristo (INC), and I do believe I am on the right path. I found no other church that truly teaches the word of God. Every doctrine the INC teaches is written in the Bible, no doubt. I have heard the teachings of the Catholics, the Protestants, the Baptists... but only in the Church of Christ that I've heard the truth. You say that INC is a false religion, where should man belong? For me, in Jesus Christ's body (the church) man should belong. There are so many religions in this world but only in this church I found Jesus---for real. My greatest dream in life is to be in heaven... I love you all... God bless us!!!

Response:

When you said the words, "I do believe I am on the right path" I can picture that you are speaking from the heart. However sincere a person is from his heart, sincerity still cannot be a basis for a person to gain eternal life. Of course, no cult group will ever admit that they are of the devil and all of them will always say they are of God. The apostle Paul reminded us, "And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light." (2 Cor. 11:14) The Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) will always be heard thumping at the back of their pulpits and announcing on their radio and television programs that they are the "true church." Is this claim valid? Are they really teaching the truth? Let's check their Pasugo magazines and place it under the lense of truth and scrutinization.

Misquoting A Religious Researcher

Pasugo Special Issue July 1997, pp. 12-13: INC writer Isabelo Crisostomo wrote, "In a book entitled *Filipino Religious Psychology* edited by Leonardo N. Mercado, it is stated: 'This type of power passed on to Erano, who, in order to maintain the society would have to be as strong and competent as the man before him. From the very start Erano was being trained for a high position... The Iglesia ni Kristo (sic) has been gaining more and more adherents everyday through the exceptional administrative abilities of Manalo. He has been described as an efficient leader, possessing mastery in organization (Sta. Romana, 1955 and *Asia Magazine*, 1965).'"

By cutting the above paragraph from Leonardo N. Mercado's book, it seems the author is commending Erano Manalo for his type of leadership prowess. But is this really a positive comment or a negative one? Let's see the full quotation from the said book.

The Full Quotation: "Manalo is considered to be a leader of singular powers (Sta. Romana, 1955; Quijano de Manila, 1963; Asis, 1963; and Trinidad, 1970) that even in the absence of written laws, the Church is guided by the pronouncements of the Supreme Brother. Casual comments made by the members of the INK point to the fact that all officers depend on the Executive Minister for guidance and have to wait for his orders, especially in all-important matters. His powers have been described as short of dictatorial, where he controls not only the mind but the soul as well (Modesto, 1958; Navarro, 1969; Polotan, 1965; *Asia Magazine*, 1965; and *This Week*, 1965). He is the only one who exercises authority with biblical interpretation.

"This type of power passed on to Erano, who, in order to maintain the society would have to be as strong and competent as the man before him. From the very start Erano was being trained for a high position, where he had to devote full concentration on both ministerial and administrative duties. He saw how effective this type of exercise of power was on the INK members. Erano therefore has not made any dramatic changes in the structure of the INK to date.

"The *Iglesia ni Kristo* (sic) has been gaining more and more adherents everyday through the exceptional administrative abilities of Manalo. He has been described as an efficient leader, possessing mastery in organization (Sta. Romana, 1955 and *Asia Magazine*, 1965).

"Personality development is influenced to a great extent by the cultural and social milieu in which the individual is situated. The Filipino people have been observed to have 'a very high regard for a leaders in whom they can repose confidence and to whom they can give respect' (Pototan, 1965). Perhaps, because they have been a colonized people, they have learned over the centuries to become submissive to those in authority. This is particularly true of the people in the rural areas and those who have not have the advantages of an education. History indicates that particular honor and trust is given to the one who claims to be a religious leader, especially if he shows an interest in the people and maintains that he is gifted with knowledge of God's trust (*Asia Magazine*, 1965 and Trinidad, 1970).

"The followers of the *Iglesia ni Kristo* love Manalo so much that they are willing to make sacrifices for him (Quijano de Manila, 1963; Polotan, 1965; and Almario, 1967). As he was described by Mrs. Sta. Romana, 'he looks more like a ruler of a small kingdom: beloved always sought after, adored and respected by his followers.' It is interesting to note that the members, who are mostly poor, do not resent the fact that their leader has so many cars and that the residence that he built is fabulously expensive. In fact, they take pride in the fact that they have a leader who has literally risen from the ranks. Again, the process of identification is at work in this particular situation....

"The Supreme Brother of the *Iglesia ni Kristo* is clothed with infallibility; he can do nothing wrong. Some have sought the help of Manalo even in the choices of a life partner. He, being considered as God's messenger, cannot make a mistake, so his help is invariably sought." (ARL, pp. 135-137)

Now would you say that write-up by Ms. Guanzon is a positive comment or a negative one? You be the judge. Please understand that her observation is not subjective but an objective one therefore she is not being bias.

Selective Over Lamsa Acts 20:28 Translation

Pasugo, July-August 1993, p. 13: "To be save or saved, one should come into the fold through Christ. The fold into which one should come or enter in is the Church of Christ as clarified by Apostle Paul in Acts 20:28, thus, 'Take heed therefore to yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you overseers, to feed the church of Christ which he has purchased with his blood.' (*Lamsa*)

Explanation: First of all who is *Lamsa* that the Iglesia ni Cristo ministers loves to quote? His full name is George M. Lamsa and he is proud to admit of his being a Nestorian. A Nestorian is a person who follows the belief of Nestorius that Christ had two separate persons, a human and a divine. He even claimed the original language of the Scripture is in the Aramaic which was change to Greek despite his lack of evidences. I'm very sure the INC ministers will not agree with Mr. Lamsa's bias conclusion. According to Christian researcher John P. Juedes,

"Scholars universally agree that the New Testament was written in Greek and that we now possess scores of manuscripts which were written before the Peshitta. Most pastors have copies of the Greek New Testament (the UBS or Nestle-Aland text) which compiles readings of several hundred old manuscripts in Greek, Aramaic, and other languages. The reader can refer to this to find the names, content, dates of production, and current location of these texts. Their dates are determined by many factors, so a claim made by Lamsa that deceitful translators cut the dates out of texts to make them appear older is false. Most contemporary versions (NIV, NAS, etc.)

translate the UBS text *directly* into English (or another language), so Lamsa's assertion that the Bible was corrupted by being translated from Greek to Latin to English is inaccurate." (CRI, DL10)

The translation "church of Christ" (Gk. ekklesian tou khristos) by Mr. Lamsa is not accurate since there are also a number of manuscripts which states "church of God" (ekklesian tou theos) and "church of the Lord (ekklesian tou kuriou). Evangelical people accept Jesus to be Christ, God, and Lord. Therefore, there will be no problem with us if a scholar translates that particular passage as "church of Christ." After all, we evangelicals accept Jesus is the Christ, Lord, and God over the church, His body.

There are still many flaws and inconsistencies in his beliefs and because of this I would rather use the translation made by competent and respected scholars.

An Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) Minister's Interpretation on 1 John 5:20

Pasugo - In commenting over 1 John 5:20, a certain INC minister named Jose Ventilacion averred in their *Pasugo* article, "A closer look at the first sentence undeniably tells us that the true God is the Father since it states that the true God has a Son. Logically, then, the antecedent of *this* in the last sentence, 'This is the true God and eternal life,' is the Father not the Son. To claim that Jesus is the true God in the last sentence while admitting that the Father is the true God in the first sentence of 1 John 5:20 is short of saying that in this verse alone, there are two true Gods, the Father and the Son. Hence, it is clearly a mistake to assert that the term 'true God' refers to Christ. Even other scholars agree that it is God [ο θεος] rather than Christ [Χριστος] that is the antecedent of *this* in 1 John 5:20." (PA2004, 31)

In this article that he wrote, he also quoted the works of two prominent trinitarian scholars namely Raymond E. Brown (Catholic) and Daniel B. Wallace (Evangelical) who concurred that Jesus Christ is referred to as the "true God" in the 3rd clause. However, despite the obvious Greek grammatical construction presented by these two scholars, Ventilacion evaded their proofs and turned his attention to Wallace's comment about other scholars seeing "the antecedent is ο θεος [God] rather than Jesus Christ, even though Χριστος [Christ] is closer to the modifier *this*." (PA2004, 31. Please see note below). That is how far an amateur INC minister can do in refuting such scholastic minds of reputed bible scholars. When I was studying my Greek, my professor gave us the rule in translation, that is, be accurate in your translation as possible. Now let us translate 1 John 5:20 and get the literal rendering to shed light on this issue:

Greek: οἰδαμεν δε οτι ο υιος του θεου ηκει και δεδωκεν ημιν διανοιαν ινα γινωσκομεν τον αληθινον και εσμεν εν τω αληθινω εν τω υιω αυτου ιησου χριστω ουτος εστιν ο αληθινος θεος και ζων αιωνιος

Literal Translation: But we are knowing that the Son of the God is arriving and is giving to us understanding that we are knowing the true and we are in His (the) Son Jesus Christ this one is the true God and living eternal.

You will notice the noun closest to the "αληθινος θεος" [true God] is ιησου χριστω [Jesus Christ]. This is one reason why Greek translators believe the true God being referred to here in the 3rd clause is Jesus Christ. In addition to this fact, John made it sure that he made a distinction between the two Greek words θεος by placing a definite article του on the θεος of the first clause referring to the Father while making the second θεος of the third article anarthrous referring to the Son. This is his way of making distinctions between the Father and the Son. If you will study John 1:1, the Father is referred to by John in the second clause as τον θεον while the Word is designated as θεος in the third clause to distinguish the two nouns. We have to

understand that John came from a monotheistic Jewish background and being a Jewish Christian he does not advocate polytheism. He wanted his readers to understand the nature of the Father and the Son are the same being divine. And it is truly possible for two (or three) distinct Persons of the Godhead to share the same one divine nature being θεός and still not being accused of polytheism. Unfortunately, Ventilacion's Unitarian view bars his mind and heart from accepting this Johannine revelation of Jesus being God.

To counter Brown and Wallace's exegesis, the INC writer reasoned, "If we agree to the suggestion that Jesus Christ is the immediate antecedent of the pronoun *this* (Greek, οὗτος) because of its proximity (it follows immediately the noun Christ), then there is a danger that false ramifications would spring up from such process of analysis. Consider the following similar construction containing the pronoun *this*: 'For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.' (2 Jn. 1:7, New King James Version)." Nice try but the INC writer did not even dare to check that the word *this* (οὗτος) in this verse can be designated into different types of nominatives like nominative masculine plural, feminine plural, and feminine singular. The closest reference to this nominative οὗτος is πολλοὶ πλανοὶ (many deceivers) and not ἰησοῦν χριστόν (Jesus Christ) being accusative.

One Filipino evangelical pastor wrote Dr. Daniel Wallace on December 2005 to get his opinion about what this particular INC writer wrote concerning his comment on 1 John 5:20. Says Dr. Wallace,

"It's interesting that he would pick on this particular text. Of course, there are many more arguments than he mentioned. Further, my study of 1 John 5:20 was based on my dissertation work. Why didn't he cite all the data that support the argument? Nevertheless, even if this verse does not support the deity of Christ, that would not mean that it denies it at all. Those are two quite different conclusions. Lack of affirmation is the same thing as denial. But the reality is that there are more compelling texts than 1 John 5:20, such as John 1:1, John 20:28, Titus 2:13, Hebrews 1:8, and 2 Peter 1:1. Why doesn't he mention those? The grammatical arguments in those passages are so strong that they are virtually conclusive."

Because of these evidences we can say there is no basis for us to doubt Jesus Christ is referred to as the *true God* and eternal life in 1 John 5:20.

An Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) Writer Misrepresents Dr. Charles Caldwell Ryrie

The Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) ministers are very deceiving in their presentation, whether they speak about their founder, quote the bible, book references, and bible scholars. They are devoted to bring all Filipino people into their religious fold even if they had to lie about many things. Even the famed scholar of Dallas Theological Seminary, Dr. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, did not escape the fangs of the INC ministers when one of their writers wrote in their very own *Pasugo* magazine,

"In the annotations of his Ryrie Study Bible he had this to say about the phrase in John 1:1 'and the Word was with God.'

'In this verse the Word (Christ) is said to be with God (that is, in communion with and yet distinct from God) (p. 1599).'

"Therefore, when Dr. Ryrie says, that the Word is distinct from God he is saying the Word is not the same, but rather separate or different from God." (PA1984, 14, 15)

This INC writer wanted to show the reading public as if Dr. Ryrie agreed with their Unitarian understanding. Fortunately, one religious researcher named Robert Elliff discovered how this INC writer misrepresented Dr. Ryrie in his *Ryrie Study Bible* concerning John 1:1. Immediately, he wrote Dr. Ryrie about it and the latter wasted no time to respond last July 23, 1988 to his letter (TOTC, 82),

Dear Mr. Elliff,

Thank you for writing about Iglesia ni Cristo. Anyone can look in my Study Bible and see how conveniently (for them) this author omitted the last phrase in the note on John 1:1. The full note reads: "In this verse the Word (Christ) is said to be with God (i.e., in communion with and yet distinct from God) and to be God (i.e., identical in essence with God)." If that is not clear enough to say that I believe in the full deity and equality of Christ, let anyone read the notes at John 10:30 and 20:28. The doctrinal summary in the back of the Bible under Trinity is also quite clear.

I don't know what English dictionary the author used to substantiate the idea that distinct means different in nature or quality, but my Webster gives no such meaning.

Such lack of integrity in quoting me or lack of scholarship in the misuse of words scarcely requires responding. But if you have any opportunity to respond and correct what this author has said in quoting (partially) me, please do so.

Sincerely in Christ,

Charles Ryrie (sgd)

If you don't believe this, why don't you start comparing their very own *Pasugo* quotation in that article with the whole context of John 1:1 commentary on the *Ryrie Study Bible*?

The Iglesia ni Cristo (INC) Hides the Truth About Creature-Worship

Thousands of Iglesia ni Cristo people do not know that when they worship their own "Jesus" along with the Father, they are in fact worshipping a creature along with the Creator rather than worshipping *the* Creator alone. Yes, they may ascribe to their "Jesus" his being the Son of God, Messiah, Saviour, Redeemer, Lord, Mediator, and Man (above ordinary humans) but the fact still remains, to them he is still a creature and the Father alone is the Creator. A certain INC writer named Tomas Catangay refutes one of the critics in their *Pasugo* magazine,

"The author [Mr. Alvir] was erroneously informed regarding our objections to the belief that Christ is only the agent of creation, not even the agent of creation. Why? Because it is God, the Eternal, Who alone made everything without anyone aiding or assisting Him..." (PA1980, 21)

For them, the Father alone is the Creator while the Son was created by the former. Surprisingly, you will wonder why they have not bothered to label him as a "creature" in their write-ups even in their very own Statement of Faith in the *Pasugo* magazine that says,

Ang Panginoong Jesucristo

Sumasampalataya ang *Iglesia ni Cristo* na ang Panginoong Jesucristo ay Anak ng Diyos (Mat. 3:17), Siya lamang ang Tagapagligtas na ipinagkaloob ng Diyos (Gawa 13:23). Si Cristo ang Siyang iisang Tagapamagitan sa Diyos at sa mga tao (1 Tim. 2:5) at tanging daan patungo sa Diyos (Juan 14:6).

Hindi kami sumasang-ayon sa paniniwala na si Cristo ang tunay na Diyos. Siya ay tao sa kalikasan ayon sa Kaniya mismong pagpapatunay (Juan 8:40) at sa pagtuturo ng Kaniyang mga Apostol (1 Tim. 2:5; Mat. 1:18).

Ang mga katangian ng karaniwang tao ay makikita rin kay Cristo. Siya ay nagutom (Mat. 4:2), nauhaw (Juan 19:28), napagod (Juan 4:6), natulog (Mat. 8:24), namatay (Mat. 27:50; 1 Cor. 15:3). Subalit ang ikinaiiba ni Cristo sa lahat ng mga tao ay Siya lamang ang tao na hindi nagkasala (1 Ped. 2:21-22; Heb. 4:15)

Siya ay pinadakila ng Diyos at binigyan ng pangalang lalo sa lahat ng pangalan upang sa pangalan Niya ay iluhod ang lahat ng mga tuhod ng nangasa langit, at ng nangasa ibabaw ng lupa, at ng nangasa ilalim ng lupa (Fil. 2:9-11). Siya ay inilagay ng Diyos sa kaibaibabawan ng lahat ng pamunuan, at kapamahalaan, at kapangyarihan, at pagkasakop, at ang lahat ng mga bagay ay pinasuko Niya sa ilalim ng Kaniyang mga paa (Efe. 1:21-22). At kung ang lahat ng mga bagay ay mapasuko na sa Kaniya, Siya naman ay pasusukuin sa nagpasuko ng lahat ng bagay sa Kaniya upang ang Diyos ay maging lahat sa lahat (1 Cor. 15:27-28). Sa maraming mga pagkakataon ay ipinakilala Niya ang Kaniyang sarili na Anak ng Diyos subalit hindi Niya kailanman inangkin ang katawagang "Diyos" o "Diyos Anak" sapagkat Siya ay tao at hindi Diyos." (PA1990, 21)

In the above Iglesia ni Cristo's Statement of Faith written by one of their high-ranking ministers, they have not even bothered to inform the reading public about their Unitarian belief that to them Jesus was a creature and not the Creator. I believe the reason behind this is the fact that it grates their ears to hear that along with the Father who is the Creator, the Iglesia ni Cristo movement also worship, serve, honor, and love *a creature* which is very much contrary to what the apostle Paul was saying in Roman 1:25,

"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen."

The book of Jeremiah also reminds us, "This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD." (Jer. 17:5) Unless they acknowledge that Jesus is also the Creator/God in equal essence with the Father and continue to hold on to their Unitarian belief that Jesus is "man and not God" then they will continue to be guilty of creature-worship and idolatry. As a matter of fact, the Iglesia ni Cristo ministers get their arguments from Victor Paul Wierwille who also believes in Jesus Christ being a creature. They even quoted from his book entitled, *Jesus Christ Is Not God*, to defend their Unitarian belief. Yes, Christians believe Jesus to be man since He voluntarily became flesh and dwelt (lit. "tabernacled") among us. (John 1:14). He is also God, not in the sense that He is the Father for that would be resorting to Modalism (Oneness) heresy, or having a separate "God" along with the Father for that would obviously be polytheism. But rather Jesus has the same nature or essence as the Father and the Holy Spirit being divine/deity/God. After all, Jesus declared I and the Father are one (Gk. *hen*) referring to His essence (not function). (John 10:30)

References:

- ARL - Written by Guanzon, Ma. Angeles C., ***"An Analysis of Religious Leadership in the Iglesia ni Kristo."*** An article adapted from "Filipino Religious Psychology" edited by Leonardo N. Mercado (Tacloban City, Philippines: Divine Word University Publications, 1977).
- CRI, DL10 - Juedes, John P., ***"George M. Lamsa: Christian Scholar or Cultic Torchbearer?,"*** (San Juan, CA: Christian Research Institute).
- PA2004 - Jose Ventilacion, ***"Who Is the True God According to 1 John 5:20? The Father or the Son?,"*** Pasugo, Aug. 2004, Vol. 56, No. 8, (Quezon City, Manila: Iglesia ni Cristo, 2004).
- PA1984 - ***Pasugo***, May/June 1984 (Quezon City, Manila: Iglesia ni Cristo, 1984).
- TOTC - Robert Elliff, ***Iglesia ni Cristo: The Only True Church?,"*** (Self-Publication, 1989).

PA1980 - Tomas C. Catangay, "**Present Day Objections To Christ's Deity Answered,**" Pasugo, March-April 1980 (Quezon City, Manila: Iglesia ni Cristo, 1980).
PA1990 - Bienvenido C. Santiago, "**Ang Aming Sinasampalatayanan,**" Pasugo, May-June 1990 (Quezon City, Iglesia ni Cristo, 1990).

Note: Jose Ventilacion quoted from the following books:

1. Wallace, Daniel B. *Greek Grammar Beyond Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996.
2. Brown, Raymond E. *An Introduction To New Testament Christology*. NY: Paulist Press, 1996.
3. Loader, William. *The Johannine Epistles*. Westminster, London: Epworth Press, 1992.

The Bereans: Apologetics Research Ministries © 2005

Please acknowledge The Bereans: Apologetics Research Ministries including the writer and website www.TheBereans.net upon quoting any of our articles.