

Living in the Way

by Jim Fowler

"To be is to do" – Jean-Paul Sartre
"To do is to be" – Albert Camus
"Do, be, do, be, do" – Frank Sinatra

The issue of "being" and "doing," and which precedes the other, is an age-old philosophical consideration that goes back as far as the different perspectives of Plato and his student, Aristotle. In fact, it may go back as far as the dilemma of "what came first ...the chicken or the egg?"

The question of being must begin with the divine Being of God, who identified Himself as the "I AM Who I AM" (Exodus 3:14)—the God who IS the essence of all being. God's Being is not established by his doing, but his active doing is expressive of his Being. God does what he does because He IS Who He IS.

In like manner, the created being of God's creatures determines what they are capable of doing. Human beings are unique creatures who derive spiritual character from a spirit-source. The spiritual character of godliness or sinfulness will be evidenced in whatever a person decides to do. A Christian has the indwelling presence and being of JESUS, allowing one to behave like the *Christ-one* he or she has become.

C.S. Lewis put it like this in his book, *Mere Christianity*: "...the whole of Christianity is 'putting on Christ.' Christianity offers nothing else... the Christian is in a different position from other people who are trying to be good... the Christian thinks that

any good he does comes from the Christ-life inside him."

THE DIVINE WAY

We hear admonitions in religious circles today about "following the way of Jesus," "teaching the way of Jesus," and "practicing the way of Jesus." This sounds good to the religious folk who see Jesus as the historical model of yesteryear—who established a benchmark of behavior to which his followers are obliged to conform.

Jesus did not say, "I came to show you a way of thinking and behaving, to which you are obliged to conform." Nor did Jesus say, "I came to bring you a structure that provides the principles, procedures and techniques for the correct religious way of life."

Jesus did not come to provide a way of learning, or a way of behaving, or a way of living, or a way of serving. Jesus did not come to give us a way of doing or performing anything!

Jesus came to BE and live out the divine Way in and through those who are faithfully receptive to His activity in them. Jesus told His disciples, "I AM the Way, the truth, the life; no one comes to the Father, but through ME" (John 14:6). He is the "new and living way" (Hebrews 10:20), providing in himself the complete dynamic and sufficiency of what it means to be a *Christ-one*!

It is a false perspective to think of Jesus as a far-removed, separate and detached Savior with expectations that we conform and perform in

accord with his methods and procedures for living and serving.

Jesus desires to be the divine Way in us, as we participate in the intimate indwelling presence of Christ. Jesus, the "resurrection and the life" (John 11:25), wants to live out his resurrection-life in us.

HOW THEN, SHALL WE LIVE?

The Christian life is not lived by our best efforts at conformity to an ideal. We live by the dynamic expression (grace) of the life of the living *Lord Jesus living within us and through us*. The Christian life is the Christ-life lived out behaviorally as *Christ-ones* are captive (by faith) to the living-out of the indwelling Christ in us. Apart from the dynamic of God's grace in the living Christ, religious morality will continue to make Christianity a hypocritical laughing-stock.

How then, shall we live? We allow JESUS to live out His life in and through us. The only One who can live the Christian life is JESUS Christ. He has lived that life out perfectly once during His redemptive mission here on earth, and now, having become the "life-giving Spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45) living in our spirit (Romans 8:9), Jesus wants to live his perfect life out in us.

Having received him as our life (Colossians 3:4), we are responsible as *Christ-ones* to be receptive by faith to the re-presentation of His life in our behavior. □

Excerpted from Jim Fowler's book, The Issue Is Jesus.