

# To Sell the Truth

by Alan R. Wolcott

*Scene opens with three individuals standing/sitting behind desks labeled #1, 2, 3. Theme music plays. It is a game show. Individual faces are darkened until the spotlight pans over each face and she says, "My name is Christina Saint." Then the narrator begins...*

Narrator: This young woman recently returned from a missions trip to Ethiopia where she spent 6 weeks doing public health work and delivering babies. As a result she says that after she completes her residency she plans now to consider working in the developing world instead of moving back to her home town to join her uncle's practice. What motivates her to consider this is her faith. Remarkably she describes herself as a "born-again Christian." She is training to be an obstetrician. Ladies and gentlemen welcome Dr. Cristina Saint. Audience claps...

Narrator: And now, ladies and gentlemen let's welcome the star of our show, Ike Tawksalot!

Ike: Thanks, Bab. Welcome everyone, as you know this is the show "To Sell the Truth" where our motto is, "If it's true for you, it's good for you and good business for us." Tonight, as you heard, our celebrity skeptic, Tom Agnostic, is going to try to sort out which of these nubile young women is Christina Saint. Doubting Tommy, where are you? Tom emerges and stands next to Ike.

Ike: Looks like you'll have your work cut out for you tonight, my skeptical friend. Feeling up to it? (Tom nods) All right we can begin the first round of questions whenever you're ready. (speaking to the 3 contestants) Ladies, let me remind you that brief answers are better, even if that means you'll have to curb your instincts—heh, heh, heh! (Ike has a smarmy style!)

Tom: Christina #1, you seem to be wearing a rather large necklace pendant. Is that some sort of a religious icon?

#1: (She is dressed rather frumpily and holds up a large cross pendant). You're quite an observant skeptic I must say, Tom. Yes, this is a cross. I wear it everywhere I go to give me good luck. You know, it seems to work, too. Why, just the other day in Ethiopia...

Ike: (cuts in) Thank you #1. Tom, would you like to continue?

Tom: Christina #3, if you become a medical missionary in some developing world, doesn't that mean you'll give up any hope of earning the money and prestige that will be yours if you stay here in the US and join your uncle? What about marriage and a family? Wouldn't it be better just to send gifts now and then or take occasional visits instead of going to live there? Isn't that throwing your life away?

#3: To be honest, Tom, some of my friends think it's sort of crazy. Most want to practice medicine and reap the benefits, too. Not bad, but it usually means not serving the most needy people. On my recent trip I heard someone quote a statement from a missionary who died trying to serve a primitive tribe: "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose."

Ike: That's what I say about my hair! (laughs....)

Tom: Christina #3, I suppose that by engaging in this sort of good works you gain brownie points with God?

#3: Not at all. It's true that the Bible says faith without works is no faith at all, but the motive for going overseas is certainly not to gain favor with God. In fact, he shows his favor and kindness whether we deserve it or not by making the sun shine every day and in sending his Son, Jesus to be the Savior. But I plan to live and serve in a developing country, simply because it's there I can make the most difference for good and for God.

Tom: Hmm. Better move on. Christina #2, it sounds as if your partner here believes that people can't do anything to get into God's good books. Do you agree?

#2: Well, in my background, a good Christian is known by the things she does and doesn't do. She doesn't smoke, she goes to church and Sunday School, she says her prayers, she reads the Bible, she socializes with her Christian friends...

Ike: That's the end of round 1. We need to take a break for this important message from our sponsor....

Commercial: (Model holds up book inside a box cut out as a "TV" screen) "Tired of being told what to believe and what not to believe? In just three steps you can have your own religion and the satisfaction that you're a good doobie with the Religion Pump Primer. This little book sets you free to explore your inner being and self-esteem. Religion Pump Primer is not available in stores. Send for your copy by dialing the number on your screen now—1-888-RPP-Fund. Religion Pump Primer, because what you believe, we believe."

Narrator: We're back with "To Sell the Truth." Here's your host once again, Ike Tawksalot.

Ike: Thanks, Bab. All contestants on this show will receive 3 "attaboys" or in tonight's unique case "attagirls" signed by the ecumenical clergy association, a kosher bagel, and a do it yourself "Hallelujah!" tattoo. We're ready for round two. How about it, Mr. Agnostic?

Tom: Ready when you are, Ike.

Ike: That's hard to believe, heh, heh, heh...but ask away.

Tom: Christina #2, I'd like to begin with you this round. You were raised in a religious family I assume and must have gone to church an awful lot. Is that why you want to impose your upbringing on other innocent people, to make them suffer like you did?

#2: (Sarcastically) Right! I actually enjoyed going to Sunday School and later to youth group every Sunday, Tom. We did lots of crafts, sang songs, heard stories.... So I suppose I want to "impose" that on them for the same reason I want to "impose" good medical practices upon them. Why wouldn't I want to share what I have found beneficial with others, whether or not it happened to be my upbringing?

Tom: Touché! But let me ask the same question of Christina #1.

#1: "Impose" is such a harsh word! I prefer to think of it as "sharing" my views. In fact, in my family, we were always taught to respect other points of view no matter what. After all, don't all roads in religion point to the same destination—heaven?

Ike: I hope not! Who wants to hang around playing a harp and wearing a halo all day?

Tom: How about you #3?

#3: Well, my dad was an alcoholic but not a Christian. I'd hate to impose the nightmare of my parents' fights, screams and beatings on anyone. I never knew anything about Jesus Christ except as a curse word until I met a suite mate in college.

Tom: Guess I should try a different tack. Christina #2, why do you believe?

#2: You have to believe in something. So I looked around to find out what other people believed and decided I liked what I inherited.

Tom: How about you #1, and #3?

#1: My family has always said that because this is a Christian nation, people born here are Christians, of course.

#3: I guess I'd like to toss out the point that to be born in a hospital doesn't make you a doctor, scrub nurse, or bedpan! Faith without reasons is foolishness. But the most important reason I'm a Christian is because I found out who Jesus is, what he has done and that he loves me...

Ike: This I know, it's time for another break before our final round of questions.

Commercial: (model holds up TV Screen box with large bottle labeled "Gos-pills" framed) "Feeling confused, agitated about current events? All stressed out? Try new Gos-pills. One tablet daily combats ecumenical angst and post-modern platitudes. Yes, Gos-pills whet your spiritual appetite and stimulate your eschatological ardor. Thousands have found renewed hope with just one Gos-pill a day. Gos-pills available from Parsons Productions and your local Bible Chapel."

Ike: We're back, believe it or not—heh, heh! Time for one last Q&A to convince the skeptic which of these young woman is the real Christina Saint. We believe you can do it, Mr. Agnostic.

Tom: Thanks, Ike. I just have one question to ask each of you ladies. It's this: What does it mean to be a born-again Christian? Aren't they all kind of nuts?

#1: That's two questions, Tom. To me, born-again just means that I've got a new commitment—I started to go to church again after stopping when I left home for college. But I admit some of the guys they show on TV hollering about the end of the world do seem a bit odd.

#2: To me, born again just means I'm conservative. The church I go to is one of those fundamentalist-type churches. That's what born again means.

#3: If I remember right, born-again was a term used by Jesus to talk about the need for people to have God wash them spiritually clean if they are going to have a relationship with him. It describes what happens when God's Spirit enters someone's life—it's as if she gets a fresh start spiritually and morally. It is connected with turning to God for eternal life and forgiveness of sin through faith in Jesus. It's a popular way to talk about conversion—spiritual awakening to God. Some of the best people I know are not ashamed to be "born-

again": Dr. Billy Graham, Kay Arthur, the pastor of my church....I don't think they're nuts.

Ike: That's a mouthful! Well, Tom, take a moment to consider the answers and make your decision. Which young woman is Christina Saint? Remember, you can't be agnostic about that, heh, heh, heh. I'll give you a minute, but that's all (music plays)...time's up, my skeptical friend. Who's your choice and why?

Tom: Ladies, I must say that you have trashed one of my most cherished stereotypes. I have always thought of born-again Christians as being narrow minded, dumb, shrill, and uninvolved old biddies. None of you are that. In fact, I am surprised to be introduced to a doctor who is a Christian, but not past retirement age. Neither did I expect to find that you're involved in anything except anti-choice activities or home- schooling. But there is one stereo-type that I think remains intact—I can't believe anyone can be a Christian without growing up that way—which rules out numbers and 3. My conclusion is that #2 is the real Christina Saint.

Ike: Well ladies you've heard what the Agnostic believes—heh, heh, heh. Now will the real Christina Saint please staaaaaaaand up! (Women look at one another, hesitate, finally #3 stands up. Theme music plays...)

Narrator: There you have it ladies and gentlemen. Thanks to Christina Saint for showing that a born-again Christian is smart, conscientious and socially active, has reasons for her belief, loves Jesus, has eternal life and forgiveness of sins, but doesn't lean on her birth certificate, religious icons or church attendance. This is Bab Borker for Ike Tawksalot and “To Sell the Truth.” We believe, but what do you believe? So long!

**The End**