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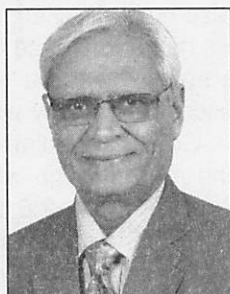
No. 4

Editorial

What Does the Bible Teach?

There Are Not Many Ways To Heaven

MOST PEOPLE BELIEVE THAT AS long as one is sincere and honest about his religious beliefs then it does not matter what one does religiously and that all religious people will finally enter heaven. In essence all humanity is trying to worship and please the same God who is the creator of all things, including man, and against whom all humanity has sinned. Yet the world is very much divided religiously. There are many faiths and many ways of different origins. In almost every religion on earth there are many honest and sincere people who are trying their best to please God and thus hope that He will open the door of heaven for them when they leave their earthly existence. But the fact is that being sincere and honest does not always and necessarily mean that one is right. One may sincerely drink or swallow poison from a wrongly labeled bottle of medicine, honestly believing it to be the right medicine and die. The poison will not save one, however sincerely it is taken. The Bible says, "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." (Proverbs 16:25). Through the story of the wise and the foolish builder Christ taught a very powerful lesson on this subject that we all need to heed, He said,



"Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father

in Heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name? And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness. Therefore, whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house: and it fell. And great was its fall." (Matthew 7: 21-27).

In this story Christ has taught that many on earth are living with false hope, thinking and believing that whatever they are doing in His name to please God, He will accept everything any way. But it is not going to be true on the day of judgment when many will discover that they were on a wrong way. (Matthew 7:13-14).

God has appointed Jesus Christ, the one mediator between God and man through whom every individual can be reconciled with God. (1 Timothy 2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21). Based on what He has done for the salvation of man from sin (John 3:16; 1 John 4:10); He declared: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6). Through Him we learn what we should do to be saved (Mark 16:16). He taught the way we all must worship God acceptably (John 4:24). He should be our example in life (1 Peter 2:21). If we want God to receive us in heaven, after our journey of this earth is over, we must hear what He taught and do what He said. Only by doing that we can make sure that we are on the way which is right and which will lead us to heaven.



HAVE YOU LOST YOUR BIBLE KNOWLEDGE?

J.C. Choate

CHRIST PRAYED TO GOD, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." (John 17:17). Again he said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." (John 8:32). But

how can we know the truth today? This knowledge comes by searching the scriptures (John 5:39), by studying the word of God (I Corinthians 10:11), and by hearing. Paul writes, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Romans 10:17).

A Bible knowledge is altogether necessary. It produces faith, leads to obedience, salvation, and freedom. It protects from error and enables one to expose false teaching. It also makes it possible for one not only to live the Christian life but to teach God's word to others with confidence that only the truth is being taught.

As wonderful as it is for one to have a knowledge of the scriptures, it must be understood that in order for one to retain what he has, he must use it. It is important that he get a sufficient amount of spiritual exercise, that he teach what he knows to others, and that he constantly add to his knowledge. Through the use of his knowledge by teaching his family, his friends, in class situations, facing false teachers, etc., he will continue to be familiar with the truths already learned and at the same time he will find it necessary to do additional study to supplement what he already knows.

Sad to say, but so many Christians have lost most of their Bible knowledge by failing to use that which they had learned. They feel that they don't have time to study, and fail to use the little that they do know to touch others. They leave it up to the preacher and Bible teachers to do the studying, preaching, and teaching. When faced with false teachers, or when someone asks them a Bible question, they have to encourage the individual to see the preacher for the answer. They remind us of those the Hebrew writer spoke of in his time: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness : for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." (Hebrews 5:12-14).

As the Lord's people members of the Church of Christ were known in past years as those who were well versed in the Bible. Members of the church could usually be detected from others by this trait. This was because we studied more, memorized more, and taught more. But what can be said of us now? From all indications we have fallen into the habits of our religious neighbours.

Many of us are as ignorant of God's word as they are. This is a terrible shame. We are also reaping the consequences. The church is not growing, many of its members use denominational terminology freely, more and more of our leaders are going off after liberalism and various kinds of religious error. This is in keeping with what Peter said, when he exhorted that we should add to our faith knowledge, and so on. He goes on to say, "For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." (2 Peter 1:8,9). God said of his people in the long ago, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge." (Hosea 4:6).

Let me ask you: Have you lost your Bible knowledge, that is, provided you ever had one? But if you did have one, and you have lost it through failure to use it, then this means that you have lost the truth, freedom, faith, and all of the other blessings that go with knowledge. This means, too, that God has lost much and the church is poorer because of it. You are like the man who did not use his talent, and in the end he lost that talent also, with God condemning him as an unprofitable servant. (Matthew 25:14-30).

May God help us to take warning and to study, learn, and grow in the knowledge of the Lord. The more we know of God's will the more we can do for him and the more effective we will be in his service. Anybody can be ignorant and most are. To remain willingly ignorant though, is a disgrace. God, on the other hand, wants us to know his will, to obey it, and to teach it to others. This is what makes people free—this is what saves.

Poor Moses?

Dalton Key

MOSES, THE VALIANT LEADER OF MILLIONS, the man whom God chose to deliver and lead His people out of Egyptian slavery, the revered lawgiver, endured a life of rejection and heartache. His troubles began in Egypt and followed him for the whole of his 120 years.

He had just successfully led Israel in their escape from Pharaoh when the Amalekites attacked. It wasn't long before the Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Amorites, and Midianites all joined together

in an attempt to block Israel's path to Canaan.

His own people were no help to him either. Though God's chosen nation had been awed and sustained by miracle after miracle, they still wallowed in the mire of murmuring. They incessantly grumbled against God and His helper, Moses. They began complaining before they were out of Egypt and kept it up even when the Promised Land was in sight. To make matters worse, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram attempted to overthrow Moses. Marah, the Wilderness of Sin, Rephidim, Taborah, Kazereth, Meribah, and Kadesh all found the Children of Israel either complaining or trying to overthrow Moses. At one point the people were all ready to stone him to death!

And his trusted leaders were many times untrustworthy and more of a hindrance than a help. Aaron made the golden calf at the foot of Sinai while Moses was up on the mount receiving the law from the Lord. Miriam and Aaron attempted to usurp the God-given authority of Moses at Hazeroth. And of the twelve spies sent into the land of Canaan, ten led the already rebellious nation in a refusal to enter. Yes, Moses had his share of troubles.

And yet, through all of the muck of murmuring and insult of insurrection, Moses emerged a better man. Inspiration commends him as *"very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth"* (Numbers 12:3). He was meek, but by no means weak. He meekly stood his ground in the face of adversity. His life served to prove the yet-to-be-written words of Paul, who wrote, *"And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope"* (Romans 5:3,4).

The next time you are tempted to complain about your troubles, think of poor Moses. His troubles made him stronger, better. The same thing can happen to you.

And They Heard The Voice (Sound) of The Lord God

Hollis Miller

FOLLOWING THE SIN OF ADAM AND EVE, God asked Adam, *"Where are you?"* Contrary to the charge of some critics that God was trying to locate the physical presence of Adam, the intent of the question was to bring the first man's attention to the consequences

of the awful thing he had done. It was as if God had said, "Adam, you have turned away from Me, and now you have reaped a harvest you cannot handle; a harvest of sin and death."

The question God asked Adam must be dealt with by every man. Until it is confronted, appropriate steps to bring one's life into harmony with the will of God will not be taken. It is because we have rebelled as did Adam, and brought death to our door, that the grace of God reached out to us with the "hand" of the cross of Jesus Christ. Truly, as the prophet declared, *"The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all"* (Isaiah 53:6).

Long ago the Psalmist said, *"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts"* (Psalm 95:7ff). So important is the exhortation that the writer of Hebrews repeated it as a warning to a later generation (Hebrews 3:7ff).

Paul declared that all men have sinned, and that none is righteous; no not one (Romans 5:12; 3:10). The apostle's declaration, however, does not mean that every man agrees with him. One who feels no sin, no sense of guilt before God, will not likely seek deliverance. On the day of Pentecost, it was the ones whose hearts had been pricked who cried out, *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* (Acts 2:37).

A heart that is hard and calloused against God's grace manifest in Jesus Christ is in a grave condition indeed. Yet, hearing the voice of God and continually turning one's ear away from it is the very beginning of a hardening heart. May such a thing never happen to any who read these lines. Today, if you hear His voice, turn to Him!

ABANDONED BY GOD

Bobby Dockery

ONE OF THE MOST SOBERING STATEMENTS in all of the Bible is found in Romans 1:26. Of certain people involved in sinful and degrading life styles, Paul wrote: *"God gave them up..."* Because of their addiction to vile practices, God completely washed His hands of them! To further emphasize their spiritual isolation, Paul twice repeated the indictment: *"God gave them up..."* (Romans 1:24,28).

What a terrifying condition! To be abandoned by God! Adding to this tragedy was the fact that these people were entirely responsible for their hopeless condition. They brought it upon themselves! They had been abandoned by God only after they had first abandoned

Him! Turning their backs on God, these people became *"filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, malice; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice... insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful..."* (Romans 1:29-31).

From this catalog of the "sins of the abandoned" three truths about sin and its nature emerge.

1. Sin is real. The abandoned condition of these people was the result of the actual presence of sin in their lives. Theirs was not a case of cultural deprivation, social mal-adjustment, or psychological disturbance. They were guilty of rejecting God's standards and attempting to replace them with standards of their own. Their sin had placed them under the sentence of divine wrath (Romans 1:18).

2. Sin is destructive. One of the great tragedies of sin is what it does to the sinner. Sin destroys the intellect. The reckless sinners of Romans 1 became "fools" in their abandonment (Romans 1:22). Sin corrupts the emotions. Paul characterized these sinners as *"depraved reprobates"* given to *"vile"* and *"degrading"* passions (Romans 1:26,28). Sin wrecks the body. Paul noted that sin had caused some of them to *"dishonor"* their own bodies (Romans 1:24).

3. Sin drives a wedge between us and God. The greatest tragedy of sin is what it does to a person's relationship with God. Sin is an intolerable offense against the holy nature of God. It is an act of rebellion against the authority of God. Those who do not repent and abandon their sins become completely and irrevocably alienated from God! The prophet Isaiah pictured it this way:

Behold the Lord's hand is not so short

That it cannot save;

Neither is His ear so dull

That it cannot hear.

But your iniquities have made a separation

Between you and your God,

And your sins have hid His face from you

So that He does not hear.

(Isaiah 59:1-2)

If you live in sin, you live apart from God. It is essential that you do something before your separation leads to abandonment. How frightening to be among those of whom it is said: *"God gave them up...."*

CONVICTION OR CONVENIENCE

Bill Nicks

WHEN THE APOSTLE PAUL STOOD before the governor Felix, as recorded in Acts 24, he preached to him of *"righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come."* Paul had been brought to Caesarea after being charged by some Jews in Jerusalem of being a seditionist, *"a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes."* Further, they said, he had profaned the temple. None of these charges had been sustained. Their misstatements of fact had been made out of hearts filled with hatred and bitter prejudice.

When one preaches the same truths Paul preached, he will often be accused, ridiculed and charged falsely. The truth has many enemies. But no amount of persecution could persuade Paul to give up his convictions.

Felix had been governor of Judea for six years. He must have known what the hope of the Jews was. He knew more than Jews gave him credit for knowing. He kept Paul in prison but allowed his friends to minister to him (Acts 24:22ff). With his unlawful wife, Drusilla, he sent for Paul later to hear him concerning the faith in Christ Jesus. It is commendable for men to want to know about Christ. It seems his desire was more out of curiosity than love for the truth.

When Paul preached to him of righteousness, self control and the judgment, he must have told him that all men, even kings and governors, must obey the gospel and enter the kingdom of God to be saved. He must have told him about the peculiar life a Christian must live, that he must bridle his passions and lusts, which thing neither Felix nor Drusilla had done.

When Paul reminded them they would have to give account at judgment, Felix was terrified. This was evidently the beginnings of repentance, but he was not willing to "break off his sins by righteousness." His answer was, *"Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call thee unto me."* He had no abiding convictions that God meant what He said, therefore he made the wrong choice. Those today who are looking for the convenient time to obey the gospel, serve the Lord, and live righteously, will never, like Felix, find the time nor the season to accomplish what is best for them.

To please the Lord, we must have convictions based on truth

which is in harmony with all God has spoken. If we are so convicted, His commands will be so meaningful that we shall do them in spite of the inconvenience to us.

Seeking personal ease and comfort has never pleased the Lord. *"Woe to them that are at ease in Zion"* (Amos 6:1). All acceptable servants of God have in all ages had strong convictions. Faith in Hebrews 11:1 is described as *"conviction of things not seen."* The word "convinced" carries with it the idea of having a firm and settled belief.

But that belief must be guided by the *truth*, and if one learns further about the truth that his former convictions were not in harmony with the will of God, as revealed in His truth, he should, like Paul, give them up for the sake of the *"unsearchable riches of Christ."*

Everyone must have convictions. We respect those with strong convictions. It is unthinkable that Christ or Paul would say, "It does not matter what we believe, or what church we belong to, or whether we have been baptized into Christ." Nor would they have condoned drunkenness, adultery, or gambling.

If we are true men of God, we will stand for that which is right regardless of whether people brand us "narrow", or "old-fashioned". Let us not be tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, but have convictions, and *"having done all, to stand."*

What Does It Mean To Be an Undenominational Christian?

Wendell Winkler

TODAY THERE ARE hundreds of religious denominations. Thus, it is not surprising that many sincere souls are asking, "Cannot I be an undenominational Christian in the 21st century?" "Is there not some way I can serve God without all the conflicting denominational trappings?" "Cannot we have the church now (21st century) as then (first century), before there were any denominations?" Hence, our present study.

In answering the question in this present study, we will give evidence that being an undenominational Christian means (a) one is not a member of a sect or party, (b) one is aligned with the Lord, (c) one is neither Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish, and (d) one is a

member of the right church, the Lord's church, the same church of which Peter James, John and Paul were members.

Accordingly, let us observe:

I. IT MEANS YOU ARE NOT A MEMBER OF ANY SECT OR PARTY

(1) *N. B. Hardeman's definition of a denomination.* "What is a denomination? It is a religious organization larger than the local church, smaller than the redeemed in the aggregate. Therefore, it comes in between separate and distinct from the church of the Bible at both ends of the line. How is the word church used? It is either a local congregation or it embraces all Christians. Now a denomination stands between these, and, therefore, it is a thing unheard of and unknown in the Bible; and, I say it cautiously, respectfully and yet firmly" (*Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons*, 1922, pp. 226, 227).

(2) *Denominationalism illustrated*, (a) *American currency*: Our currency system is divided into various denominations: one dollar, five dollars, ten dollars, twenty dollars, etc. (b) *Political system*: Our political system is also denominated: the Republican party, the Democratic party, etc.

(3) *Deduction.* Therefore, we can see from the foregoing that the word denomination signifies apart, a division, or a segment; thus, in the religious sense, a *sect* or a *party*. Accordingly, to be an undenominational Christian means that one is not a member of any religious sect or party.

II. IT MEANS THAT YOU ARE ALIGNED WITH THE LORD

(1) *Our Lord did not align himself with any party or division during his earthly pilgrimage.* There were four principal divisions among the Jews: the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians and the Essenes. Though each of these advocated some truth, our Lord did not identify himself with any of them.

(2) *Additionally, let us note:* (a) our Lord *prayed* for unity (John 17:20,21), (b) *paid* for unity (Eph. 2:16), (c) *pleaded* for unity (I Cor. 1:10) and (d) *planned* for unity (Eph. 4:1-6). And, unity is the antithesis of denominationalism.

(3) *Deduction.* Our Lord was anti-denominational and undenominational. Thus must his church be. Thus must we be.

III. IT MEANS YOU ARE NEITHER CATHOLIC, PROTESTANT NOR JEWISH

(1) *You are not a member of Catholicism. Why?* (a) *The Roman*

Catholic church did not come into existence in a full grown state until 606 A.D., nearly 600 years after the Lord's church was established on Pentecost (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1-47). Furthermore, (b) there is not a cardinal doctrine peculiar to the Catholic church that does not contradict the scriptures (Mariolatry, primacy of Peter, transubstantiation, purgatory, etc.). None of these were/are advocated by the Lord's church.

(2) You are not a member of any Protestant denomination. Why?

(a) All of the Protestant denominations of our day were established by men, upon men, and hundreds of years after the Pentecost of Acts 2. For example, the Lutheran church started about 1530 A.D., the Episcopal church in 1534 in England, the Baptist church in England in 1607, Methodism by John Wesley in England in the 1730's, the Presbyterian church during the 1530's in Geneva, Switzerland with its principle doctrines being formed by John Calvin, the Quakers in England about 1650, the Christian Science movement in America by Mary Baker Eddy, along with several of the holiness and Pentecostal sects, (b) Denominational earmarks are conspicuously absent in the church you read about in the Bible: prayer altars, voting on baptismal candidates, mechanical instruments of music in worship, choirs, universal and territorial organizations, unscriptural designations, auctions and similar fundraising efforts, etc.

(3) You are not a member of a Jewish synagogue. The Old Testament, the foundation of Judaism, has been done away (Rom. 7:1-7; Eph. 2:14, 15; Col. 2:14-17). We are now under the New Testament (II Cor. 3:6). We are to hear Christ, not Moses (Acts 3:22, 23; Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-4). In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gal. 3:28; Col. 3:11). Being a Jew spiritually, not literally, is what matters (Rom. 2:28).

IV. IT MEANS YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE LORD'S CHURCH, THE SAME CHURCH OF WHICH PETER, JAMES, JOHN AND PAUL WERE MEMBERS

(1) Being a member of the Lord's church in our day does not depend on church succession. If you have corn growing in state "A" and you desire to have a crop of corn in state "D," you do not have to have an unbroken chain of corn plants from state "A" to state "D." Rather, all that is necessary is for you to take some corn seed from state "A" to state "D" and plant the same. The results? An identical crop of (corn in state "D" as is growing in state "A." In like manner, we do not have to trace the "unbroken chain" all the way back to the

first century to make sure that we are members of the right church, the Lord's church. Instead, all we need is the same seed in our day as was used in the first century. Luke 8:11 and I Peter 1:21-25 tell us that "the seed is the word of God." If we will plant the same seed—the pure, simple, unadulterated gospel of Christ—*now* (this century) as *then* (first century), we will have the same results. You see, one of God's immutable laws is that seed bears after its kind (Gen. 1:11,12). When the gospel was preached in the first century, it produced churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16), New Testament Christians only, only New Testament Christians (Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Pet. 4:16). And, when that same gospel is preached today, it will produce churches of Christ, Christians only, only Christians. This is the beauty of undenominational Christianity; this is what it means!

Our Lord was undenominational and anti-denominational. We cannot afford to be otherwise. His church cannot afford to be otherwise.

(2) *But, you ask, "How am I going to know when I find the Lord's church, the church of which Peter, James, John and Paul were members, some two thousand years hence; yea, among so many other churches in our day?"* Well, we all agree that the right church is the church of the first century, yes, the church of which the apostles were members; indeed, the church that existed hundreds of years before any Catholic body or Protestant denomination. If we can find that same church existent in our day, it will still be the right church. If not, why not? But, again, how are we going to know when we find it? Perhaps this illustration will help.

Suppose a friend of yours had lost his automobile and was soliciting your help in finding it. However, you have never seen his car. So, how are you going to know when you find the right car among so many? He would give you a list of identifying features of the car (1995 model, Old mobile, maroon exterior, black interior, dent on the right front fender, etc.). In your continued and persistent search, you finally find a (1995 model, an Old mobile, maroon exterior, black interior and which has a dent on the right front fender. Now, you have found the right car. How did you know? Simply because you have found the car that has all the essential identifying features.

So it is with the Lord's church, the church that antedated denominationalism. We must ascertain the essential identifying features of the first century, New Testament, church. We will then need to come over into our day and search for the church that has

the same identifying features. When we find this church, we will know that we have found the right church, the Lord's church the same church of which the apostles were members. Now, as we open our New Testament to ascertain the essential identifying features of the first century church, we will observe that: (a) the church was *guided* solely by the apostles' doctrine, the church having no man-made creed, discipline, manual, catechism, confession of faith or such like, Acts 2:42, Philippians 1:27; II Timothy 3:16,17; II Peter 1:3; Galatians 1:6-9; (b) the church *worshipped* on the first day of the week (I Cor. 16:2), upon which day they sang a capella (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), gave of their means (I Cor. 16:2), observed the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7), prayed (Acts 2:42), and studied God's word (Acts 20:7); (c) the church was *organized* on a local, congregational, autonomous level (Acts 14:23), the church having elders, deacons, evangelists and members (Phil 1:1); (d) the church was *designated* "the church" (Col. 1:18), "the church of Christ" (Rom. 16:16), "the church of the Lord" (Acts 20:28, ASV), "the church of God" (I Cor. 1:2); and, (e) the church was *entered* as a result of people becoming saved upon their believing, repenting and being baptized (Acts 2:36-47). *Yes, this was the church as it existed in the first century, the church of which Peter, James, John and Paul were members.*

Now, with no intent at all to be boastful, but to be kindly clear, we affirm that the church of Christ in this century is the same church. The church of Christ in this century has the same essential identifying features: (a) we have no man-made creed, discipline, manual, confession of faith or catechism. We are governed solely by the apostles' doctrine, by the New Testament, (b) We worship on the first day of the week by engaging in a capella singing, praying, studying God's word, giving of our means and by observing the Lord's supper, (c) Each congregation is local, independent, autonomous or self-governing, having elders, deacons, evangelists and members, (d) We are designated as "the church of Christ" or by an equivalent, (e) If you were to ask, "How do I become a member of the church of Christ today?" you would be kindly instructed that you must be saved by becoming a baptized, penitent believer. *You see, a thing is composed by the sum of its parts.*

CONCLUSION

(1) *Review.* What does it mean to be an undenominational Christian? (a) It means you are not a member of a sect or party, (b) It means you are aligned with the Lord, (c) It means you are neither

Catholic, Protestant nor Jewish, (d) It means you are a member of the Lord's church, the same church of which Peter, James, John and Paul were members.

(2) A *plea*. Our Lord was undenominational and anti-denominational. We cannot afford to be otherwise. His church cannot afford to be otherwise. Her pleas is for pure, simple, New Testament, undenominational Christianity. Legion are they who are being attracted thereby and thereto. May their tribe increase.

Can A Christian Be Lost?

Jerry Jenkins

THE TEACHING THAT ONCE ONE has been truly pardoned by the Lord there is nothing that he/she can do to jeopardize that saved condition is a consoling doctrine. There is only one problem, i.e., it is not what God's Word teaches.

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (James 5:19,20). Note that this passage is addressed to saved people, Christians, members of the family of God. We know this because James refers to them as "brethren." The verse states that one who is saved may "err from the truth." It is further evident that one in such conditions needs to be converted, and if he is not converted after "erring" from the truth, his soul will die. This cannot be the first death, for all will die (Hebrews 9:27). Therefore, the passage must refer to the second death. This second death is described in the Bible as follows: *"And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death"* (Revelation 20:14).

These who have so departed can be "converted." Paul states, *"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted"* (Galatians 6:1). In our effort at restoration, it is helpful to know what caused their fall. It would originate from a number of things including: (1) discouragement, (2) a lack of spiritual growth, (3) cares of this world, (4) the deceitfulness of riches, (5) the lust of other things, (6) negligence, (7) hurt feelings, (8) being envious of the wicked, (10) pride, or a number of other things.

How are such to return? By repentance, confession, and prayer. *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,*

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22).

God is concerned about His erring children today. There is joy in heaven over one sinner that repents. When the ancient prodigal came home, a party was given. This demonstrates the great concern God has for each of His children who have gone astray.

Will you think seriously of your relationship with God? Will you realize the spiritual famine now in your life, and your lost condition away from the fellowship with the church and God? Will you say, as the prodigal of long ago, *"I will arise and go to my father"*? If you will, there will be great rejoicing in heaven, in your heart, and in your home.

David said, *"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments"* (Psalm 119:59,60).

Was Jesus Culture-Sensitive?

Joe C. Magee

"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

There is a great deal being said and written today about the necessity of the church making itself more compatible to the culture in which we live. This may be one way of saying, "Lord, come unto us on our terms, and make our burdens light, but let us choose our own yokes." They argue that Christianity of the first century will not fit the culture of the present century, and certainly not the upcoming century with all its promised changes and social developments.

Let's look at the culture into which Christianity made its bold and energetic entrance and see if culture really had the influence upon the church as some would have it to be today.

First, let us look at Greece. Demosthenes (*Against Naeaeira* 122) sets out what he takes to be the rule of life. He was not condemning, but simply setting forth what was the normal day-to-day practice: "We keep prostitutes for pleasure; we keep mistresses for day-to-day needs of the body; we keep wives to be the mothers

of our children and the guardians of our home." In Greece, premarital and extra marital relationships were the norm, an accepted part of life.

Second, a look at Rome. Broadly speaking, there was no process of divorce; all a husband had to do was to tell his wife to go. In that world, the woman was a thing, not a person, and had no legal rights. Seneca said that women were married to be divorced and divorced to be married (*De Beneficiis* 3.116). Juvenal tells of a woman who had eight husbands in five years (*Juvenal, Satires* 6.230). Jerome tells of one woman who was married to her twenty-third husband, she being his twenty-first wife (*Letters* 2).

Third, a look at the Jewish world. Divorce was a much more serious matter. The Jewish law was clear. In Deuteronomy 24, if a wife found no favor in the eyes of her husband because he had found some uncleanness in her, he could write her a bill of divorcement and she would be free to marry anyone who would have her. Jesus might have said, "Because of the hardness of your heart Moses permitted a law of divorcement and in this present day culture it would be better just to leave things as they are." But this isn't what He said. Read Matthew 5:34; Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18. What Jesus said in answer to the Jews' question concerning divorce transcended all cultures and returned to the principle set forth in Eden.

"He said to them, 'Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery.'

"His disciples said to Him, 'If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry.'

"But He said to them, 'All cannot accept, this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it'" (Matthew 19:8).

On the subject of women's role in the church, some argue that the apostle Paul was yielding to the culture of his time, a time that suppressed the values of the female gender. But we see Paul transcending all cultures and returning to the principle set forth before there were any cultures *"And I do not permit a woman to teach or*

to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Timothy 2:12,13). Obviously Paul understood the greater value of women and their role as God would have it.

If Christianity had been woven into the fabric of first century culture, it would have lost its identity within one generation. As William Ralph Inge put it, "The church that is married to the spirit of its age will be a widow in the next."

He Enjoyed Himself to Death

C. Bruce White

WE HAVE ALL HEARD THE STATEMENT, "He worked himself to death." We realize the implications and warn ourselves and others of the impending danger. I wonder if the opposite extreme has been adequately researched.

We live in a pleasure-oriented world. It is not my intent in this brief article to exhaust the implications of this situation. My purpose is to expose an attitude which may find expression in every quarter of life.

Paul wrote of this in 1 Timothy 5:6, "*But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth.*" The context is making recommendation for widows whom the church may support. It appears that Paul is impressing the fact that church business is serious.

It may be that this impression needs to be emphasized once again. It does not take an in-depth study of the church to observe the need. The casual observer of the development of church functions, action, and programs can attest to the move.

There are preachers who spend more time searching for a quaint story, a lively illustration, or a wittier joke than they do in researching the biblical basis of their sermon. The pressure is on him to perform; after all, the audience must leave thinking well of him and having "enjoyed the sermon."

It is not unusual to find the entire worship service motivated by "what the people enjoy." The songs must be entertaining, not too slow, not too many verses, not morbid. The prayers should be short, fresh, and alert. The sermon must be refreshing, uplifting, positive, invigorating, and, by all means, brief. The entire episode is underscored by the theme, "Give them what they want, or they may not come back."

The question which ultimately must be faced is this, "Is their coming back of any value?" The business of the church is serious.

This same attitude exists in the Christian's approach to life. Recently, a divorcee told me that he "didn't think that he could live his life alone." He was saying that his physical pleasure was of greater value than his spiritual well-being. It is pertinent to observe that one would be better off without a mate for the rest of life than without God for the rest of eternity. But that kind of teaching upsets people, and they cannot interpret it as reality, since it isn't fun or contributing to their personal pleasure. It is, however, very similar to the teaching of one Who said, "*If your right hand offends, then cut it off....*" (Matthew 5:30).

The frequent response to this is that the church should be planning more programs, building more centers for activities, and providing more opportunities for the members to play, rather than teaching serious lessons on how to live. The question that must be faced is this, "Will there be any **real** members of the church to occupy these places?" The business of the church is serious.

Now, am I opposing everything that is not serious? Obviously, I am not. But the emphasis of the church needs scrutiny. We must be alert to the pressure to "*conform to this present generation.*" We cannot be guilty of reading "*they will follow their own lusts and heap to themselves teachers who will scratch their ears*" (2 Timothy 4:3), and then practice the error.

Paul wrote to the church at Corinth and insisted on an introspection. In 1 Corinthians 16:13 he charged them, "*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*" The emphasis in this verse is to distinguish between behaving as men (courageous, strong, mature) and as children, or weaklings. Surely, we do no harm to this text by saying that Paul wants the church to "get serious." Maybe that is what we need to hear today. We don't want to be found "enjoying ourselves to death."

The Uniqueness of Baptism

T. Pierce Brown

IT IS TRUE THAT WHEN THE Apostles preached to sinners, we never find a sermon which could be properly entitled, "Baptism". That has led some to conclude, "We should preach Christ and forget about baptism." That conclusion is unwarranted for the simple

reason that in the New Testament record, *no one ever preached Christ without emphasizing baptism!* We need to understand the uniqueness of baptism.

- **Baptism is unique in that it is mentioned in every case of conversion recorded in the New Testament.** As important as faith and repentance are, they are not mentioned in every case, but baptism is.

- **Baptism is unique in the prominence given it in other ways.** All four Gospel records mention that Jesus was baptized.

Its prominence is indicated in the fact that Jesus had just said, *"All authority has been given to Me..."* when He commanded baptism (Matthew 28:18,19). That command is among His last recorded words. If you were at the bedside of your father when he died, his last words to you would probably be prominent in your memory.

That command's prominence is shown by the contrast between those who accepted and those who rejected it. Luke 7:29,30 shows that the Scribes and Pharisees thus rejected the counsel of God against themselves, as did Felix, Agrippa, and all wicked men who rebelled against the authority of God. In contrast, Acts 2:41 shows that those who gladly received His Word were baptized. That number eventually included Paul, Cornelius, the Philippian jailer, and all others who wanted to do the will of Christ.

- **Baptism is unique in the fact that it needs to be done only once, if it is scripturally done in the first place.** Not every baptism is by the right authority, and for the right purpose (Acts 19:1-6). These factors determine whether the procedure of being immersed in water is actually in compliance with the word of God.

In contrast to the once-in-a-life-time experience of true baptism, monetary contributions are to be made regularly. The Lord's Supper is to be taken each week. Good works are to be repeated regularly. All other Christian responsibilities of which we can think are to be done often. *Baptism is to be done only once.*

- **Baptism is unique in that there are no degrees of it.** There are degrees of faith (Matthew 8:8; Matthew 14:31), and of ability (Matthew 25:14ff). There are therefore degrees of responsibility (Matthew 10:15). There are even degrees of sin (John 19:11). *But there are no degrees of baptism!*

- **Baptism is unique in the extent to which it is based on faith instead of human reasoning.** One can, by human logic and

reasoning, see why Hebrews 11:6 is true. *"Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him."*

One can logically conclude that a person must repent of his sins before he can get rid of them. One could even logically conclude that if a person were unwilling to confess his faith in Christ, Christ would not confess him (Matthew 10:32).

However, baptism is almost entirely an act of faith, for one could scarcely understand merely by human wisdom *why* it is required. Understanding is not difficult, though, when one thoughtfully reads Romans 6 and sees how *baptism demonstrates faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ*. Furthermore, it indicates, as nothing else could, *the willingness to submit to the Lordship of Christ and be identified and united with Him*. It is for remission of sins, for at that moment it symbolically brings us into contact with His blood, which was shed in His death. However, *human reasoning* could not tell us these things. The knowledge must be based on *faith* in His revealed Word.

• **Baptism is unique in that it is the only way stated that one can get into Christ, where salvation is found (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27).** Faith, repentance, and confession are things that bring us *unto* Christ and God, as Hebrews 11:6 suggests, *"He that cometh to God must believe that he is..."* Baptism is the act that *transfers us into* Christ.

• **Baptism is unique in that all the other steps are something that the individual *does*.** They are *active*. Baptism is something that is *done to the penitent believer*. He is *passive*. Those who claim we are saved by faith only and that nothing we can do has anything to do with our salvation are mistaken in at least three ways.

First, faith is something one *does*.

Second, even those who teach salvation by faith only admit that *repentance* is necessary. One cannot be saved by *faith only* if one also has to repent.

Third, baptism is not a work you do, but *an act of submission* in which something is done *to* you and *for* you.

Baptism is indeed unique in many ways. If this study helps you to see the value of obeying the Lord in baptism, we shall be grateful.

WHAT IS MAN?

L. A. Stauffer

OCCASIONALLY, A SCIENTIST ATTEMPTS to calculate the worth of man in dollars and cents. One of them a number of years ago determined that a 150 pound person consists of 12 1/2 pounds of calcium, 3 3/4 pounds of phosphate, 11/2 pounds of potassium, 1 pound of sulfur, and 3 ounces each of iron, copper, and iodine. The rest, he said, is water. The scientist then concluded that man was worth about \$5.60 cents based on the current prices of those substances. At today's prices the value would be twice or three times as high.

Man's spiritual nature. This could be the real value of man if he is merely a combination of material properties. But man also reasons, loves, appreciates beauty, worships, wills, feels pangs of conscience and has moral sense concerning what he ought and ought not do. Are these qualities merely movements of mineral or chemical reactions? If yes, then why can they not be analyzed in test tubes or viewed through microscopes? Could it be that man has non-physical qualities that cannot be calculated monetarily? The modern world, having been bombarded for 140 years by the theory of evolution, refuses to acknowledge the spiritual nature of man. In school textbooks, in popular journals, and via TV, man has been told repeatedly that he is merely an intelligent animal. Is it any wonder he is out of control, that he is dominated by the flesh, and that he cares only for what he wants? live it up, he is told. You only go around once in life, get all the gusto you can! Get stoned on drugs, walk out on your wife and children, cheat someone if it's to your advantage, step on whoever you have to get ahead, etc.

The myth of evolution. But what if evolution is not true? What if man is more than an intelligent animal? How many people are aware the Charles Darwin in the *Origin of the Species* used such doubtful expressions as suppose, seems, appears, probable, possible more than 500 times? More than 100 years later a biology textbook used in one of the area high schools employs these and similar expressions. Evolution is no closer to being proved today than it was when Darwin wrote in 1859.

Scientists, for example, cannot prove by any experiment that matter is eternal, that matter can spontaneously generate life, and that one-celled organisms progressed gradually into modern forms

of life. It is merely assumed. Every major argument for evolution is disputed by other evolutionists themselves. As one of their own put it: "The evidence that supports it is not sufficiently strong to allow us to consider it as anything more than a working hypothesis" (Kerkut).

Man in God's image. The Bible teaching of creation by an infinitely powerful and intelligent being makes more sense than evolution, especially in view of the evident design in the universe and non-physical qualities in man that resist scientific analysis. This teaching says that man was made in the image of God who is Spirit. (Gen. 1:26; John 4:24). If God is Spirit and man is made in his image, then man has in addition to the flesh—a spirit. Biblical writers refer to the spirit as the "inward man" or the "soul" (Eph. 3:16; Matt. 10:28). It is this inward life, this spirit, this soul that no man can kill—and it is worth more than the whole world (Matt. 16:26).

This fact explains the response Jesus gave to Satan when he was tested by the deceiver in the wilderness of Judea. After fasting for 40 days Jesus was tempted by the devil to change a stone to bread that he might eat. Jesus replied: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). Here Jesus says that man is not merely a fleshly creature who can be sustained by food. Man also possesses a nature that can only be nourished by the word of God.

What is man's question. As a shepherd lad in Israel he had no doubt viewed the vastness and beauty of the heavens many times. As he did he must have often wondered what some years later he expressed in Psalm 8:3-4, "When I consider the heavens, the works of thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which thou has ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?"

Why, the ancient king in Israel pondered, had God spoken to man, why had he made and fulfilled commitments to man, why had he promised him a redeemer? What, he is asking, is so special about man that he receives attention that the rest of earthly creation does not receive? The answer, of course, is that man is made in God's image; that he has a spirit that God holds accountable for judgment (John 12:48).

God, therefore, gave his only begotten Son to die for man and sent his Spirit to reveal the gospel to man. It is man—not the rocks or the stars or the trees or the animals—that must respond to this good news in faith and obedience (Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38). In so

doing man is rewarded with life and is delivered from eternal wrath—a promise and threat that applies to no other earthly creature or creation.

Man, indeed, is special; he is no mere breathing, thinking body of flesh. He is special in God's eyes and can rise to eternal fellowship with God if he will give up devotion to the flesh and commit himself to God's righteous ways. As Solomon concluded: "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man" (Eccl. 12:13). Man, possessing the image of the divine, cannot live by bread alone. He must be nourished by the words of life that come from God.

TILT THE EQUILIBRIUM?

Jim Ward

LONGSHOREMAN PHILOSOPHER, Eric Hoffer (1902-1983), wrote: "Good and evil grow up together and are bound in an equilibrium that cannot be sundered. The most we can do is try to tilt the equilibrium toward the good" (*Reflections on the Human Condition*).

Most of us know what Mr. Hoffer was talking about. We, too, are troubled over the apparent invincibility of evil. This win-a-few-lose-a-lot world—all that is apparent to our straining eyes—wears us down.

This was the Preacher's quandary as he declared, "I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind. What is crooked cannot be made straight, And what is lacking cannot be numbered" (Eccl. 1:14-15). He and Hoffer weren't that far apart—up to a point. That point, of course, is the realization that earthly philosophy, though often cogent, is at best inadequate to grapple with the meaning of life. So, Ecclesiastes went further than wisdom "under the sun"; he trusted in wisdom from "beyond the sun," if you will.

Human eyes see that "man has no advantage over animals," just "as one dies, so dies the other" (Eccl. 3:19). Divine wisdom reveals a difference; it tracks the spirit of man back "to God Who gave it" (Eccl. 12:7). Man sees only the standoff between equity and inequity: "I returned and saw under the sun that—the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know

his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them" (Eccl. 9:11-12). Divine wisdom counters: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).

Mr. Hoffer didn't anticipate judgment, when God will do much more than "tilt the equilibrium toward the good." He will utterly destroy evil. One greater than Solomon told a parable in which wheat and tares grew intermixed. When servants wanted to pull up the tares, the field owner commanded them to wait until the time of harvest, saying, "Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn'" (Matt. 13:30).

Why do we believe this "harvest" will occur? Because God promised it and then undergirded that promise by raising Jesus from the dead. Paul told the Athenians that God "has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). The resurrection of Jesus stands as a guarantee of judgment.

Whether it is evil men gloating over the apparent triumph of evil, or righteous men weeping, they share the same fallacy: shortsightedness. Miscreants in the time of Malachi taunted, "Where is the God of justice?" (2:17), and in the time of Peter, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pet. 3:4). Habakkuk pleaded, "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and You will not hear?" (1:2); fallen saints begged, "How long, O Lord, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" (Rev 6:10). God has the same answer for both of them: **wait**. *I cannot be held to man's timetable*, He seems to say; *a day or a thousand years—they are alike to me*. *I will come and I will judge. Let that be a warning to you who scoff and a comfort to you who mourn*.

Though in this world good and evil exist side by side, it will not always be that way. Jesus promised that he will destroy evil and that he will preserve good. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!" (Psa. 27:14). After all, if we lose heart and grow weary while doing good, how shall we reap in due season? (Gal. 6:9).