

# THE BIBLE TEACHER

*Pleading for the restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity*

Vol. 21

July 1990

No. 3

## EDITORIAL



### *Who is A Christian ?*

Let us begin by asking, who is not a Christian, to really understand who, in fact, is a Christian. So, who is not a Christian ? Just because a man or a woman has an English name or a Bible name does not necessarily mean that such a person is a Christian. Some think of a person that he or she is a Christian because they see in one's neck an ornamental sign of cross, as some wear it as a piece of jewellery. Others would think that so and so are Christians, because they find in their homes religious pictures supposedly of Mary and Jesus; because they go occasionally to a "church" and observe some religious festivals, once or twice in a year, which people associate with Christianity. Another misapprehension with most people in our country is that they believe that all white people or people from western countries are Christians. The fact of the matter is that not all people who claim to be Christian are Christians, in reality. Who is a Christian then ? What does the Bible say ?

A Christian, according to the Bible, is a follower of Christ. "If anyone desires to come after me", Christ has said, "Let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." (Luke

9 : 23). One must therefore have a desire to come after Christ to become a Christian. One cannot be forced to become a Christian. Rather one becomes a Christian by his or her personal choice, by denying self and by giving oneself to Christ. Becoming a Christian is a challenge to take up one's cross daily to follow Christ. When Christ suffered and died on the cross for sinners, cross became a sign or symbol of suffering and sacrifice. In becoming a Christian one understand that he or she is expected to live as Christ had lived. (1 Peter 2 : 21). How, does one become a Christian though ? According to the Bible, one becomes a Christian or a follower of Christ by taking following steps : One must hear about Christ and about what He has done to save man from sin. One must, with all heart or mind believe in Christ that He is the Son of God and the Saviour of man. One must, after this, repent of sins, that is, change his or her whole attitude from wrong to right. And then, one must be baptized (immersed in water and come out of it in emulation of Christ's death, burial and resurrection) for the remission of sins. (Acts 2 : 37, 38 and 8 : 35-39). Obviously, all of these steps leave babies out, because little children can't do any of these things, and the fact is that they need not to do any of them, because they have no sins to be forgiven, they are innocent before God. Speaking about little children Christ taught that of such is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18 : 3 and 19 : 14). Christ didn't die for babies who can't sin, He died on the cross for sinners, for people who are capable to sin and who have sinned. Such need to become followers of Christ to be eternally saved in heaven. Those who believe in Christ and repent of sins and submit themselves to be baptized into Christ (Romans 6 : 3,4; Galatians 3 : 27), become followers of Christ, hence Christians and members of the church of Christ, His spiritual body of the saved ones, to which Christ adds whom He saves. (Acts 2 : 47; 1 Corinthians 12 : 13). Being a follower of Christ, one becomes a new creation in Christ, according to 2 Corinthians 5 : 17, and one who should follow in Christ's steps. (1 Peter 2 : 21). Through the obedience to the gospel a new birth of spiritual nature has taken place. (John 3 : 3, 5; 1 Corinthians 15 : 1-4).

A Christian, therefore, is a changed person, He has transformed his life. (Romans 12 : 2). He seeks those things which

are of heavenly nature. He sets his mind on things above and not on things on the earth. (Colossians 3 : 1, 2). When a person truly becomes a Christian, he changes his whole attitude for the world; his way of life changes; his priorities change. (Matthew 6 : 33). As the Apostle Paul testified when he said, "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ." (Philippians 3 : 7, 8). A Christian tries to be like Jesus Christ, as He was on earth, as He lived, as He behaved and conducted Himself on earth; and this is the meaning of the word Christian—CHRIST—I—AN. Sometimes people feel offended when they see someone, whom they think is a Christian, living immoral life, using bad language, drinking alcohol, quarreling, etc. The fact of the matter, however, is that such a person might have never become a Christian, if he ever did become one, with understanding and seriousness. There are some who claim that they are Christians "by birth", since they were born in a so called "Christian family" and were traditionally "baptized" with the sprinkling of water while yet babies, and perhaps were even given "Christian name" at that occasion. But this is not the Bible definition of a Christian. No one is ever born physically a Christian, but one becomes a Christian by being spiritually born again through faith in Christ and by doing those things that he has commanded that one must do to become a Christian. !

Here is what the Bible teaches about who a Christian is ? In writing to the Christians at Corinth the Apostle Paul reminded them by saying, "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God ? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God". And then in the very next verse he pointed out to them, "And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." (1 Corinthians 6 : 9-11). See the difference ? Before they had become Christian, they had engaged themselves in

committing all kinds of sins on earth. But now, as Christians, they were, he said, washed and sanctified and justified through the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross for sinners. (Matthew 26 : 28; Revelation 1 : 5). That is why they were baptized to become Christians. Again Paul said, "Therefore we were buried with him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in the newness of life.....knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." (Romans 6 : 4, 6). If you have a copy of the Bible or the New Testament, I urge you to please read from Galatians 5 : 19-25 and Colossians 3 : 1-17. From all of this we learn that the Christian life is the best life on earth. It is the kind of life that God desires for all of us to have and to live. A life in which there is hope of eternal life in heaven, because of what Christ had achieved on the cross for sinners. Are you a Christian ? I mean, are you really a Christian ? If not, you can become one as the Bible teaches. God will bless you in this life and will give you the hope of eternal life in heaven with Christ, after this life on earth is over.

## *Who is A Christian ?*

J.C. Choate

There are many definitions of a Christian. Giving a broad definition of who he is, the majority would say that he is anyone who believes in Christ. Others would describe him as being one who has accepted Christ as personal saviour. These are the ones who would agree that a person is a Christian if he says that he is one. Most would also say that there are Christians in all churches.

To be too strict in defining who he is, brings immediate criticism from many directions. They would say that in that case that one's thinking is too narrow and that would be judging.

Even some members of the church have become quite liberal and denominational in their concept of what it means to be a Christian and where Christians may be found. This kind of reasoning is the result of a lack of knowledge of God's word and at the same time wanting to be like those around them. For sure, it is popular to think like that, and one certainly is not faced with near as much opposition. Another step toward denominationalism is going along with the idea that there may be Christians in all of the churches.

But doesn't the Bible say something about being a Christian, who he is, how to become one, and where he may be found? It most certainly does, and we would do well to go to it to see what it says about these things. Man may say many things, but God's word is the final authority on something like this. And if we will not accept that, then we might as well forget about it anyway.

We have the name Christian being spoken of in three different scripture references. Acts 11:26 tells us that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch. Later, when Paul was talking to King Agrippa, he responded by saying, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." (Acts 26:28). Finally, Peter said, "Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." (1 Peter 4:16). Isaiah had prophesied concerning God's people, "And thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name." (Isaiah 62:2). Later we read that salvation is in the name of Christ (Acts 4:12). and that all is to be done in his name. (Colossians 3:17).

It is obvious that this name was the one that the Lord wanted his people to wear, In being Christians they would be Christ-like, followers of Christ. It would likewise be the name that would honor him. In view of this, how any one could think that a substitute name or a man-made name placed before it or after it could be acceptable to the Lord, is difficult to understand. Where in the scriptures do we read of this kind of Christian or that kind of Christian, using names that would honor men? We don't, and that's the point. Now to say that it doesn't matter, one is assuming a lot. If it doesn't make any difference, then we are wasting our time anyway. How absurd people are in their attempt to justify their beliefs and practices.

Then we come to the matter of what the Lord expects one to do to become a Christian. Surely there are some conditions. One can't just say that he is a Christian and be a Christian. But you might wonder if believing in Christ would not be enough to make one a Christian. No, since there are many people who believe in Christ, but they don't claim to be Christians, and of course they are not Christians. Then you would reason that if one accepts Christ as his own personal saviour, that surely that would make him a Christian. In other words, you are saying that by believing in your heart that Christ has saved you, that you are saved, and therefore you are a Christian. If that is what you are saying, I ask you, my friend, where do you read that in the Bible? I know that is the popular teaching, but if you will read through the scriptures, you will find the Lord himself, as well as the various writers that were inspired of God to write what they did, saying that one must believe in Christ, but they also say that there are specific things that one must do to be saved, or to be a Christian, and specific things that one must do to remain saved, or to remain a Christian. To begin with, Christ said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Again, he declared, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 7:21). The Hebrew writer said of Christ and our obedience to him, "Though he were a Son, yet learned the obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:8, 9). Now do you get the idea that the Lord requires that we not only believe in him, but that we must obey him as well? But you might say, "We are saved when we believe, and then we are to obey him because we are saved." Again, where do you read that in the scriptures? Hear Christ, as he says to the Apostles, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:15, 16). Now can one be a Christian without being saved? If not, then one must believe and be baptized to be saved and to be a Christian. But what if one doesn't believe? Then he will be like a lot of other people, that

is, he will be lost. But what if he believes? Then he will obey the Lord. Surely you would not deny that.

Philip had preached Christ to the man from Ethiopia, and he wanted to know if he could be baptized. Then he was told, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts 8 : 37). Continuing, the record says that Philip baptized him. So to be saved it was necessary that he believe in the Lord with all of his heart, that he confess that he believed that Christ was the Son of God, and that he be baptized. But then we read in Acts 2 : 38, after Peter and the Apostles had preached to a large group of people, and they had become believers and wanted to know what else they should do, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." The record goes on to say that about three thousand of them gladly received the word and were baptized that same day, and "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2 : 41, 47). So what do we have? We have seen that those who believed in the Lord, repented of their sins, confessed their faith in Christ as being the Son of God, and were baptized to be saved and were added to the church. Now would you say such people became Christians? If so, would you not think that the Lord required that all others do the same to be saved, to be members of the church, and to be Christians? If so, would you not conclude that all today who did what they did will be saved, added to the Lord's church, and that will make them Christians? And would you not agree that those who do not do that are not saved, not added to church, and neither are they Christians?

If you will read through the book of Acts of the New Testament then you will find many cases of conversion there, and you will also find that they all did the same thing to be saved, and consequently they were all members of the same church, Christ's church, and were all Christians only. Also, we read that all who obeyed the Lord were baptized into Christ (Romans 6 : 3, 4) and into his church. (1 Corinthians 12 : 13). And all today who do what they did will be saved as they were saved, and as a result will enter Christ and his church.

Now to say that one is a Christian when he does what the Lord says that he must do, or to say that one is not a Christian if he has not done what the Bible teaches, who is judging? Actually, one is judging, assuming, and speaking where the scriptures do not speak, when he says that a person is saved and is a Christian when he has not complied with the Lord's will.

Next, how can one be a Christian if he is not in Christ and his church, when the the scriptures say that when one obeys the Lord that he enters Christ and his church? And how can one be a Christian in a denominational or man-made church? The Lord did not save him and add him to such a church. When he saves a person, he adds him to his church. If you are in a church that you cannot read about in the scriptures, please don't risk your soul by trying to convince yourself and others, that in spite of that, that you are saved and that you are a Christian.

And finally, to be a Christian you must be a follower of Christ, and a faithful follower at that. The Lord would require you to worship him each first day of the week, to love God and your fellowman, and to be like Christ in all that you say and do.

To sum it all up then, to be a Christian, then one must obey Christ to be saved, to enter Christ and his church, and to remain saved he must faithfully follow Christ all of the days of his life. Of course there is a lot involved in obeying Christ, and in being faithful to him, as we have seen. Not just anybody and everybody is a Christian. We can't make our own rules and regulations. We are not the saviour. Since Jesus is the saviour then we must comply with his teaching, and only then, can we be what he would have us to be, that is, a Christian, a faithful Christian. My friend, are you a Christian according to the Lord's standard? You may be a Christian by your standard, or by the standard of men, but you can be a Christian only by doing what the Lord asks you to do. He is the saviour and he is the one to say. If you have not obeyed him, then please do. Only then can you know that you are saved and that you are a Christian.



# *The Church of Christ* *—What is it Like ?*

W.A. Holley

Jesus Christ did not come into the world to establish a religio-political government (Matthew 22 : 15-22; Mark 12:13-17). Thus, the Lord put a difference between the things of God and the things of men. "My kingdom is not of this world," declared Jesus (John 18:36). The boundaries of the Lord's kingdom are truth, righteousness, purity, and holiness.

The Lord's church is described by various figures or symbols so that we may have the proper concept of its divine nature. Some examples are : "Body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12:13, 20, 27); "My kingdom" (Luke 22 : 30); "The church" (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:25); "The church of God"—"The churches of Christ" (Acts 20 : 28; Romans 16:16); "A spiritual house," "a holy nation" (I Peter 2 : 5,9); "The house of God" (I Timothy 3 : 14-15). Never is the church of Christ (in the Bible) referred to as a material building, a building made of brick, or stone, or marble, or wood. In its early days the church assembled in the private homes of its members (Romans 16 : 5; I Corinthians 16 : 19; Colossians 4 : 15; Philemon 2). Hundreds of years passed before the church ever owned any real estate.

The Lord's church is like a "family." One's "house" is one's "family" (Joshua 24 : 15; Hebrews 11 : 7). The Lord's house is his family, his church. We quote : "... in the house of God, which is the church of the living God . . ." (I Timothy 3 : 15).

How does one become a member of the Lord's church or family ? It is through the "new birth." It is impossible to enter it in any other way (John 3 : 3,5). What is involved in the "new birth ?" Well, it is necessary for one to believe that Jesus is the Son of God (John 3 : 16), to repent of all sin (Acts 17 : 30-31), confess Jesus' name before men (Matthew 10 : 32-33), and to be baptized in Jesus' name for remission of sins (Mark 16 : 16; Acts 2 : 36-38; 22 : 16 ; Romans 6 : 3-4). The NEW BIRTH, as

mentioned in John 3 : 3-5, is not a birth wrought miraculously by the Holy Spirit, as is affirmed by some. Why do denominational preachers work so diligently to get rid of baptism as taught in John 3 : 5 ? The answer is, because of their denominational prejudice !

If the Holy Spirit works miraculously, separate and apart from the word of God, why are not all men saved—since God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35) ? Who will answer ? ?

The wonderful blessings of the church or kingdom are of a SPIRITUAL nature. One may never become a member of the Lord's church, yet if one is industrious, honorable and upright, one may enjoy the same MATERIAL blessings which the most devout child of God enjoys (Matthew 5 : 45). Wicked men may materially prosper, but their wealth cannot sustain them in the hour of death and in the world to come (Psalms 37 : 1-3, 6-8, 14-16, 23-28; 49 : 6-10, 16-18; 73 : 3-25).

But for the Christian there is "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" (Philippians 4 : 7). God hath "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 1 : 3). To be in Christ is to be in his spiritual body, the church (Ephesians 1 : 22-23; Colossians 1 : 18-24; II Corinthians 1 ; 20). In Christ we have "salvation" or "remission of sins" (II Timothy 2 : 10; Acts 2 : 38; Colossians 1 : 13-14; Ephesians 1 : 7).

Thus, the church is composed of men and women—but not of just any kind. All who are in the Lord's church or kingdom have been born again; they have been called out of the world; they have become new creatures in Christ (Romans 12 : 5; I Corinthians 12 : 3, 13, 20, 27; John 3 : 3, 5; II Corinthians 5 : 17). All such can say with Paul, "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me . . ." (Galatians 2 : 20). It is because of Paul's special relationship with Christ that he could say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4 : 13).

The church of Christ is a spiritual institution; it was not built for the natural man. "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up

a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by "Jesus Christ" (I Peter 2 : 5). Jesus founded the church for the spirit of man, that part of man that lives forever (Matthew 10 : 28; 16 : 26). Hence, the Lord's church shall not pass away with the death of our bodies (Luke 16 : 19-31). The gates of hell can never destroy it (Daniel 2 : 44; Matthew 16 : 18-19). Its divine purpose is to prepare man to live with God forever.

All civic organizations, all lodges, all human institutions, however great and wonderful they may be, can never take the place of the church. Death diminishes the membership of all human institutions, but not so with the church of the Lord. Note this fact : A Christian is just as much a member of the church after his death, as he was before he died (Ephesians 3 : 15; Cf. 1 : 10).

Human institutions (human churches, et. al.) may support, and comfort, and feed one's ego while he lives on earth, but beyond the grave they cannot go.

Why not become a Christian today ? It is not a difficult matter. Hear God's word, believe it, obey it, live faithfully the Christian life unto death, and heaven shall be your eternal home. Do it today !

## *God in the Flesh*

Philip C. Wilkerson

The central doctrine of Christianity is the teaching that the man Jesus Christ was God clothed in a human body. In fact, this doctrine is so crucial, that were it taken away from Christian doctrine, the resulting religion could not be called "Christianity." Yet amazingly, some religions that claim to be "Christian" deny this core tenet. That is, in some way, they deny that Christ was

God incarnate. In doing so, they unwittingly deny the teaching of the Bible which says, "in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2 : 9).

There is more than ample evidence in the Bible that Jesus Christ was God. Let us examine this evidence with open minds, for if Christ was not God, then all who believe in Him believe in vain (see Acts 10 : 43 and John 21 : 30-31).

**The Word was God :** John 1 : 1 affirms the deity of Christ by stating : "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and Word was God." Verses 14 through 17 leave no doubt that the person called "the Word" was Jesus Christ. The conclusion is clear : The Word was God (verse 1). The Word [God] became flesh (verse 14). Therefore, Christ was God.

**The Testimony of Thomas :** John 20 : 19-29 records the story of Thomas, who refused, without tangible proof, to believe Christ had risen from the dead. Christ himself supplied the proof in verse 27. This event is significant for many reasons, but we must not forget John's guiding principle for selecting the events recorded in his gospel account : "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God." To encourage our belief, John records the testimony of Thomas, "my Lord and my God" (verse 28). Thomas addressed Christ as God. More importantly, Christ did not reject that title.

**The Testimony of God the Father :** In Hebrews 1 : 8-9 one member of the Godhead [God the Father] is speaking to another member of the Godhead [God the Son]. Note that the Father uses the title "God" when addressing the Son : "But to the Son He says : 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, your God has anointed you with the oil of gladness more than your companions.'" This passage proves that prior to His becoming a man, the member of the Godhead who later became known as "the Son" was co-equal with, and co-eternal with, the member of the Godhead who later became known as "the Father." Put in more simple terms, one person of the Godhead became a man.

**The Eternal Existence of Christ :** Further evidence of Christ's deity is found in the prayer He prayed shortly before His betrayal. This prayer is found in John 17. In verse 5 Christ says to God the Father : "And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was." By saying this, Jesus himself asserts that He was a member of the Godhead before the act of creation began, He was, in fact, the member of the Godhead through which the creation was accomplished. Hebrews 1 : 2 says that it was through the Son that the worlds were made. Colossians 1 : 16 says that all things were created through Him and for Him. John 1 : 3 says of the Word : "All things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made." These verses complement Philippians 2 : 6 which states that before becoming a man, Christ existed in the form of God. When considered in light of Genesis 1 : 1 ("in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth") the above mentioned passages can only be reconciled by the fact that Christ was God.

Christ could not have been created, as some denominations claim, because as Colossians 1 : 16 points out, Christ was the creator and maker of *all* things : "For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him."

To accept the false doctrine that God created Christ as the first act of creation is to say, in effect, that Christ created Himself—an impossibility ! There never was a time when Christ did not exist, because Christ was God and God is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 90 : 2; Romans 16 : 26; John 17 : 5).

**The Worship of Christ :** During His ministry on earth, Jesus Christ was worshipped by His disciples (Matthew 14 : 33) and by those whom He healed (Matthew 8 : 2; John 9 : 38; Matthew 28 : 9). Being a devout Jew, Christ understood that to worship anyone or anything other than God was a sin (Exodus 2 : 3-4). In fact, when Christ was tempted by Satan, He rebuked Satan by saying "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only you shall serve" (Deuteronomy 6 : 13). Yet Christ received and

accepted the worship of men. Why? Because He was God and worthy of worship by men.

**The Authority of Christ :** In Matthew 28 : 18 Jesus Christ made this statement : "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth." How could any one but God make an assertion such as this ?

Together, these verses attest to the deity of Christ. They point to only one conclusion ; The man Jesus Christ was God in the flesh.

To deny that Christ is God is to deny the Holy Scriptures, for it is they alone that offer the proof. To deny that Christ is God is to deny the very essence of Christianity, for salvation is based on man's belief in Christ as the Son of God (John 8 : 24; I Peter 1 : 21). To deny that Christ is God is to deny the tri-personal nature of God as Father, Son (Christ), and the Holy Spirit—three distinct spiritual Persons—yet one Being called God (Genesis 1 : 26; Matthew 3 : 16-17; Matthew 28 : 19).

## *Modest Apparel*

**Bobby Liddell**

It is Summer that time of year when many feel the need to undress publicly. What is wrong with that? Paul said, "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works" (I Timothy 2 : 9-10). The word "modest" indicates decency, and "shamefacedness" means restraining from an unworthy act. "Sobriety" means inner government with its constant rein on all the passions and desires.

Why should we be concerned about what is worn? Why wear clothes at all? God created Adam and Eve and put them in

that perfect Paradise, in which they—its only occupants.....were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2 : 25). After the fall, “.....the eyes of them both were opened; and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons” (Genesis 3 : 7). Later, Adam said to God, “I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast you eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?” (Genesis 3 : 10-11). Verse 21 says, “Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God made coats of skins, and clothed them”.

The Bible shows plainly that public nakedness is shameful. Listen to II Samuel 10 : 4-5, “Wherefore Hanun took David’s servants, and shaved off the one half of their beards, and cut off their garments in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away. When they told it unto David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed.....” Isaiah prophesied : “So shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians prisoners, and the Ethiopians captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, even with their buttocks uncovered, to the shame of Egypt” (Isaiah 20 : 4). In giving instruction to Israel concerning an altar for sacrificing to God, God said, “Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not uncovered thereon” (Exodus 20 : 26).

As the priests of old were not to have their nakedness uncovered, so should Christians, who are an holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices (I Peter 2 : 5), likewise keep their nakedness covered. Paul says that Christians are to present their bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God (Romans 12 : 1). While clothing does not determine character, character determines the type of clothing worn. One’s character may be judged by the clothing he wears or does not wear. Genesis 38 is a perfect example of this. Judah was tricked by his daughter-in-law, Tamar, into lying with her. Judah thought the woman with whom he lay was a harlot for she was in the place where harlots, by custom, sat, and she was dressed as harlots dressed (Genesis 38 : 12-19). Women who dress as they should not, and put them in places

they ought not be, will be looked upon in that way today, and should not be surprised to be thus viewed and considered.

What is "modest" clothing? Sometimes one will say, "What is modest? Is one inch above the knee a modest length, but two inches immodest?" Modest apparel is not too short, but neither is it too tight. One might be covered from neck to ankle, yet be wearing a dress that is too tight, and still be immodestly dressed. One may likewise be immodestly dressed when one's dress is too thin, or when one's neckline is too low, or when one's skirt is slit too high. Modest apparel is neither too short, too tight, too thin, nor too low. When one dresses in such a way as to attract the stares and incite the desires of men, such an one is immodestly dressed.

In a letter supposed to have been written to Emperor Hadrian (117-138 A.D.), is the following:

The Christians know and trust God. They placate those who oppress them- and make them their friends. They do good to their enemies, Their wives are absolutely pure and their daughters are modest. Their men abstain from unlawful marriages and from all impurity. If any of them have bondwomen or children, they persuade them to become Christians for the love they have for and toward them, and, they become so they call them without distinction "brother". They love one another.

Contrary to the modesty of the early Christians, Mary Quant, dress designer, known as the "mother of the miniskirt" was quoted thusly: "Mini-clothes are symbols of those girls who do not want to wait until dark to seduce a man into bed." Theodor Reik said, "The other day the owner of one of our most elegant dress store stated that a dress is successful when it wakens in the man who looks at the woman the wish to take it off." Christians must not fall into Satan's trap. Remember the Holy Spirit enjoins us: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2:15-17).



The acceptance of near nudity has promoted the moral breakdown of our nation. Statistics show that the two major influences that trigger rape and violent assault are : (1) Alcohol; (2) Immodest dress, pictures and movies. Mrs. Walter Ferguson wrote, "I am inclined to attribute the moral breakdown to two great changes in our society. The first is the deplorable emphasis on sex in our literature, movies and press. The second is the decline of modesty among women". Consider this : In Granby, Canada, paid admission dropped 72 percent over a five-year period when the town fathers decided to stop mixed swimming by men and women in the public swimming pool. L.M. Boyd, in an article in "The Daily Mountain Eagle" (3-3-83), said : "Favourite sports among young women are swimming, tennis and bowling. Theorists contend that there's a reason. These sports in particular permit a minimum of clothing. Or atleast, numerous variations of revealing costumes. Except for those female athletes of championship caliber, most sports-minded women are said to be more interested in the costume of the sport than in the sport itself."

Someone objects by saying, "Some men will lust regardless ! I can wear what I want and if they lust, that is their problem !" Another might say, "Short shorts and halter tops are fashionable and comfortable, that is why I wear them." Still another might say, "Well, I want to be popular. There is nothing wrong with that, is there ?" Dear sisters, such excuses still do not make immodest clothing "modest", nor do they change sin into righteousness. First, one does not have to answer for the sin of another (the man who lusts—Matthew 5 : 28); but one does have to answer for dressing in a way that INCITES a man to look and lust (Galatians 5 : 19-21). Second, being pleasing to God (Galatians 1 : 10) is more important than being fashionable, "comfortable" or popular (Matthew 7 : 13-14).

Men do not have to be wicked nor evil-minded to be in danger when in the presence of nearly-naked women. One college professor noted that a normal healthy man could not look long on an immodestly attired woman without entertaining thoughts unbecoming a Christian. If one claimed to be able to so do and say, "That does not bother me", one of the following must be true, he said : (1) He is too young; i.e., a child, (2) He is too

old: (3) He is too ignorant; (4) He is not normal or not healthy; or (5) He is lying !

David was not a wicked or evil-minded man, but he was tempted and fell into sin by seeing, Bathsheba bathing in the open (II Samuel 11). How that story might have been different if Bathsheba had not so done.

Fathers and husbands, of all people, should know the effect of looking upon an immodestly dressed woman. Amazing, some men still allow their wives and daughters to publicly display themselves ! Suppose a teen-age daughter is about to leave the house dressed only in her underwear. Do you think her Dad would allow that ? Certainly not ! However, the same young lady can stroll out of the house in a bikini—which displays more of her body than her underwear did—and her father does not so much as lift an eyebrow. Something is wrong.

A Christian man has both the RIGHT and the DUTY to set standards for the women in his home. God gave him that right and duty as the “head” of the house (Ephesians 5). God expects him to carry out his responsibility, and will hold him accountable.

Christians are to be “examples” (I Timothy 4:12), not mindless followers of the world’s wicked ways. Some day, we shall give an account of the things done in this body (II Corinthians 5 : 10). Shall we approach that day as the Devil’s disciples, dressed as prostitutes ? or, with robes that are washed white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 3 : 4-5) ?

## *Conduct in the Church*

**Jerri Monasco**

“These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly : But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the

church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth". (I Timothy 3 : 14-15).

Maintaining proper conduct is not an optional concern for the Christian ! One whose faith has led him to be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins (Romans 6 : 3-4; Galatians 3 : 27; Acts 2 : 38) must understand that he was agreed to forsake his old life and commit himself to a new style of living. Formerly a child of Satan, he is now a child of God with the attendant blessings and responsibilities. Having been previously content to satisfy his own desires and to please himself and his peers, he now must yield to Jesus in everything. He must devote himself now to the pursuit of proper conduct in the church as he sets himself to the task of leading others to Jesus (Read I Peter 4 : 1-5).

What is written is for our instruction in the way of life. Paul penned, "These things WRITE I unto thee....." Remember that Timothy had been left in Ephesus to guide the church and its teachers in the proper direction (I Timothy 1 : 3-4), Even he needed to be reminded, though, that if his life were not a proper portrayal of Christian character, he should not expect others to be much impressed or motivated by his preaching. Though he had the advantage of being with Paul personally, he now has the added benefit of receiving a letter from that great apostle, which he could read and re-read as he improved himself in the Master's kingdom. Modern Christians ought to be impressed with the importance of carefully studying the inspired scriptures, for these writings can make us what we ought to be (II Timothy 3 : 14-17). When we fail to maintain the proper conduct in God's church, it is not because we don't have the means of knowing how to act; this failure must be attributed either to (1) ignorance of God's will (through lack of study) or (2) unwillingness to behave well in God's church. Either way, it is scarcely possible to imagine that we will be excused.

Though living some twenty centuries after the time of the early church, we must remember that God is timeless (Isaiah 57 : 15; Malachi 3 : 6; Hebrews 13 : 8). His expectations of his people remain constant. That we live in more modern times, with (perhaps) greater pressures and temptations, does not excuse us

from meeting God's terms of discipline and self-restraint in life. God still wants his church to be a fitting reflection of his purity and holiness (Ephesians 5 : 27). The only way we can do this is for us to be students of the word of instruction, and practitioners of the same !

The conduct of the Christian is important because of the relationship of the church to the truth, and because of what others perceive the church to be. In a time when truth is doubted, and the church is disregarded, it behooves each Christian to present as untarnished a picture of Christ and the church as possible. We must reflect the divine character of the church. The church is the Lord's, being the "house of God,.....the church of the living God." The idea that the church belongs to man, and the divine element is only secondary, is probably one reason why the church is not often seen for its divinely-designed purity. Since the Lord adds people to the church (Acts 2 : 47), then it is the Lord whose purpose must be accomplished in the church ! This cannot be done by those who are set on accomplishing their own will when God's will is just too inconvenient for them.

What sort of picture of the church does the surrounding, community receive from YOUR life-style ? "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 23 : 16). I fear that we have allowed ourselves to grow weary of this precept of Jesus, probably because it is so often recited. The real problem, however, is not the repetition of inspired words, but our forgetting that the Christian's purpose is to SHOW society what the good life is. The church is the "pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3 : 15). It upholds the truth, but it does not invent truth. It is not within our jurisdiction as Christians to modify God's truth in order to solve modern society's conscience or to justify our own yearnings for spiritual and moral compromise. Sadly, though, prominence of the human element has tended to oust Jesus from his rightful pre-eminence in the church. The result in too many cases has been that the image of the church which God wants conveyed has been colored beyond recognition !

To behave properly the Christian must be consistent with his

calling and profession. His calling is holy and his profession is Jesus (Matthew 10 : 32-33; Ephesians 4 : 1-3) ! If the church member is like the unconverted world around him, then what is the motive for the worldly to become like the "Christian" ?? Christians, by their very existence, stand out in society. "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord : walk as children of light..... And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5 : 8, 11). "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance : But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (I Peter 1 : 14-15). Certainly one who pays little heed to these simple divine decrees is not behaving well in the house of God.

Proper behaviour is necessary because the life of the Christian is an open book rather than a sealed scroll. People are watching us daily. Truly it is unfair for the world to select the worst specimen in the local church as their measuring rod for the whole; but the fact that it does is reason enough for us to be even more cautious about conduct. "Do all things without murmurings and disputings : that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world" (Philippians 2 : 14-15). Both Timothy and Titus were cautioned to so live that they could not be despised (I Timothy 4 : 12; Titus 2 : 15). This does not mean that the world will not seek and find flaws in us—but Christians must do all they can to make it awfully hard for them to find legitimate complaints ! Paul was not beyond sin or temptation, yet he did not hesitate to invite careful inspection of his life (II Corinthians 1 : 12; 4 : 2; etc.). The old Prophet Samuel confidently did the same thing (I Samuel 12 : 1-5). Many church members would not stand for such investigation of their lives to be made--yet they are "known and read of all men" day by day !! Proper behaviour requires that the Christian bury himself so that Christ can shine. Thus shall the house of God prosper !

# *A Few Questions Concerning Christian Music*

Dalton Key

Why is instrumental music in Christian worship unacceptable? Is it wrong because it is mechanical? or is it wrong because it is not authorized by scripture?

Upon what basis is singing in worship to God acceptable? Is it right because it is non-mechanical? or is it right because it is divinely authorized?

What constitutes "singing" as commanded in Ephesians 5 : 19 and Colossians 3 : 16? Is singing to be defined as any non-mechanically produced sound issuing forth from the human voice box?

Thayer, in his *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, defines "singing" in these passages as "the lyrical emotion of a devout and grateful soul." Webster defines "lyric" as "the words of a song, as distinguished from the music."

What, then, is authorized within the New Testament with respect to music in our worship? The answer should be obvious: Singing, the uttering or chanting of words, is authorized. Through the singing of "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs" we are to make melody in our hearts as well as teach and admonish one another.

Is it possible to make sounds with the voice which are not singing? Of course it is. Are these sounds authorized in Christian worship any more than mechanical instruments of music are authorized? In what way are such sounds different, or on a higher plane of scriptural authority, than the sounds produced by a mechanical instrument of music?

The reason the organ is wrong, and singing right, is not because one is produced mechanically and the other vocally. The organ is wrong in worship because it does not fulfil the scriptural

command to sing. Singing is right because that is expressly what the scriptures command.

In short, not all sounds produced by the human voice box are authorized in our worship, only singing is authorized.

The question is not: "Is it mechanically, or vocally, produced?" The question should be: "Is it singing or is it not?"

## *Repentance*

Michael D. Greene

Jesus' first recorded words of public proclamation are "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4: 17). He later informed the Pharisees that he came to call not the "righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Matthew 9: 13). As with all faithful preachers of the ages, the message of today should be for men to repent, for God commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17: 30).

Just a casual survey of the New Testament will show that repentance is a part of God's plan for man. Peter told the multitudes on Pentecost to "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2: 38). He also told those gathered at Solomon's porch to "Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 3: 19). To the fallen Christian, Peter's message is: "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee" (Acts 8: 22). We can safely conclude that repentance is as much a prerequisite to salvation, and as much a prerequisite to salvation, and as much a part of conversion, as is baptism or belief!

What exactly is repentance? The Greek word translated "repent" (*metanoeo*) means literally to have another mind, or to

change one's mind about a matter. Thayer defines it in these words: "to change one's mind for the better, heartily to amend with abhorrence of one's past sins."

An excellent illustration of repentance is found in the account of Jonah and the people of Nineveh. When Jonah finally preached the appropriate message, the people of Nineveh "believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth from the greatest of them to the least of them" (Jonah 3 : 5). The king, who also donned sackcloth and ashes, proclaimed that all the people should "cry mightily unto God : yea, and let them turn everyone from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands" (Jonah 3 : 8). The result : "God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not" (Jonah 3 : 10). Of this action our Lord said : "The men of Nineveh . . . REPENTED at the preaching of Jonah" (Matthew 12 : 41).

In the letter to the church at Ephesus, the risen Lord said : "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works" (Revelation 2 : 5). From these examples it is clear that this repentance is not only having a change of mind, but also a change of action; that is, you stop doing what you are doing! You change the actions of your life. It is stated plainly by Paul : "Let him that stole, steal no more" (Ephesians 4 : 28).

In order then to repent of a sin, one changes his mind AND changes his action. If he steals, he stops stealing. If he lies, he stops lying. If he covets, he stops coveting. If he hates, he stops hating. Repentance is this and this only !

What is it that motivates such a drastic change of mind and life ? Paul tells us that "the goodness of God" leads to repentance, coupled with godly sorrow (Romans 2:4; II Corinthians 7:10). When one ponders the glory, holiness, love, and mercy of God contrasted with the sinfulness of his own life—especially in light of what the attributes of God have moved God to do for mankind he becomes sorrowful for his sins and is led to repent, to change his thinking and his actions.

When one "repents" as did the people of Nineveh, two things



are sure. First, "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). Secondly, that person will be received by God as prodigal son was received by his father (Luke 15:11-32).

Let us all take heed, for God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3:9).

## *There's That Horse Again*

**Joe Malone**

A man attending a livestock exhibition saw a young fellow leading about a beautiful, well-groomed horse.

He drew near and asked, "Is that a saddle horse?"

The young man replied, "No, sir, this horse won't let anything stay on his back."

"Well, is he a buggy horse—is he used for pulling?" the man inquired.

"No. He was hitched up once, and made a wreck of the carriage he was supposed to pull."

"What's he good for?"

Quickly the answer came back, "Show, man, show! Just look at what a picture he makes!"

Later, that same man that had attended the livestock exhibition attended the morning worship of a congregation, and saw people in fine clothing coming into the assembly.

In conversation with the preacher prior to the worship, he asked, "Are all of these folk workers in the church?"

"Oh no," the preacher answered sadly.

"Will they be back tonight?"

Again the preacher answered sadly. "The faithful few will—otherwise, no."

"Well, do most of them contact your visitors, visit the sick, encourage new members or try to regain the backsliders or convert others?"

With obvious sadness, the preacher replied. "The faithful few do—otherwise, no."

The recent attendant at the livestock exhibition observed to himself, "Well, there's that horse again."

In 2 Timothy 3 : 4,5, we read of certain ones in the church being "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof : from such turn away."

The inspired James makes it quite clear that faith is made perfect by work (James 2 : 22). So, to stylishly follow the course of least resistance is tragic. In fact, following the course of least resistance is what makes beautiful rivers crooked. And you know where crooked rivers and in the bottom of the sea !

"Must Jesus bear the cross alone,

And all the world go free ?

No ! There's a cross for everyone

And there's a cross for me."

Let it be constantly kept in mind : there can be no crown without the cross.

## *One of Nature's Most Distinctive Designs . .*

**Wayne Jackson**

"The hummingbird is the smallest bird on earth--some species

weigh no more than a dime. It has the highest rate of metabolism (at rest, about 50 times faster than man's) and thus must consume enormous amounts of nectar to avoid starvation. Not adapted for night feeding, it must stretch its food stores from dusk to dawn. To accomplish this, nature had equipped the hummingbird with a unique energy-saving design: the ability to hibernate overnight.

"During the night, the hummingbird's metabolic rate is only one-fifteenth as rapid as in the day time, and its body temperature drops to that of the surrounding air. The bird becomes torpid, scarcely able to move. When it does stir, it moves as though congealed. By daybreak, the hummingbird's body spontaneously resumes its normal temperature and high metabolic rate, ready once again to dart off in search of food."

Isn't it amazing how "nature" was able so mechanically and unintelligently to "design" such wonderful and ingenious organisms in our world? Isn't it pathetic that men have to resort to the word "nature" because they are too embarrassed to say "God"? There is as much substance to the "Mother Nature" myth as there is the "Mother Goose" tales.

Too, if evolution occurred over millions of years, as we are constantly told, how did the hummingbird survive while its essential little metabolic regulator was gradually evolving?

## *Winning Over Temptation*

North MacArthur

Oscar Wilde, the British writer, observed, "I can resist anything except temptation". Perhaps we all can identify with such a statement. Unless we heed the warning of James to "Submit yourself to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you..."

(James 4 : 7-8), we may be defeated by Satan and the temptation he places before us,

Temptation not only affects the worldly, but Satan uses it to reduce the godly as well. David conquered Goliath the giant, but lost to the giant of lust. Temptation wins when we take our eyes off of Christ. There is a story of a Viking warrior which vividly illustrates this truth.

A Viking warrior was brought before the conquering Roman king. When asked what he would do if his life was spared, the warrior replied, "I would serve you." The king then asked what he would do if the life of his son were spared, and the Viking answered, "I would fight for you." Finally the king asked what he would do if his wife was spared, to which the Viking answered, "I would die for you."

The king replied, "You are too mighty a warrior. Go in peace and take your family with you."

As they were leaving the soldier asked his wife, "Have you ever seen such a palace as magnificent as that?" She responded, "I never saw it". Again he asked, "Did you see the gold, the silver and jewels in the king's crown?" "No", she replied, "I never could take my eyes off of the man who was willing to die for me."

When we meet personal defeats, human rationale looks for "scapegoats" such as "environment, genes, the crowd, parents, circumstances"—some even attempt to blame God just as Adam did by saying, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree. . ." (Genesis 3:12).

Satan employs his strongest tactics at our weakest moments to distract us. Let God's Spirit help you through the conflict. Remember—to triumph we must keep our eyes on Christ.