

Can We Be Saved

—Then Lost?

by Ray L. Straub

John Calvin was born in 1509. He matured unusually fast. At the age of 12 he became a chaplain. He entered the college of La Marche at age 14, and became curé of Marteville when he was 18. A curé is a parish priest in France.

After two years, he transferred to his father's native town. Obeying his father's instructions, Calvin gave up the study of theology in favor of law. He went to Paris where he later became a critic of writings by prestigious theologians. His inquiries and criticisms brought him persecution, and he had to flee.

A brilliant teacher, he was called by some the greatest theologian of his time. It was Calvin who proposed the doctrines of predestination, and restricted salvation to "the called" for whom the grace of God is irresistible.

It takes but little imagination to recognize that Calvin and his disciples suffered suppression from the religious establishment of their time.

Just four years before the decease of John Calvin, there was one born named Jacobus Harmensen, a native of Southern Holland. He later became known by the name of Jacobus Arminius. This second name gives immediate indication that

he was the founder of the Arminian doctrine.

Actually, both the doctrines of Calvin and Arminius were largely developed by their followers. Authorities suggest that Calvin would probably not have stated the doctrine of particular election and irresistible grace as narrowly as it was later taught.

What's of interest is the fact that Calvin proposed his teachings amid periodic interruptions brought about by persecution. When the followers of Arminius came along, refuting some of Calvin's teachings, they became subjected to persecution—death, in some instances—on the part of those who zealously promoted Calvin's teachings.

Are you Calvinist or Arminian?

There is an interesting question which involves our membership in the family of God. Once a man has been born again, is it possible for him to fall from grace? Once he is saved, can he still be lost?

We use a religious phrase that is familiar to most Christians, "free moral agency." What does this mean?

"Free moral agency" implies the right to choose whether or not we want salvation. We are the agent to decide for or

against our being saved.

The Calvinist doctrine of predestination proposes that man does not have free moral agency. The doctrine of eternal security allows that man has free moral agency, until he chooses to become part of the family of God. Once he has salvation, he retains it. As a son of God, he is no longer a free moral agent.

The Bible teaches that in this present life, as long as man has the mental and physical capacity to do so, he is a free moral agent. The only exception might involve the unpardonable sin.

While there is certain Scriptural basis for the doctrine of eternal security, the Bible does not actually teach it. It is interesting to compare the teachings of eminent theologians like Calvin and Arminius, but it really *matters* only what the Bible says.

Much of the eternal security teaching finds its basis in the repeated New Testament observation that having salvation means we possess eternal life.

For instance, John 3:36 says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life..."

John 6:47, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

John 6:54 says, "Whoso eat-

eth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 10:27-29, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

John 11:26 finds Jesus promising, "...whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die..."

These samplings give some idea how various passages of Scripture are used by those embracing the doctrine of eternal security. It is based on the premise that the child of God has—possesses—eternal life.

There are verses of the New Testament which deserve attention. The Bible does not contradict itself. Where certain passages appear to give conflicting viewpoints, we face a challenge to seek further understanding.

Matthew 24:13 and Mark 13:13 promise that "...he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved." This same phrase may also be found in Matthew 10:22.

John 15:1, 2, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

I Corinthians 9:27, "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."

I Peter 5:8 warns, "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."

Finally, consider Revelation 2:10 which ends by saying, "...

be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

This series of verses certainly gives the impression that salvation is something to attend to and protect. We are called upon to be faithful to God until death. We can then expect to receive eternal life.

It would be less than accurate for me to imply that proponents of the eternal security doctrine would find the references I just read difficult to answer. These references are proposed only to show certain Scriptural basis for each school of thought.

Do Christians have eternal life? There are no doubt many who would give a confident "yes" in answer to that ques-

I Don't Know How to Pray

by Carrie G. Lakin

**Father, I don't know how to pray,
I do not know which way is best,—
To kneel in prayer with head bent
low**

**Or upon my feet to stand
With open eyes bent heavenward,
With hands spread wide and toward
you raised.**

**I do not know just how to pray.
I do not know the words to say.
I only know I wish to say,
I thank you for another day!**

tion. Others would quite honestly answer "no."

Even if one were to ask a group composed only of active Christians, he would still receive some positive answers and some negative ones.

Which answer is correct?

If you answered "yes," you were correct. If you answered "no" to the question about whether we have eternal life, you still were correct!

The Bible refers to one possessing eternal life in more than one way. Eternal life can be immortality. When one considers eternal, or everlasting, life to be immortality, he would

have to conclude that the Bible teaches that we do not yet have it. We are not yet immortal.

The first reference indicating that we do not yet have immortality is Daniel 12:1, 2, "And at that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book. And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

Note Matthew 25:31, 46, "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats... And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous *into* life eternal." How could one go INTO life eternal, when he is already there?

"Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we SHALL BE CHANGED. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must PUT ON IMMORTALITY. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal SHALL HAVE PUT ON IMMORTALITY, THEN shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory" (I Corinthians 15:51-54).

We will be translated from mortality to immortality—at the last trump. It is then that ALL the righteous are changed.

We do not and will not have immortality earlier.

This is confirmed in Revelation 22:6, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power..."

Hebrews 9:27 informs us that it is appointed unto men once to die. This befalls everyone, whether righteous or otherwise. After death is the judgment. Those judged worthy to be in the resurrection of the righteous will be exempted from the second death. On these the second death has no power.

Incidentally, a definition of immortality is *exemption from death*, which is precisely the description given here in Revelation 20:6. This exemption does not come until Jesus' return and the first resurrection.

None has exemption from death now. So, in the sense that having eternal life is having immortality, we do not yet have it. The Bible spells that out clearly.

The other interpretation the Bible gives to the expression "have eternal life" refers to *the promise of endless life*.

God offers assurance of eternal life to those who receive forgiveness of their sins; establish a love relationship with Him; and confirm this by being obedient to His commands. Even though the assurances are bold, they are not without contingencies.

It seems difficult for some to realize that God would state the promise so strongly, describing the reward in such definite terms yet all the time making the offer on a conditional basis. Some feel that the nature and person of God are offended by such a suggestion.

The fact that God offers a guarantee of eternal life to those who accept His grace as pardon for sin does not automatically imply that one cannot possibly be lost thereafter. Obviously, it depends entirely upon the nature and provisions of the guarantee.

What kind of guarantee does God offer to those who turn from the world to Him?

Ephesians 1:12-14 is a passage that a Bible student should become familiar with. It is important. It explains how we come to God. It tells us how we can know that we are saved, and it explains the nature of God's guarantee of salvation.

"That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory."

Proponents of the eternal security teaching consider that the use of the term "sealed" suggests that we are encased in the grace and love of God. They say that it would take a power stronger than God to extract us. Once saved, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit and cannot, subsequently, be lost.

I acknowledge that this can be a correct application of the word "sealed." Often words are misused, assigned definitions that do not exist, in order to attempt to prove an ill-conceived opinion. Such is not the case here. This is a proper, undistorted use of the word "sealed."

However, it is not the only good use of the word. It has other meanings, just as widely and accurately applied, such as "to stamp," to "attest," to "give witness to." A seal as a stamp, can refer to a mark or a signet, such as the presidential seal. Companies, institutions, and others have an official seal, which is a mark or a signet.

We need to determine which is the correct usage here.

Our answer is found in Romans 8:16. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spir-

it, that we are the children of God."

Harmonizing Ephesians 1:13 with Romans 8:16, we understand that the function of the Holy Spirit is to bring us witness that we are children of God. In this manner it marks us, or seals us. We have the Holy Spirit which identifies us to be God's children.

The "purchased possession" refers to eternal life. It was purchased for us on Calvary. John 3:16 tells us that God gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Obviously, the purchased possession has not yet been redeemed. A transaction has taken place. The Holy Spirit came to represent the earnest of our inheritance. Paul uses business language here in describing the assurance of salvation that the repentant sinner has. What is the "earnest of our inheritance?"

Most of us understand what earnest money is. It is a deposit which demonstrates our intention to make a purchase. It signals our sincere interest in negotiating and completing a transaction.

Earnest money carries with it certain stipulations. It establishes a contract between owner and purchaser listing conditions and alternatives. The buyer agrees to pay a certain amount for the privilege of exercising ownership. Should the buyer default, the owner has a right to repossess.

For instance, we may decide to purchase an automobile. We pay a deposit. Along with this comes a contract calling for a stipulated amount to be paid regularly. While the payments are being made as agreed upon, the purchaser may consider that the car is his. Should he default, the owner of the car may reclaim ownership. As long as payments are made, the seller will not repossess.

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CAN WE BE SAVED, THEN LOST?

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In the same manner, the Word of God comes to us. We believe and we trust. God then sends the Holy Spirit. This assures us that we are children of God, and it guarantees that God will, without fail, give eternal life—provided that certain agreements are met. As long as we are faithful, eternal life is ours.

This passage does not actually say that conditions have to be met in order for the child of God to be saved. I recognize this. On the other hand, the use of the word "earnest" certainly suggests it. Other references confirm that such is the case.

Please note carefully the wording of the passage found in Hebrews 6:4-6, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they FALL AWAY, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Our attention needs to be focused on this last phrase in verse 4—"and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost." We just read that it was the Holy Spirit that sealed us. Romans 8:16 tells us that it is God's Spirit that witnesses with our spirit that we are the sons of God. It seems logical that this is how one becomes a *partaker* of the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit. It seals us, or attests that we are children of God.

Note the words, "FALL AWAY." Fall from what? Obviously, this fall is from the blessed experiences listed.

On occasion I have read this passage to those who embrace the once-saved; always-saved doctrine. They answered by sug-

gesting that the descriptions given are not necessarily those of one who is saved.

If these verses do not refer to a saved person, they must refer to one who is unsaved—to a sinner. This would infer that a sinner was once enlightened.

It was a sinner who tasted of the heavenly gift. It was a sinner who was made a partaker of the Holy Spirit. It was a sinner who tasted of the good word of God, and it was a sinner who tasted the powers of the world to come. It is a sinner who may fall away. How interesting!

If the sinners enjoy all of these benefits, there must not be all of that much difference between sinners and those who have come to God in repentance and received pardon for their sins.

Another reference which tells us that it is possible to fall from the grace of God is found in II Peter 2:20-22, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire."

Of whom does this passage speak? It refers to those who "have escaped the pollutions of the world THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE LORD AND SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST."

Were they saved? It is difficult to place a sinner into the role of one who has escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of our

Lord and Saviour. It is difficult for me to see the sinner as one who has known the way of righteousness. The Bible hardly suggests that!

The text also notes that they again become entangled with the world. Those who have known the way of righteousness have turned from the holy commandment. One who has been saved from his sins (the pollution of the world), and has begun his walk with God (the way of righteousness in obeying the holy commandment) is again become entangled with the world.

These passages tell us that it is possible to fall from the grace of God. Please take note of the fact that in EACH CASE, it was the individual, himself, who made the decision to turn from God, back into the world. At no time is it mentioned that this removal from grace was brought about by some other person. Those who turn from God do so on their own accord, by their own determination. None has come along and taken his salvation from him.

This is the assurance we have in John 10:27-29, "My sheep hear my voice and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither SHALL ANY MAN PLUCK THEM OUT OF MY HAND. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

The security extended to those who receive salvation is that no man is able to PLUCK them from the Father's hand. A relationship established between God and man cannot be broken by a third party. God sends the Holy Spirit as a guarantee until the redemption of the purchased possession—until God gives immortality at the coming of Jesus. The witness of the Holy Spirit is assurance that God will honor His part of the agreement.

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THE CREATION

by Wayne Leslie

In the beginning God created heaven and earth,
This then was the miracle of our planet's birth.
At the start of this creation a formless void He held,
Darkness reigned upon the deep, then His Spirit dwelled.
For as His Spirit touched it, the darkness changed to light,
This then was the difference, dividing day from night.

God saw that this was good, and this He did say,
And the evening and the morning were one stupendous day.
God then divided the waters with a firmament in between,
This firmament He called heaven, dividing all He'd seen.
This great task now over, He then saw fit to say,
And the evening and the morning were then the second day.

He then so gathered the waters to one place,
He made it so that land appeared on this planet's great new face.
The land that then appeared was given the name of earth,
The seas then encircling all of its wide girth.
Grass He then brought forth and fruit to pave the way,
This then the way He ended His third and glorious day.

The sun He placed in heaven, made the earth so bright,
When the Lord saw how good it was He knew that it was right.
A lesser light He needed so He placed there in the sky,
A moon to rule the darkness, with the stars He placed on high.
The evening and the morning became as He did say,
The sun and stars of heaven were of this fourth great day.

From the waters He brought forth all that lives and moves,
The fowl to fly the firmament, all of this the Lord approves.
Under the waters He produced the whale to spawn and live,
To multiply abundantly that the Lord hath life to give.
Life was there that morning, all that He did say
Came into existence on His fifth enlightened day.

Then He placed the cattle and all the beast of earth,
He made man of His image, and to his mate gave birth.
Multiply and flourish, this was the word you see,
To man and beast alike, to this He did agree.
That man should then control all the living beasts,
The Lord was very happy, this day His Work had ceased.

The sixth day had ended, He was very proud,
He thought then of the Seventh, then His head He bowed.
The heavens and the earth were finished, God rested then that day,
He gave it of His blessing and made it a time to pray.
This is our creation, the times of heaven and the earth,
It's God's own way of giving life to us at birth.

Genesis: Chapters 1:1-31
2:1-4

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What this passage does not comment on is the possibility of our defaulting on the agreement we made with God—of our deciding quite deliberately that we will return to the ways of the world.

Proponents of the doctrine of eternal security accuse those of our persuasion of giving more credit to the power of Satan than to the power of God. They insinuate that we think the devil is stronger than God because he has the power to undo the work of our heavenly Father. I have heard this statement often, from preachers of stature.

To suggest that a child of God returning to sin credits the devil with more power than God is like suggesting that a delinquent child proves that poor parental guidance is more dynamic and effective than insistence upon proper discipline.

Anyone who spends any time teaching the Scriptures ought to know that an example of weakness does not undermine the strength of goodness. Values do not cheapen simply because someone does not recognize them. A lofty position does not come under indictment just because a weak mortal cannot retain it. It is completely untrue to suggest that the possibility of man losing his salvation by his own decision means that the devil is stronger than God. How unworthy—such an assertion!

The real difference between those who teach that a man cannot be lost after he is saved, and the teaching that it is possible to be lost after salvation has to do with free moral agency. When all of the verbiage melts away, this is the question that remains. Does man retain his free moral agency after he becomes a son of God? Or does he have it only until he is born again?

The Bible's answer to this question has been presented. The answer is that *mortal* man retains free moral agency as long as he is mentally and phys-

ically capable of exercising it.

I thank God for His keeping power, for His love that draws, saves, and sustains. I thank God that I am His, and there is no other power, short of my own will, that can change that. We have the Holy Spirit which brought us God's guarantee that He will give us everlasting life. It has already been paid for on Calvary. When Jesus returns again the transaction will be complete. This mortal will put on immortality. Thanks be to God Who giveth us the victory through our Lord, Jesus Christ!

THE SIN OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS

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will not profit us one iota.

We are obligated as Christians to read and study God's Word and to share its message with others. We are to exhort, teach, and instruct—but such must be done in the right manner, with the proper attitude, and for the purpose of telling of God's love and the way of salvation.

We are to read and learn God's Word in meekness and holiness, so that we may ably "... be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (I Peter 3:15).

In II Timothy 4:8, we are informed that the Lord is the righteous judge. We are not to judge each other. Romans 14:10 says, "But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at naught thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

When we are armed with the true sword of the Spirit and wear the armor of God, we will first slay the devil of self-righteousness before we make any attempt to teach God's Word. It is then that we will be a greater warrior for the Lord.

WHEN THE MOON TURNED TO BLOOD

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young lad he had some strange dreams which were more than just dreams. They were in reality prophecy. One of these dreams we notice at this time.

"And he dreamed yet another dream, and told it his brethren, and said, Behold, I have dreamed a dream more; and, behold, the sun and the moon and the eleven stars made obeisance to me. And he told it to his father, and to his brethren: and his father rebuked him, and said unto him, What is this dream that thou hast dreamed? Shall I and thy mother, and thy brethren indeed come to bow down ourselves to thee to the earth" (Genesis 37:9, 10).

Everyone who knows the story of the life of Joseph knows this dream was a prophecy which came true in process of time. His brethren and his father did bow down to Joseph in Egypt to receive at the hands of Joseph bread which could not be had in the land of Canaan where they lived.

Note the symbolism used in the dream. The sun, the father; the moon, the mother; and the stars, the brothers.

The function of the physical sun, moon and stars is a perfect type of the Son of God, the church and the members of the church. As the sun is the source of light, and as the moon gets its light from the sun, just so it is in a spiritual sense.

Jesus is the source of spiritual light to whom the church is indebted. Jesus said "... without me, ye can do nothing." This applies to the church as a whole and to each member of the family.

So Joseph's dream not only was prophetic, but was a perfect, spiritual picture of the church.

The Moon, the Church

As the moon represented the

mother of this family the picture before us indicates that the church is represented by the moon.

We know that in both Old and New Testament Scriptures that a woman is used as a type of the church; so then, a woman comes to represent the church.

The family of Jacob was the mother, so to speak, of the Old Testament church. It was this church that Jesus came to, and it was the members of this church that had Him crucified.

Ordinarily, the moon gives a beautiful reflection of light from the sun when there is nothing to obscure such a reflection. At times we do not get a clear reflection due to interferences and substances that will not allow the true light to reflect.

God has chosen His people to reflect the true spiritual light, but they do not always prove true to their calling. The church was established as a life-giving institution—to offset the forces of darkness.

It was the calling of Israel that the light of heaven might shine through them. It was the calling of the church now to let the light of heaven shine into the darkness of human hearts and guide them into the perfect light of life.

What happens when interferences come into the church to blur the light that can save? What happens when the institution to reflect the light of life becomes an institution of blood-letting?

We often read and hear about the terrible persecutions by institutions in this age who are supposed to be Christian, killing and murdering people and doing every kind of ungodly thing that could almost embarrass the devil, if such could happen.

Is the prophet Joel giving us a picture of the church when he says, "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and terrible day of the

Among the Christian churches of today there are many conflicting doctrines taught. There is also noticeable contention among those who claim to be God's people. Is it any wonder that the onlooker is confused and unable to know which way to go? Bible truth is the only answer to the problem.

What Kind of Church is God's Church?

by Ray L. Straub

There is a characteristic about the Christian and the church that represents an interesting paradox. It is this: Christianity can really have little meaning outside the church. Yet the church often finds herself guilty of providing as much handicap as she does help.

People come to accept Christ because they need a Saviour. They want answers to the many bewildering and distressing situations confronting them. Obviously, no man can provide a satisfactory answer. God, through Jesus, can.

Plowing a lonely furrow, with little hope for a satisfying harvest, man reaches out for the Son of God, Who can and does instill new strength and direction. Peace and praise are rediscovered in a personal acquaintance with our Lord. Man is then joyful instead of empty, beaming instead of scowling, purposeful instead of pointless. He has found new light, new answers, new hope, new meanings.

With these newly found eternal treasures, he sets out to look for God's church, the place where he can serve his Master. This is God's workshop where words turn into deeds; where worship and work

go together. He has a gleam in his eye, new spring in his step, a fresh optimism, and Christ in a heart that previously was empty. He finds the Church of God and embarks on his career in the army of the Lord.

Strangely, the church, this workshop of God, soon tends to become a source of doubt, disappointment, frustrations, and difficulties. This community of the redeemed does not always get along too well. Its goals lack vision, drive, and an effective relationship with its times. In all too many ways it is inconsistent, and knowing it, finds itself powerless to reform. Christianity can hardly survive without the church, and yet the church is not always truly Christian.

The greatest difficulty with the church is the existence of so many divisions. There are hundreds of congregations, all claiming to serve God, all claiming to be the family of God, representing God in teaching and enacting His will.

Obviously, not all churches are teaching the will of God. God does not have that many commands which are often in contradiction to each other.

In the face of all of this con-

fusion, many people will have nothing to do with church at all. They do not want to become involved in difficulties that arise over marriages between people of different faiths. They do not want to argue about which church to send their children to, and they want no part of the seemingly pointless and often petty competition going on between the many denominations.

Others just assume that the church they attend is the right one. They never question it. They just go along with it. If their church happens to be wrong, they could hardly care less—they will simply be wrong right along with it and barely be surprised.

Some people are intensely zealous about finding the right church, but they do not know how to do it. They go from one to another in an endless procession, never stopping for any length of time in any one church. A new man's logic is always the most attractive to them. They follow the new man.

What a job it is to find the right church! Some think the right church is any church. If there is a true church, how might one find it? *That* is a good question!!! How can one find the true Church

of God? There are hundreds of different churches—some large, many small, ready to present a case that they are the one true church. How can one be sure?

I recognize this to be one of the most important questions we encounter. It is crucial. A wrong answer may not be too damaging in some ways, but in other instances it could be disastrous. It is difficult to answer, and yet it must be done.

With so much confusion hampering a sincere person's effort to find the correct church, one would almost presume that there is little that the Bible has to say about God's attitude on this subject. It seems reasonable that if the Bible were clear on this matter, agreement would not be such a dismally impossible dream.

The Bible does have something to say about the church. There is plenty of information given to let us know what kind of church is pleasing to God. It also tells us quite clearly what displeases Him. It is not a matter of the information not being there. Apparently, many of us do not take it seriously enough.

Some of the clearest, most easily understood criticism issued from heaven to the church is found in Revelation, chapters two and three.

In the second chapter there is criticism of four churches. In the third chapter there is criticism of three. A sizeable number of theologians consider these churches to be typical, a theological term suggesting that the churches are symbols. It is taught that each of these churches represents a specific time period in the life of the Christian church from its primitive days right up to the return of her Founder, the Lord Jesus. Ephesus, the first church mentioned, is said to represent the primitive, or early church.

I have no argument to offer on this other than to insist that there is much more to be gained from so valuable a passage.

The striking fact is that these two chapters give us Jesus' own idea of what He considers an acceptable church to be. He pur-

chased the church with His own blood. His criticism is worth hearing.

Let us read what was written in the Bible about the church at Ephesus. We begin at Revelation 2:1. "Unto the angel of the church of Ephesus write; These things saith he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, who walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks; I know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil; and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars: and hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast laboured, and hast not fainted. Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. But this thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nico-

HIDE AWAY

by Walter E. Isenhour

**O fellow-pilgrim, brother dear,
Look up to God and do not fear,
Although you've tried in heart and
soul**

To quit the road to Eden's goal.

**O hide away, yes, hide away,
Where you can meditate and pray;
For God will always meet you there
And bless you in the place of prayer.**

**O hide away when storm-clouds rise
And overcast your sunny skies,
And wait till Jesus whispers peace
And bids the raging tempest cease.**

**O hide away when tempted sore
By demon spirits, more and more,
Until you don't know what to do.
But trust the Lord to see you
through.**

**O hide away when things go wrong
And you have lost your happy song,
And linger till our God above
Enfolds you in His arms of love.**

laitans, which I also hate."

We give careful analysis to this church's strong points—those which earned approval.

This church was commended for her work and patience. She had plenty of endurance. That means much!

Note another excellent quality: "thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars."

There are three important, basic values that are integral to the life of any church. These are seen in varying degrees, but to some extent they are all present in each church. They consist of a church's doctrines, her emotional tenor or spiritual life, and her traditional or historical character.

It is obvious that Heaven's approval was clearly manifest in the review of this Church's zeal for truth. She was intolerant of deception.

The Church of God at Ephesus was founded by the Apostle Paul. On a journey to Macedonia, Paul made a stop at Miletus. From there he sent for the elders at Ephesus to meet him before his departure by boat. Memorable words of advice he gave on this occasion are found in Acts 20, beginning with verse 28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

Much to her credit, this church responsibly accepted Paul's advice. They would tolerate no deception, countenance no heresy, give no room to falsehood.

When one came claiming to represent God, he would either prove to be in tune with God's Word or

intolerable to the congregation. If the professing preacher's performance was not in harmony with the Scriptures, the music was stopped.

Our brand of Christianity today has all kinds of adjectives for this kind of attitude. Most of them are derogatory. A pastor of such a congregation would be considered a bigot, a fanatic, a religious zealot, and out of step with the times. Today we should tolerate everything but intolerance; respect only the absolute that there is nothing absolute; obey but one law, that which grants complete freedom. We should be lenient instead of firm, open minded instead of opinionated, pragmatic instead of dogmatic.

One needs to give this passage in Revelation 2:1-6 but little study before coming to the conclusion that all of our unchanneled intellectual and theological frivolities are indulgences of our own. No matter how piously disguised, or carefully sugarcoated, this pragmatism, this unsatiable tolerance for heresy, deception, and falsehood does not find God's approval as a proper attitude for His church. It may please man. It does not satisfy God.

There was a popular new doctrine floating around in several of the churches in those days—particularly the more modern, cosmopolitan type. It was called the doctrine or deeds of the Nicolaitans.

Unfortunately, specific detailed information about this teaching is not available, but the context of these two chapters gives strong indication that this was a kind of freedom-loving doctrine. It suggested that the gospel and license complemented each other—including the freedom to break the moral laws forbidding idolatry and fornication.

The Ephesian Church stood firmly against this teaching. What was heaven's reaction to this rigidity? The Lord said, "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."

There is a truth I want to share with you here. No church claiming to be purchased with the blood

of Christ can even begin to be free until she becomes a prisoner of her Lord. We do not have Jesus until we are captivated by Him. It is only when our will is broken, and we stand quite ready to make God's will our will that we can ever be truly free!

No man is a prisoner of his Lord, if He fails to search out as carefully as he can just what the will of God is. He can find truth if he will search for it. The church is of no value to one seeking to do the will of God unless she is a responsible, captivated, energetic servant of Jesus Christ. He was the Word made flesh, and we beheld His glory, that of the only

begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

It is difficult to know how that any community can claim to be a prisoner of the Lord and yet coddle and defend error in deference to the rebellious nature of man. How can the family of God love the error God hates and hope to expect His approval?

This church at Ephesus was commended for her intolerance for deception. Jesus commended her for this. To be part of God's church, we must reflect the same attitude—the complete willingness to go the required distance, meet the necessary challenge, to learn, defend and teach truth.

His Sustaining Presence

Someone observed: "A ship in harbor is safe, but that is not what ships are for."

Most inventions have a purpose in the economy and well-being of the human race. Even more can be said of people. Every person has a place to fill in life; everyone has a purpose and commission that, if carried out, will benefit others. The problem is that too many want to stay in the harbor of security.

Perhaps a prevailing reason for failure is that people fear to step from the safety of their present sphere of living to meet the challenge of greater things. Anything that is accomplished is done at some expense and often at considerable risk. We have many Biblical examples of greatness exemplified by men of courage.

Moses was one of the greatest. He left the security of royalty to lead his people to a national home of their own. Soon after his experience started he had the blessed privilege of personal contact with the God of heaven. God spoke to him in a personal way and gave him the laws, both the Ten Commandments and the laws for Israel.

No doubt Moses had enough human nature about him that he would have liked to abide in that momentous experience forever. When we have a highlight experience in our lives where God becomes very real to us, we like to cherish it and remain in it. But there was a work for Moses even as there is a work for every one of God's servants.

It was up to Moses to leave Mt. Sinai and lead the people of God across the wilderness. God gave him a wonderful promise. "And he said, MY PRESENCE SHALL GO WITH THEE, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14).

Moses trusted God and His Word. He knew that God would sustain him in every problem that he faced. Such faith! God had promised, and Moses believed the promise of God. Things are no different today. God's presence will go with His people now and He will sustain them. How far are you willing to step out for the Lord?

Effects of an Ecumenical Church Upon Christianity

by Ray L. Straub

Our economy is spirited by new fads. They suggest that new purchases are in order. Many a hard-earned paycheck goes to replace clothing that has no fault other than its identity with old styles. The ability to possess the "latest" shows success, good taste, and progressive living in this materialistic society.

Fashion changes not only transmute life into the economy's bloodstream, but they also offer strength to the ego. They appeal to the imagination and offer new interests to the restless. One cannot deny that new looks, even though costly, contribute a certain value to any people.

Fads are not limited to clothes, dances, games and cars. Practically every avenue of life has its changes in style. Thinking runs in fads. Thoughts change from that of concentration on having fun, as at the turn of the century; to a recent fad of psychiatric thinking when appointments with psychiatrists were a status symbol and good adjustment was mere self-knowledge; to the present space-

age thinking where a rocket can be anything from a hamburger to a spacecraft booster.

Far from being immune to the shifting winds of fads, the religious world is most changeable and distributes its embraces freely. In the face of widespread criticism against Christian churches of their confusing and irreconcilable differences of opinion, the various expositors of higher thought and discipline flow along lines of religious fashion with almost flawless uniformity.

The fad is on. It is unity. Everyone who is anybody in the Christian religion thinks unity and understanding — tolerance, at least! The ecumenical church is the most necessary and eagerly sought goal of the Christian world today. Its platitudes of promotion are virtuous and clearly descriptive of the cause of Christ. But then, the labels always are such.

Under the leadership of Pope John XXIII, the first Ecumenical Council in decades was convened. Though Roman Catholic domi-

nated, it has spurred the most lubricated liberalizing that churches have experienced in centuries. The Roman Catholic Church, known to have been static in church liturgy, now stands near the front of this movement. Services have been streamlined, forsaking the Latin-speaking masses in several countries, church dress is being modified, and divisive doctrines are being reviewed.

The present Pope Paul VI, in previewing the first major document of his pontificate, advised that it would outline three roads toward a "living church" in line with the modern world.

"Our letter is a qualified announcement of our assumption to the chair of Peter." The Pope said, "It is a manifestation of our feelings and thoughts rather than an objective and organic treatment of a given theme." Pope Paul's background as a liberal in the Roman church practically assures that this opinion will be compromising in nature.

To the Catholic's description of

Protestants as "the departed," the term "brethren" has been added. It is difficult to negotiate with the departed; that is, if they are not *brethren!*

Unity is never one-sided. So, as could be expected, Protestant leaders are suggesting that the term *catholic* in describing their "new look" churches seems apt, since it accurately suggests universality. One leader in his book which stresses the importance of unification suggests that reference to the Roman Catholic denomination should include the use of both these terms. The use of the single word *catholic* is no longer understood to refer to a particular sect. And so the unity movement progresses through the propagating of principles and the clarification of technicalities that have significance only in deeper meanings with which the average layman does not concern himself.

Christians, beware! Food is not purified by antiseptic wrappers. Pudding sounds good, but the real test is in the tasting. The newness of a garment does not guarantee its fit. Some responsible and cautious thinking is in order.

Were this quest for the general church unity an essential to practicing Christians, one ought to find such injunction in the Christian's textbook and guide, the Holy Bible. Movements whose essential motives lie without the boundaries of the Holy Writ would be futile efforts toward achieving such goals as are promised within. An examination of Scripture on ecumenicity is of the essence!

The ecumenical movement is one for the unity of mankind, authored by men. Of necessity, it ignores the real basis of unity in Christ and seeks to channel the masses through whatever thinking and discipline will accomplish its aims. Disunity is the problem; heresy is masked.

Jesus assured: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27). Today's movement seeks conformity by those who put forth little effort to follow all of Jesus' teachings, and it seeks the cooperation of

those who not only lack His acquaintance, but suggests that to doubt His divinity marks intelligence! Jesus warned that those who hear His sayings, but do not follow with actions, are building houses which stand but temporarily on sand (Matthew 7:26).

"...I am the way, the *truth*, and the life..." said Jesus (John 14:6). The ecumenical movement involves itself in efforts to mitigate the value of truth as preached in sound doctrine. Teachings are passed off as private interpretations and opinion. Opinions, being a personal possession, must be selflessly disregarded where unity is threatened.

Truth is eternal. It is not always convenient, but its existence cannot be jeopardized. Truth can be ignored, but this leaves one ignorant. Since it is truth that makes men free (John 8:32), it remains a prime and indispensable ingredient when one seeks salvation and resolves to fight the good fight of faith.

Prisoners of sin will never find the hope and joy in a union behind bars that they would find in liberation!

Religious fads deserve analysis. A reasonable approach to this task is to see how current aspirations

You Can't Fool God

**You can fool the hapless public,
You can be a subtle fraud,
You can hide your little meanness,
But you can't fool God!**

**You can advertise your virtues,
You can self-achievement laud,
You can load yourself with riches,
But you can't fool God!**

**You can criticize the Bible,
You can be a selfish clod,
You can lie, swear, drink, and gamble,
But you can't fool God!**

**You can magnify your talent,
You can hear the world applaud,
You can boast yourself somebody,
But you can't fool God!**

—Greenville Kleiser

harmonize with those of the Holy Spirit. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).

The Church, thrust into a hostile world by the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, was given a job. The goal of achieving a "brotherhood" was not foremost, even though it was valuable and real. She was sent to preach truthfully the gospel of Christ. "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me..." (Acts 1:8). Preachers who taught doubt concerning the reality of Jesus were called "anti-christ" (I John 4:3).

A further, closely-connected essential duty of the church was to safeguard the truth. Paul reminded Timothy that the church of the living God was "... the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Timothy 3:14).

His pastoral advice was: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; *continue in them*: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (I Timothy 4:16).

Paul's warning in II Timothy 3:13 and 14 exposes our present fad: "... Seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. But *continue* thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; and that from a child thou hast known the holy Scriptures which are able to make thee wise unto salvation. ..."

For one to fail in his love for the truth is a most grievous spiritual shortcoming. "... Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved... God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth..." (II Thessalonians 2:10-12). "And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (II Peter 2:2).

Consistent with this attitude,
(Continued on page 18)

verse 23: "So the Lord saved Israel that day." It was the Lord's victory, but Jonathan had the faith to believe that "there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few" and he was willing to back up his faith with his life.

This is no isolated illustration. Jonathan's great victory over a vastly superior foe is the basic pattern of life for the men and women who bear the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Think of David approaching the giant Goliath with a slingshot "in the name of the Lord of Hosts" (I Samuel 17:45). Think of Daniel in the den of hungry lions saying confidently, "My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me" (Daniel 6:22).

Think of the Christian church starting with not many more than a hundred people in a remote corner of the vast Roman Empire and in one generation leaping from Jerusalem to Rome. And that famous statement, that backhanded compliment, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also," was spoken not of Caesar's legions but of two Christian missionaries.

The church's condition today is much like it was when the armies of Israel faced the Philistines. The number of men and women confessing openly and unashamedly that Jesus Christ is Lord seems like a mere handful, while the enemies of our Lord and those who scoff at the supernatural are as numerous as the sands of the seashore. The gospel is being driven out of every phase of life. Leonard Ravenhill said, "We have a stricken church in a stricken world."

In the midst of this situation the church is looking for better and better methods. E. M. Bounds correctly observed that "God is looking for better men." And the Bible clearly states, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (II Chronicles 16:9).

Jonathan did not win a great

victory by applying a better method. He won because he properly understood the nature of God and how God works, and he acted on his faith. "There is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few."

You may be the only Christian among a hundred, or even a thousand, "Philistines" who mock and scoff at your Lord. Dare to believe that through the power of the Holy Spirit you can live and witness for your Lord.

EFFECTS OF AN ECUMENICAL CHURCH UPON CHRISTIANITY

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there are stern warnings against the espousing of heretics. "... Mark them which cause divisions and offences *contrary to the doctrines which ye have learned*; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17). Heresies are characterized as works of the flesh in Galatians 5: 20, as damnable in II Peter 2:1, and Titus 3:10 instructs that the heretic is to be rejected.

It is true that Paul confessed to walking after the way which was called heresy (Acts 25:14). A careful examination of this text, however, will prevent tragic misuse of it. Paul did not confess to being a heretic. He admitted that he fit the Jewish description of a heretic—no more!

Let none presume that Paul's admission awards approval to such a spiritual malady. Paul was not a heretic to the Christian faith; he was considered so only by that sect from whose darkness he emerged through his conversion.

Instead of forsaking doctrinal accuracy for massiveness, we are warned against fellowshiping with "... the unfruitful works of darkness..." (Ephesians 5:11). The present ecumenical movement could not possibly be fruitful, lacking the awesome inability to set forth its true goals beyond that of bulky sameness. Unity is strength to those who wait on the Holy Spirit and follow His guidance. It is useless when it is a mere goal in itself.

It becomes rather obvious that universality merely speeds the Christian world to the place of complete spiritual anemia toward which it has steadily been traveling. Churches lacking essential purpose grasp at straws in attempts to justify their existence. Universality quietly removes what little starch a unique religious teaching gives a church body. Quantity falsely suggests progress, and precious quality is outdated.

For its rewards togetherness has great potential, political strength. With good principles in view the massive strength of unified churches could be formidable, indeed! "Finally, the world will be forced to recognize Christian teaching," sigh the optimistic religious stylists.

The church would do well not to expose naivete in this regard. Compromise on religious doctrine and practice to achieve togetherness leaves mere massiveness. Everything big is not strong.

Beliefs left to the ecumenical church are sufficiently watered down to where they lose identity in the oceans of good intentions fostered by every other kind of union in existence. The church, notoriously unfaithful to Christian principle, as demonstrated in her forthright censure of war during times of peace and approval of it during conflict, stands little chance of being effective where those more than her equal politically have failed.

The move for the church is forward. May it ever be so! Not every tide that gives a lifting sensation will carry us in the right direction. One still needs to retain his perspective and reach for power to progress.

Forsaking essential qualities for conformity is a questionable transaction. Spiritual discernment reveals that it was our Saviour Who gave us birth into the world of abundant life, peace, and security, and it must be He Who will lead us on. Those who press toward varying goals must with all their sincerity and zeal travel without us. God's path appears quite definitely to take a different direction.