

The REFLECTOR

Be Ye Like Minded

BY JOHNNY HOOKS

Most religious minded people believe that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. Is this right? Do we really have the right to put our faith in what we want to believe? Or does God have the right to tell us what we should do in spiritual things? Does He have a certain way He wants all men to follow?

To answer these questions let's turn to the scriptures and see what they have to say. Read carefully Jn. 17:20-21. Is not Jesus praying here that all of His disciples be unified in all things, including the way we think on religious matters? Christ prayed that all of His followers be one, as He and the Father are one. In other words, He wants us to be like-minded, to think, believe, and to work the same way with no variance at all. We don't see anywhere in the scriptures where God said one thing and Christ taught something different.

Now look at I Cor. 1:10-17. Is not God, through the apostle Paul, pleading that we speak, or believe the same thing, along with teaching the same thing? There are to my knowledge over three hundred different "churches" that teach and believe in different ways. There are no two that teach exactly the same thing on everything. Is this unity? Are they all speaking the same thing? Are they being one as the Father and Son are? Is this being like-minded with no division at all? Is this being in the same judgment, as verse 10 states? Obviously the answer is no.

Look now at Acts 4:12. Is no other name is there salvation. Look back at I Cor. 1:12. God through Paul was admonishing these people, because, v. 11, there was contention among them. They didn't seem to know where their salvation was. Are we not like that today? Could we not insert man made religious titles in here? I am Baptist, or I am Methodist or Catholic, or Mormon, or any other name that a church may wear. Ask yourself these questions: Is there salvation in

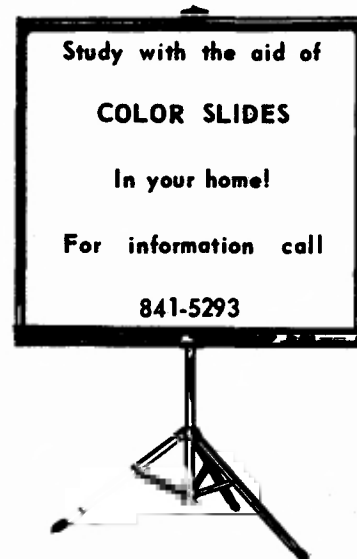
John Smythe, founder of the Baptist church? Or in John Wesley, founder of the Methodist church? or in Joseph Smith, founder of the Mormon; in John Calvin, Presbyterian; in Charles T. Russel, Jehovah's witness? Acts 4:12 says no. Not in these or any other that has a founder other than Jesus Christ.

This raises another question, is there a church that is founded in no other name, save that of Jesus The Christ? The Bible answers yes. In Matt. 16:18. Christ is the founder, and in I Cor. 3:11 its foundation. This church described in the scriptures is unique in that it has Christ as it's only head, Eph. 5:23. Is Christ the head of your church or is there a governing body of men that make the decisions? It is unique in that it bears a name given to it by God. There are many designations of the church in the Bible, is yours one of them? It's unique because its only doctrine is the New Testament. (It has Christ as the lawgiver, Eph. 5:24; 4:7-16. The Holy Spirit as the revealer, I Cor. 2:13; Eph. 3:1-6. And the apostles teachings as its manuel, Acts 2:42; Eph. 2:20.) Is the New Testament your only doctrine or do you have a doctrine creed written by men?

Now ask yourself again, do we really have the right to believe the way we want to? Does God have the right to tell us how to worship Him? He gave His only Son for us, who was rejected, beaten, and finally killed. Yes, God not only has the right, but has done so in His divine word. We should diligently search, with open hearts, for the truth. Accept it with a ready mind. And be content with what God has said on all things.

We as sinful humans, Rom. 3:23, do not have the way within ourselves, Jer. 10:23. Matt. 15:9 teaches that if we accept the doctrines of men we worship God in vain.

summer. Brother Hooks is working with us as an evangelist for this summer. He will be speaking once each Lord's day when brother Bragwell is in town and both services when brother Bragwell is not home. He will be studying daily with brother Bragwell and helping with the Lord's work in general in this community. After the summer's work is completed, brother Hooks hopes to go some place to work full-time in the preaching of the gospel. We are sure that he would be glad to hear from any church wishing to have someone come work with them.



WELCOME TO THE HOOKS'

We are glad to have brother and sister Johnny and Karen Hooks with us for the

EDITOR'S DESK



Faith Only -

A Wholesome Doctrine?

By: Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

An article of faith of a popular denomination says that "faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort". It is a most dangerous doctrine and very full of error. It contradicts plain Bible statements. It perverts the Biblical doctrine of salvation by faith. It discourages sinners from doing what God requires of them to be saved.

One is saved or justified by faith -- but not by faith **only**. James 2 is devoted to showing that faith only will not justify one. It plainly contradicts the doctrine that justification by "faith only is a most wholesome doctrine".

James says more about "faith only."

*It is unprofitable for salvation. "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?"

*It is an unreasonable as trying to feed and clothe the poor with mere words without supplying their needs. (verses 15,16).

*It is dead faith. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, **being alone**." (verse 17). "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works is dead?**" (verse 20). "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also". (verse 26).

*It places one on the level with demons. (verse 19).

*It is not the kind of faith that justified Abraham nor Rahab. (verses 21-25).

In spite of all this teaching, religious teachers and preachers abound that insist that salvation is by faith "plus nothing, minus nothing". Thousands of dollars and countless hours are spent on radio, TV, publications, pulpit messages and "personal witnessing" to spread the message that salvation is by faith **only**. What a shame! A shame that so much effort is made by so many to persuade so many more to pin their hope of heaven on a doctrine that is destroyed by one short Bible verse: "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only**."

The advocates of the "faith only" doctrine are not without verses that they believe teach their view of salvation. There are many verses, like John 3:16,

that link salvation to faith without mentioning any other condition. The problem here is that there are many other verses that link other things to salvation without even mentioning faith. It would be a mistake to conclude from these verses that the thing mentioned and linked to salvation in each one is the **only** condition.

*Philippians 2:12 links salvation to works: "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling".

*Luke 13:3; 2 Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30 mention only repentance as related to salvation.

*1 Peter 3:21; Acts 22:16 link only baptism with salvation.

It should be obvious that none of these things alone is the total picture of the terms of salvation, but that **all** of them are linked to salvation. Work, repentance, baptism, as well as faith are tied to salvation in the Bible. One is no more saved by baptism alone, than he is by repentance alone, than he is by faith alone. God did not reveal in one verse or even a few verses everything needed to make us "wise unto salvation" (cf. 2 Tim. 3:15-17) --but all scripture must be studied to get the total picture.

There is a sense in which our salvation is "not of works". (Eph. 2:8,9; Rom. 4:2). Yet, the same context (Eph. 2:10) states that we are "created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which, God has before ordained that we should walk in them (good works)." The **works that justified Abraham** in James' account must differ from the **works that could not justify him** in Paul's account. The works that Eph. 2:9 must differ from the works that God has ordained that we should walk in them (Eph. 2:10).

The works that do not justify us are works in the sense of earning or deserving salvation, hence putting God in debt or under obligation to save us. Our salvation is not "of debt", "of works" or reason for boasting or glorying in the sense that salvation is due us on the basis of our performance or works (Rom. 4:4). Our justification is upon the basis of grace and faith in Christ (as our Savior) rather than upon the basis of our works (perfect performance of God's righteous will). Once man sins, his justification (if

he ever has it) can not be "of works" (his performance of accomplishment of God's righteousness), but if he is ever righteous it will have to be upon some other basis -- the gracious pardon of God through Christ. He can never boast that his standing in God's favor is due to his works (accomplishment or performance), but rather due to God's merciful plan of redemption in Christ. His faith in Christ, as savior and redeemer, leads him to submit to the terms or conditions of pardon.

Yet, his standing with God (saved, justified, righteous) is not by faith alone -- that is, without any work (action) of any kind on his part. In fact, faith itself is a work. (John 6:28,29). Availing faith is a working faith (Gal. 5:6). Living faith is working faith (James 2). The work of baptism, or of repentance, or of confessing with the mouth, no more makes our justification "of works" (in the sense of merit), nor nullifies its being a "gift of God", than the work of believing does.

Somehow, the idea has gotten around that if man is required to do anything in order to be saved, then his salvation is no more of grace. Yet, the Bible clearly teaches that faith, itself, is a work that man does in order to be saved. We have already seen that faith is called a work. It is done by man: "For with the heart **man believeth** unto righteousness." (Rom. 10:10)

We are saved by faith --but not by faith only. We are justified "by works" in that we must do the works demanded by faith in order to be saved and to stay saved. But it is not "of works" in the sense of perfect performance of God's way of righteousness. We must accept this grace (forgiveness/or pardon) by doing what He says we must do to be saved. If one says there is nothing to do, then what of believing itself? Is that not something we must do? What of repentance? What of baptism? (See Acts 2:38).

**We Are Simply Christians
Without Being Members Of Any
Denomination And You Can Be Too!**

The Work Of An Evangelist

"But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Tim. 4:5). There is woeful lack of understanding among brethren as to the work of an evangelist. While all the reasons for this may not be known, it is certain that, to some extent, denominational concepts have molded the thinking of some who have not bothered to search the scriptures to see what the Lord taught about it. Denominationalism has its "clergy-laity" distinctions unknown to the New Testament. This concept has resulted in undue power falling into the hands of preachers, and the further robbing of many of the blessings of services which all Christians should perform.

What His Work Is Not

(1) It is not the duty (nor the right) of an evangelist to "take over the work." A few years ago a brother asked me when I was moving to a certain place to "take over the church." I informed him that I was not going to "take over the church" at all, that the congregation had elders to oversee the flock, to rule, and to watch for souls, including my own, and that I was simply going to labor with them in preaching and teaching of the gospel. Even where there are no elders, preachers are not to rule. A preacher has one voice in business matters, along with other faithful men, but no more. It is regrettable that there are some preachers who are determined to "rule or ruin."

(2) It is not his work to help the church "climb the social ladder." Some are disposed to put great store by what they call being a "good mixer". Preachers, like other Christians, should be conversant with ordinary social amenities (evidently some are not), should show hospitality, and not withdraw themselves into ivory towers of isolation from the brethren with whom they work. But there are some who want us to "mix" with the fraternal orders and business clubs of the town, court the favor of the ministerial alliance and in general pursue the course of increasing the prestige of the church in the community. All Christians, including preachers, should conduct themselves honorably in all things. When that is done then God is glorified and the church will be "in favor" with honest people. But it is not the work of a preacher to be some sort of social butterfly flitting here and there to satisfy all the social aspirations of some untaught members.

(3) It is not his work to be a church coach, planning and executing recreational activities for the young or older members.

(4) It is not the work of an evangelist to be the official visitor of the sick as the bona fide representative of the congregation. As a Christian, he shares with all other Christians a responsibility toward the sick, but that is not his duty because

he is a preacher.

What His Work Is

(1) He is to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). An evangelist is a herald of good news, the word coming from the same root as the word "gospel". "Preacher" means "proclaimer". He is to be an instructor (2 Tim. 2:25), and a good minister (servant) of Christ (1 Tim. 4:6). His service of proclaiming and instructing is to be done both publicly and privately as opportunity arises (Acts 20:20). Some men pride themselves on being great pulpiteers, but are deficient in personal teaching. Others develop great skill in "personal work" but give little attention to the effectiveness of their public teaching. Both are deficiencies.

Jesus often taught the individual (Nicodemus, the woman at the well, Zacchaeus). Phillip could reach great crowds in Samaria and then go teach and convert one man (Acts 8:5-39).

Notice the restrictive nature of what is to be preached- "the word." There is no place left for opinion ("it seems to me", "probably", "maybe", "perhaps"), for book reviews, PTA talks in the pulpit, philosophical disputations and speculative theories. It is the "engrafted word" which is able to save the soul (Jas. 1:21). The preaching of that word involves reproving error, rebuking ungodliness and exhorting to faithfulness (2 Tim. 4:1-5). This is to be done with "all longsuffering and doctrine."

(2) In order to "preach the word" it is necessary to "give attendance to reading" (1 Tim. 4:13), to "meditate upon these things" (verse 16) that our "profiting may appear to all" (verse 15). Who can teach what he does not know? Who knows what he has not studied? This requires good translations, books and more books. These are the tools of an evangelist. Carpenters need hammers and saws, mechanics need wrenches, and preachers need books. Then there must be a generous portion of time spent in diligent study. Paul had "books, but especially the parchments" (2 Tim. 4:13). It is a mistake not to add useful tools of study as finances permit. But it is also a grave mistake to neglect the study of the actual text of what God said while giving most of our study time to what men have said about what God said.

If a preacher allows himself to become the errand boy for the congregation, or the official arbiter of all marriage problems so that he has little time to study, it will soon become apparent. He will arise to speak having to say something but having nothing to say. Time will hang heavy on his hands and will impose his lack of preparation on a people whose patience will gradually wear thin. This is commonly known as "running out of soap". Audiences will have much more confidence in what a

man teaches when it is evident that he has studied the matter through and knows whereof he speaks.

Most local preachers have five or six public lessons to present each week (not counting gospel meetings, bulletin and newspaper articles, and sometimes radio programs which require extra time and preparation), to say nothing of occasions for private studies. Besides that, every preacher needs to discipline himself to study subjects for his own edification, and not just because he has to "get up a lesson." Such diligence will greatly enrich his teaching and edify his hearers. Having devoted himself to the will of God, he can then "speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority" (Tit. 2:15).

Faulty concepts, unscriptural and unreasonable demands, and malpractice on the part of some preachers have created much ill-will within congregations and have contributed to the serious shortage of gospel preachers. The work of an evangelist is vital to the well-being of the kingdom of God and should neither be retarded by untaught brethren nor by lazy and inefficient preachers.

Connie W. Adams

"SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES"

LOOKING FOR PERFECTION?

By Robert C. Welch

Perhaps you remember the story of the man of ancient times who went about the streets day and night with a lighted lantern looking for an honest man. There are many today who take the same cynical attitude toward the church and Christians. They are looking for a perfect church and perfect Christians, and, until they find them, they are going to do nothing but wait and complain.

Some person says that he is not going to become a Christian because he knows church members who are no better than he is. That is perhaps true but that person is going to spend eternity in hell for his sinful rebellion to God, and he will then have as his associates all those with whom he refused to be seen here. Another refuses to worship with a congregation in which he knows there are hypocrites. Perhaps there are hypocrites in the church, but not any worse than the hypocrisy of the man who claims to be so good that he cannot worship where there are people who are not yet perfect. That man in his pharisaical hypocrisy could not even worship with the apostle Paul for he said that he himself was not perfect (Phil. 3:12).

Some person does not want to worship with a congregation because they are not friendly. Perhaps he has never thought that some people "go to church" to worship God and in so doing they just cannot get the club banquet attitude. Did that person ever complain that the people at the theatre were not friendly? Why does that perfect (?) Christian not get in the church and show the others how to be friendly?

Somebody does not like a congregation because they are not doing enough for the young people, they are doing very little charity work, their singing is poor, their preacher either does not visit or cannot preach, ad infinitum. Of course the church is not perfect, it is made up of human beings, who can only strive for that perfection taught and exemplified by our Lord. But they are much further along that course than the do-nothing cynic. He is doing nothing for the young people, giving nothing to the needy, not singing at all, and having no fellowship in preaching the gospel.

There are those who are looking for perfect men for elders. They have not found such men, and they have no elders in such churches. This is not to be taken as justification for ignoring any of the qualifications which are specified in the Bible. But no man is perfect in character, life, or abilities. This is not to prevent a church from having elders any more than lack of perfection in a preacher is to keep him from preaching. And elders will make mistakes in judgment, life, and overseership. When they make the honest effort to turn from, overcome, and correct such mistakes, they present the example to us to do the same with our mistakes, and are worthy of the respect and honor which the Scriptures enjoin upon the flock.

You are looking for the perfect church with which to unite? When you find it, please refrain from casting your lot with them, for you are the very person who will mar its perfection.

Three Views Of Modesty

By Bill Hall

Three women face the problem of modesty. All three recognize the teaching of I Timothy 2:9: "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array..." but their attitudes toward modesty differ considerably.

The first woman takes the "Where do you draw the line?" view. If someone could draw the line for her (at the knee? ankle? calf?) and prove by the Bible that it was the line separating modesty from immodesty, she would abide by it (she says). But, meanwhile, until someone comes up with the Bible line, she wears what she wants to. If anyone approaches her about her immodesty, she justified herself with one question, "Where do you draw the line?" followed by one observation, "Grandma wore her dress at the ankles, you know."

The second woman takes the "follow the dress code" view. She has listened to sermons on modesty, and has established for herself a code of dress by which she lives religiously: no shorts, no halters, no swimsuit, skirt below the knee, high neck, etc. She is a good woman and is to be commended for her conscientiousness, but it has never "dawned" on her that a woman can dress by her code and still be worldly, suggestive, and immodest in appearance. She would be shocked to learn that reasonable people consider her

to be immodest at times.

The third woman is concerned about dress, but is more concerned about the character of which dress is a reflection. Recognizing Bible teaching concerning purity and chastity, she has become genuinely pure and chaste, not only in conduct, but in heart and disposition. She is pure "through and through," "inside and out," and her clothing reflects that purity. Decency of dress is not a mechanical, "follow a dress code" type of thing with her. It is a natural outgrowth of her modesty from within. While other sisters in Christ grope with I Timothy 2:9, and wonder why the Lord would be so restrictive in their dress, she sees that teaching as being perfectly natural, an obvious supplement to Bible teaching concerning purity and chastity of heart and life.

Her dress reflects her character in other areas. For instance, she seeks to be lady-like in heart and demeanor, and this attitude is reflected in her dress. She remembers the warnings in the scriptures concerning pride, and has become truly "poor in spirit." This is also reflected in her dress. Her dress in every way is a true commentary on her character. One glance reveals that here is a woman who is pure, lady-like, humble, and genuine.

And is this not what I Timothy 2:9 is teaching? The verse says that we are to dress with modesty, shamefacedness, and sobriety. When we all develop these three qualities in our hearts, then-- and only then-- will our problems of dress vanish.

THEOPHILUS

