

How YOU Can Become a CHRISTIAN

You may be in for a surprise! Many people who THINK they are "Christians" are very mixed-up. Here is a CHALLENGE for anyone who sincerely wants to establish a closer contact with the Eternal God.

by Roderick C. Meredith

WHAT DOES Jesus Christ think of the spectacle of *hundreds* of different, competing denominations and sects—each calling themselves "Christian"? Did Christ teach several hundred different methods of salvation and ways of life—or just *one*?

Since the Korean War and the advent of the *hydrogen bomb*, thousands more Americans than ever before are attending church. More and more people are seeking a contact with God. *People are turning to religion.*

But what *kind* of religion? Will just *any* religion do?

Which Church?

Perhaps many thoughtful people have been shocked by the recent articles in the popular national magazines revealing just how careless the average American is about picking which church he attends. But the problem is certainly one for *everyone* to think about.

If you happen to be a church member, how did YOU pick *your* church—*your* theology?

Try to look at the problem objectively—thoughtfully. Before you began attending your particular church exclusively, did you first try to make a careful, unbiased analysis of all the churches to see which one taught the most Bible *truth*? Did you *study* the Bible to make certain of its teaching on various points of doctrine?

Or did you, like so many people, just grow up in your particular faith and *accept* it without ever having really *PROVED* it to yourself?

Think this over. People spend time and effort to determine what clothes they should buy, what car they should drive. A wise young man and woman spend

many hours over a period of *months* getting to really know each others' character before they are willing to make a life contract in physical marriage.

But the average person isn't even *half* as careful when it comes to uniting himself to a church and its doctrines with the hope that this will bring him an *eternal reward* from the very Creator.

Yes, whether we belong to a church or not, *most of us have been very careless* in acquiring our various beliefs in God. We have been SO CARELESS, in fact, that there are over *four hundred* denominations and sects all teaching *different* things in the name of Christ and God.

But the *Bible* says, and *common sense* ought to tell us, that there is only *ONE* right way. The apostle Paul was inspired to write: "There is one body (*church*), and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, ONE FAITH, one baptism" (Eph. 4:4-5).

How can we find the one right way to gain salvation? How can we be sure?

Truth Stands Proving

The first thing to bear in mind is that if any of our beliefs are *true*, they will stand *proving*. If they are *not true*, we should *want* to discover this and *rid ourselves* of this error as soon as possible.

The inspired Paul exhorted: "PROVE *all things*; hold fast that which is *good*" (I Thes. 5:21).

In proving any spiritual matter, we should obey God's admonition to "lean *not* unto thine own understanding" (Pro. 3:5). God's Word also instructs us: "There is a way which *seemeth RIGHT* unto a man, *but* the end thereof are the ways of DEATH" (Pro. 14:12).

Then how are we to *prove* which is *God's* way of salvation? Where is the right doctrine to be found?

"All scripture is given by *inspiration* of God, and is profitable for DOCTRINE, for *reproof*, for *correction*, for *instruction* in righteousness" (II Tim. 3:16). We should get *all our doctrine* from the *Bible*. And we should let the Bible *correct* us and *reprove* us where we are *wrong*.

Will we?

Jesus Christ said: "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word of God*" (Luke 4:4). So Christians are commanded to LIVE by the Bible—to base their very lives on its teachings.

Then if we will honestly lay aside *our* ideas and begin to prove all things by the *Bible*, what better teaching could we follow than that of *Christ* himself. Who knows *better* how to instruct us in Christianity than *Christ*?

Let us put our own ideas and human opinions aside for a moment, and *SEE WHAT JESUS CHRIST SAYS ABOUT THIS MATTER*.

After all, He is the one who really *knows*!

The Christian Way

In Matthew 7, Jesus warned His followers, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for *wide* is the gate, and *broad* is the way that leadeth to DESTRUCTION, and *MANY* there be which go in thereat: Because *strait* is the gate and *narrow* is the way, which leadeth unto LIFE, and *FEW* there be that find it" (verses 13-14).

Notice that Jesus prophesied that *few* would find the way to eternal life. It is not the broad, popular, *easy way* that so many have assumed. Are you sure that you are on the *way* that Jesus taught

would lead to abundant, eternal life?

Jesus warned us to, "Beware of *false prophets*, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. *Ye shall know them by their fruits*. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth *good fruit*; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth *evil fruit*" (verses 15-17). The "fruits," the product, or *results* of true prophets, then, should be a society filled with *love, joy, and PEACE*—the "fruit" the Holy Spirit always produces (Gal. 5:22).

The peoples of western Europe and America have always called themselves "Christian." Our countries are filled with professing Christian churches. Has the "fruit" or result been *love and peace*—OR WAR?

Let's face facts.

Something is terribly WRONG with this so-called "Christian" society of ours. We call Jesus our Lord—but *is He?*

Jesus answers, "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 heaven" (Mat. 7:21).

"Lip service" to Jesus Christ is *not enough!* We must be DOING God's will. We must *act* on Jesus' commands. "And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine, *and doeth them not*, shall be likened unto a *foolish man*, which built his house upon the sand . . . and great was the fall of it" (Mat. 7:26-27).

Jesus taught a definite *way of life*. That *way* is *obedience* to the will of God the Father. Anyone professing to be a Christian, but going a *different way*, is "likened unto a foolish man."

Jesus cried, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46).

We are rather ridiculous, aren't we? There are plenty of names in the world to choose from. But WHY do individuals, churches, and nations call themselves "Christian" while they continue to teach and practice an entirely *different way* than that taught by Christ?

Bible Is Consistent

The religious ideas and teachings of *men are varied and confused*. Even the great denominations have repeatedly *changed* their doctrines from time to

time. But the teaching of the Bible is *consistent and unchanging*.

The true servants of God in all ages have written and taught the same basic *way of obedience* to God. "Thy **WORD** is *truth*," Jesus said (John 17:17). And again He said, "The scripture *cannot* be broken" (John 10:35). *God does not contradict himself in His inspired Word*. We should always bear this in mind in studying the Bible.

So Jesus continued to teach the same truths all through His ministry, and the apostles preached the *same gospel*—not something different.

Later in Jesus' ministry, one asked Him, "Good master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life."

Jesus answered, "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, *keep the commandments*" (Mat. 19:16-17).

This is the *way* Jesus taught would lead to eternal life. He said nothing about a meaningless ceremony of "joining" a church and "accepting" Him as Savior. He taught that if He is to be your Lord you have to *obey* Him.

Did Jesus know what He was talking about?

Many organizations of men seem to think He didn't, for they have substituted a dead faith and belief in His *person*, but deny the *way* of salvation which He taught.

The apostles were to continue preaching the *same* message Jesus did. Before His ascension to heaven, He commanded them to go forth and instruct all nations, "teaching them to observe *all things* whatsoever I have commanded you" (Mat. 28:20).

The Apostles Teaching

The apostle Paul taught the *same way of life* that Jesus did, and he recognized that *way as being what "Christianity" is!* He speaks of having formerly persecuted the Christians as follows: "And I persecuted *this WAY* unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4).

In Paul's day, Christianity was recognized as a *way of life*.

Of exactly *what* does this *way of life* consist?

The apostle Peter answers, "For even

hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps*: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Pet. 2:21-22). Jesus gave up His own will and suffered for us. He did no sin. He set us an *example* that we should follow His steps. This, Peter says, is our "calling."

In Galatians 2:20, Paul explains this even further. "I am crucified with Christ," he writes, "yet I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Could anything be plainer?

Paul wrote that he had crucified his own will, and that CHRIST was living in him—totally directing his life. He was not only living by faith *in*, but by the very faith *of*, the Son of God.

How to be a Christian

No human being can naturally and normally yield himself to obey God and follow Christ's example as he must.

As Paul explains, this is so, "Because the *carnal mind is enmity against God*: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. *Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his*" (Rom. 8:7-9).

We must have Christ's Spirit within us—guiding our every thought and action—to be recognized as His. How may we receive God's Spirit?

When God's church first began on the day of Pentecost, Peter gave the answer to this question. "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 Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

We have to realize our own ways are wrong, that they have brought on this war and suffering about us, and be willing to *repent* and completely turn from our former ways and let God rule our lives. Then we should be *baptized*, which Paul explains in Romans 6:1-6 is the outward sign of our willingness to completely *bury* our old self in a watery grave and come up to walk in newness

of life—following Jesus' example.

Then we are promised the "gift" of the Holy Spirit to guide us in obeying and following Christ—our *real* Lord and Master.

God's Spirit is a part of His own *character* placed within us to enable us to live *as we should*. Paul explains that, "the *love of God* is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5).

There are many *human ideas* about how we should express this love every Christian should have. *But God Himself tells us clearly in His Word.*

"For this is the *love of God*, THAT WE KEEP HIS COMMANDMENTS: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

Yes, God's love will always lead us to obey Him, to follow Jesus' example, and thus to be a *real Christian*.

Perhaps the best definition of a "Christian" contained in any one verse of the Bible is found in 1 John 2:6. The Weymouth translation makes the intended meaning more clear than the older King James wording. It reads: "He who says that he abides in him *is bound to live as he lived.*"

How many of today's "Christians" feel BOUND to live as Jesus did?

Key to Conversion

The complete, *unconditional surrender* of one's self to God and to Christ as Savior *and Master* is the key to real conversion.

If *you* would really be a Christian—*examine yourself*. Have you come to the place where you *believe* in the Creator God and in the Bible as His Word—His inspired revelation to man? Are you willing to totally SURRENDER your will to *obey His Word—to study it honestly, zealously, and to live by it?*

Are you ready to actually GIVE your life to Christ—yielding *completely*, willingly, so that He may *live His life in you* through the Holy Spirit? Are you willing to quit arguing and say, "Yes, Lord, *THY will be done?*"

If you sincerely feel this way, you should be *baptized*, immersed in water—as an outward sign of your willingness to completely BURY the old self in full surrender to Christ. "Sprinkling" or "pouring" do not picture this burial. Christ taught water baptism, and so did all the apostles and the inspired New Testament church.

If you are in doubt about this point, or if you want more information about the *necessity and meaning* of water bap-

tism, write *today* for Mr. Armstrong's *free* booklet on "*Water Baptism.*"

To really be *Christians*, we need to study the Bible as most of us never have before, noticing especially the example and teaching of Christ, and *repent* of our ways and surrender our lives to God in *baptism* that we may receive His Spirit to guide us.

If you feel that this is the very *work of God*—preaching Christ's message as a *witness* to this dying world, perhaps you would like to write us about being baptized. Each summer we send out teams of ministers or advanced, competent ministerial students from Ambassador College to baptize people all over the United States who request it. And you readers in Britain may now have this same opportunity by contacting our London office.

So if *you* would like to make the decision to *give your very life* to God, send us your name and address today to be put on our baptizing list.

May God help you to take this step if you are truly ready—and may He help you to find the *glorious new and happy life of a true Christian*—led by the Holy Spirit—and fulfilling the *great purpose* of human existence.