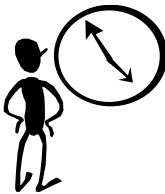


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### Time of Assembly



#### **Sunday:**

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.  
Worship 10:00 a.m.  
(every other week)

Worship 5:00 p.m.

#### **Wednesday:**

Bible Study 7:00 p. m.

## Is Sincerity All We Need?

By Jefferson David Tant

A common expression I hear from time to time about religion is, "It doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you are sincere."

Well, sincerity is not only good, but it is necessary in whatever activity in which we are engaged. This is fundamental in our family relationships, our business relationships, and whatever else in which we may be involved. And I have been told that sincerity is all we need in our spiritual relationship with God. An acquaintance told me, "It doesn't matter what you believe, so long as you are sincere." This may be a common thought among many, but can we find support for this in the Bible — God's Word?

Consider Saul of Tarsus, who came to be identified as the Apostle Paul after his conversion from Judaism to Christ back many years ago. If you have any knowledge of the Bible's New Testament, you are probably aware that when the first Christian martyr, Stephen, was stoned to death in Acts 7. A prominent Pharisee, Saul of Tarsus, was among those who were killing Stephen. Note what is written in Acts 8:1: "*Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death....*"

**Question:** Was Saul sincere in what he was doing? Obviously so, as he recounted in Acts 26:9-10: "*So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them.*"

Also note Paul's words as he made his defense before the Council in Acts 23:1: "*Paul, looking intently at the Council, said, "Brethren, I have lived my life with a perfectly good*

*conscience before God up to this day."*

Who can dispute the fact that Saul was absolutely sincere in assisting in the murder of Stephen? Note that they both believed in the same God, as He is the same God in both the Old and New Testaments. It is obvious that Paul's conscience was mistaken. Even though he was very sincere in what he was doing, he was sinning by helping to murder a Christian.

Now, let's move up several centuries to an event titled "The Mountain Meadows Massacre" of September 7–11, 1857. This was a series of attacks that resulted in the mass murder of at least 120 members of the Baker–Fancher emigrant wagon train passing through Utah. It was perpetrated by Mormon settlers under the direction of Mormon president Brigham Young. The wagon train, made up mostly of families from Arkansas, was bound for California, traveling on the Old Spanish Trail that passed through the Territory.

**Question #1:** Did these Mormons believe in God? Yes.

**Question #2:** Were these Mormons sincere in their murders, thinking they were doing God's will? Again, the answer is "Yes."

**Question #3:** Do you believe God will overlook their sin just because they were sincere? I believe we would agree that the answer to question #3 is "No."

On November 18, 1978, Jim Jones led his "Christian" followers into a mass suicide in Guyana, South America, which left over 900 dead and is known as the "Jonestown Massacre" I would suppose they were all "sincere" in what they were doing. But what a tragedy.

Now consider some issues concerning the 42,000 different denominations today that claim to be "Christian." It is evident that they all teach something different from the Bible. If they taught the same thing as the Bible, we wouldn't need the Creeds and Manuals, etc. We believe that the Bible teaches Truth, and Truth does not contradict itself. But the Baptist Manual differs from the Catholic Catechism and from the Methodist Discipline. If all the 42,000 different creeds and manuals taught the same thing as the Bible, we wouldn't need them.

We have evidence that the Bible was inspired by God. Is there any evidence that the Book of Mormon, the Standard Manual for Baptist Churches, Luther's Catechism, the Catholic Catechism, or the thousands of other denominational creeds were inspired by God? Absolutely not! They all contradict one another, and God does not contradict himself.

In Christ's prayer to the Father for his disciples, he prayed "*Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth*" (John 17:17). Then Christ continued His prayer: "*I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me*" (John 17:20-21).

Note that Christ prayed that all of His followers might be “one” even as Christ and the Father are one—united. So, how would we view the “oneness” of God? Could it be that the Father is a Baptist, the Son a Jehovah’s Witness, and the Holy Spirit an Episcopalian? Who would contend for something like that? Therefore, what we have on earth is not the answer to Christ’s prayer. We have division rather than unity or oneness.

Consider just a few instances where the doctrines of men contradict what the Bible teaches.

A confusing statement in *Hiscox Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* is on page 22: "It is most likely that in the Apostolic Age when there was but 'one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,' and no differing denominations existed... 'baptism was the door into the church.' Now, it is different... The churches therefore have candidates ... give their 'experience,' and then their reception is decided by a vote of the members."

Who said it was now "different?" My Bible still reads the same as it did in the first century, and voting to receive members is not in it.

Methodists and other denominations sprinkle water for baptism. All scholars agree that the original Biblical Greek shows that the word “*baptizo*” means “immersion.” But the Methodist Church evidently has a new book of doctrine that supplants the Bible.

Note the following quote: “We have therefore expected that the DISCIPLINE would be administered, not merely as a legal document, but as a revelation of the Holy Spirit working in and through our people.” Note that the Church places this human document on the same level as the Bible, the revelation of God.

**Question:** Does this new revelation change anything that was in the old revelation, the Bible? It certainly does, including the change of frequency in observing the Lord’s Supper, changing baptism from immersion in water to sprinkling, changing the role of women in the church, etc.

**Question:** Why did God give a new revelation only to the Methodist Church? Why not to the Catholics, Presbyterians, etc., etc., etc.?

It is obvious that the Methodist Discipline and the church’s practices differ in various ways from the teaching of God’s Word — the Bible. A warning from God’s word addresses this, as well as any other deviation or change in any church’s book of doctrine.

*“I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book”*  
(Revelation 22:18-19).

Another example from the thousands we could mention relates to the Catholic

practice of calling their clergy "Father." When I open the pages of God's Word, I come across the following words: "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven." (Matthew 23:9) This is not forbidding a child to use that word for his father in the flesh but does forbid using the word for a spiritual title. So, if a Catholic is sincere in calling a priest "Father," does that make it right to violate one of God's prohibitions? Judge for yourself.

We would assume Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Christian Scientist Church, was sincere when she wrote in the church's Manual, No. XVIII: "No more communion... The Mother Church of Christ, Scientist, shall observe no more Communion seasons."

Thus, with the stroke of a pen, Mrs. Eddy discards one of the most important memorials that God has ever given man -- the Lord's Supper, also referred to as Communion, which Christ gave as a weekly reminder of his death and resurrection. Who shall we follow? Jesus Christ or Mary Baker Eddy? I'll choose the words of an old song: "I will follow Jesus, standing for the right."

Luke's gospel gives us an account of the Last Supper as Christ spoke to the Twelve: "And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, *"This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me"* (Luke 22:19).

Would we assume Mrs. Eddy was sincere when she wrote her prohibition? I guess we would. So, because she was "sincere" does that mean God will accept the church's refusal to honor what God has given as a memorial? You know the answer.

We could continue citing the contradictions between the doctrines of the 42,000 or so denominations and the Word of God, but those cited show that the doctrines of men contradict God's Word. The problem with "doctrines of men" is not new today. They have been around for ages, and Christ pointed out this problem to the Jewish religious leaders while on the earth. *"But in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men"* (Matthew 15:9).

And just what are the "precepts of men?" Would they not be the creeds, manuals, catechisms, and dogmas that have originated in the minds of men?

Dear Reader, our only hope of salvation is in following the truth of God's word. And yes, we must be sincere in doing so, but sincerity apart from truth is not enough. Were Adam and Eve sincere when they ate the forbidden fruit? I suppose so, for Satan had convinced them that it was OK. But it didn't turn out well for them.

Salvation will come from following God's Word, not the doctrines of men.

