

Can Christians Help Support The Salvation Army?

Every year there are many who help support the Salvation Army, not knowing it is a religious denomination. Every Christian I know, who has given to this denomination in the past, has stopped helping as soon as they learned what they were supporting.

Why did they stop? Because John said, *"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds"* (II John 10-11).

The Salvation Army is a denomination which split off from the Methodist Church in 1861. They preach their doctrines in 89 countries, and have one and one-half million members. Their denominational headquarters in the United States is in Verona, New Jersey.

Notice carefully some of the many doctrines this denomination teaches. In doing so, you will be able to easily see why members of the Lord's body cannot support this cause. Yes, they do a lot of good, but yes, they also teach a lot of error to those they help.

This denomination teaches that men are born sinners. Article 5 of their creed book (Handbook of Doctrine) says all men are totally depraved, and have become sinners as a consequence of Adam and Eve's fall. Page 83 states man is a sinner by inheritance. Page 85 teaches man is born a sinner.

The Bible teaches, *"They are all gone out of the way"* (Romans 3:12). God does not say, "They are born out of the way." Jesus said, *"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3).

The Salvation Army teaches no one can understand the Bible without the direct help of the Holy Spirit (Handbook of Doctrine, pp. 2, 133-134). However, in no place does the Bible teach men must receive the direct help of the Holy Spirit in order to understand and know the truth.

The Salvation Army teaches those they help that salvation is at the point of faith. Their creed book devotes nine whole pages, trying to prove baptism is not essential to salvation (pp. 180-188).

Page 188 of their creed book teaches baptism and the Lord's Supper should not be practiced at all today. Their members are not to speak against those religions which practice baptism and the Lord's Supper, unless those religions teach these are essential.

But, of course, the Lord's church does teach baptism is essential. Why? Because the Bible says: *"Repent, and be baptized ... for the remission of sins"* (Acts 2:38). We also teach the Lord's Supper is essential in the life of a Christian. Why? Because Jesus said do it "in remembrance of me" (I Corinthians 11:24-25). We are told to show the Lord's death till He comes (I Corinthians 11:26).

The Salvation Army also teaches that a Christian can be sanctified, so as to never sin. Their creed says a sanctified Christian will be tempted, but as Jesus never sinned, so we will never sin. It says the sanctified Christian can be mistaken in judgment, but even that is less likely to happen (pp. 145-165). In contrast, sanctification in the Bible means a Christian is set apart as holy to God. Never does it mean a Christian has reached the point of never sinning (I John 1:8-10), The church at Corinth was sanctified (I Corinthians 1:2). But as one reads 1 Corinthians, he will read of several sins committed by these sanctified Christians.

These are just a few of the many reasons why Christians should not support The Salvation Army.

- by Danny Pettus

When Was Jesus Born?

While it has become common to assign December 25th as the birth date of Jesus, there is an abundance of evidence which suggests that He surely was NOT born on this date. Consider:

"Now there were in the same country shepherds abiding out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night." (Luke 2:8). According to this statement, Jesus cannot have been born in December, in the middle of the rainy season as has been since the fourth century supposed... According to the Rabbins, the driving forth of the flocks took place in March, the

bringing in of them in November..." (Critical and Exegetical Handbook To The Gospels of Mark and Luke, H.A. W. Meyer, pg. 273)

"It was a custom among the Jews to send out their sheep to the deserts, about the Passover, and bring them home at the commencement of the first rain; during the time they were out, the shepherds watched them night and day. As the Passover occurred in the spring, and the first rain began early in... November, we find that the sheep were kept out in the open country during the whole of summer. And as these shepherds had not yet brought home their flocks, it is a presumptive argument that... our Lord was not born on the 25th of December, when no flocks were out in the fields. "(Adam Clarke's Commentary, pg. 857)

How then has December 25th come to be the day assigned as the birthday of Jesus? There is unanimous agreement among historians that this date was selected in the fourth century by the apostate Roman church. Their apparent interest was to divert the pagan practice of worshiping the Sun during the winter solstice. There is no Bible information that tells us on what day Jesus was born, and no Bible instruction to have a special religious observance such as Christmas.

- by Greg Gwin

What We KNOW About Christmas

The world is fully into the seasonal observance of Christmas. While there are many myths and misconceptions about Christmas, there are some facts that we KNOW. For instance:

- 1) We know that the Bible does not reveal the date of Jesus' birth. God simply did not choose to supply this information.
- 2) Biblical evidence indicates that Jesus was almost certainly NOT born on December 25th. The fact that shepherds were in the field at night tending their flocks on the night that Jesus was born points to a date that would have been in a warmer month of the year. By late December the flocks would not have been kept out in the fields at night. *(See additional article in today's bulletin for authoritative references.)*
- 3) The religious observance of Jesus' birth did not begin until several centuries after the New Testament was written. There is nothing in the New Testament that indicates a special "Christmas" celebration by first century Christians.
- 4) Many historical references confirm that December 25th was designated by the Catholic Church as a day to celebrate the birth of Christ. This celebration first took place in Rome around 350 AD. There is clear evidence that this date was chosen to divert a longstanding pagan tradition of worshiping the sun at this time of year.
- 5) We KNOW that Jesus was born of a virgin in Bethlehem about 2,000 years ago. He came to save lost men from their sins (Luke 19:10). We are grateful beyond measure – every day - for the wonderful gift that God gave us in sending His Son to this earth. But the Scriptures give us no instruction for a special religious observance of His birth.

- by Greg Gwin