

IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE . . .

WHAT I BELIEVE

By Richard Ginder

Wean the baby on milk or gin.
Shine your shoes with black or tan polish.
Put new tires or retreads on your car.
It's all the same!

Drink paregoric or ginger ale.
Eat bacon or limburger for breakfast.
Go to church or don't go.
It doesn't make any difference!

BUT that doesn't make sense. Everybody knows that gin is far too strong for a baby—and tan polish on black shoes will make an awful mess— and you won't ride as far on retreads as on new tyres. Everybody knows that a glass of paregoric would kill a horse—limburger is a little strong as a breakfast food— but so many people stop right there. They will say that whether or not you go to church -- that is your own business, and it doesn't make much difference in the long run. Which is so much nonsense.

God put us here. We are here for a purpose and we must find out what that purpose is.

We are in the driver's seat, behind the wheel, and if we do not find out how to steer; what road to take— we are bound to crack up sooner or later.

We all know that there will be a life after death—an everlasting life. Wouldn't we be foolish if we didn't try to find out something about it? So many of us jump off at the deep end without having the least idea of what is in store for us.

If we want to take out a little insurance policy, we start looking around and reading advertisements. We call up the A.M.P. agent and compare his rates with the Prudential man's.

If we decide on a new car, we think a long time before we decide on a Ford, or a Holden, or a Toyota.

Why, if we only want a new rug for the dining-room, we shop around and visit one store after another.

But when it comes to everlasting life, --that is when we close our eyes and hope for the best.

Suppose you should wake up some day and find yourself in hell! Not a very pleasant thought, but then not all truth is pleasant. I must have a tooth pulled soon. I don't like the idea very much. But like it or not, it's the truth; and unless I have that tooth out, my cheek will soon be as big as a ripe tomato.

Right now there are over 400,000,000 people who agree that there is a hell. Maybe you don't—and maybe you're wrong.

You see, there are some things we just have to face—even as I have to worry about that tooth. And you would get quite a jolt if you were to wake up on the other side of the grave to find that you had spent this life barking up the wrong tree—to find that you were one of those standing at the left of the Judge instead of the right. It's possible, you know!

There is such a thing as a fool's paradise. The people of Germany, for instance, lived there until one day they woke up and found the Allied legions marching down the main streets of Berlin. They had thought Germany could not lose. Until the last, they had thought their armies were unbeatable. They were surprised. And painfully!

HOW can you be sure you won't some day get a like uncomfortable surprise?

PERHAPS you already go to church. Perhaps you are a devout Christian. In that event, we take off our hat to you. You are to be congratulated—praised for your piety and devotion in an age gone pleasure-mad. If you can find time for God now, be sure that He will find time for you later; and if you own Him in this life, He will own you in the next.

Do you believe that yours is the right church? If you're a Baptist, what reason have you for not being a Methodist?

And if you're a Methodist, why aren't you a Presbyterian? Have you ever thought about that?—or are you one of those kind souls who say “It doesn't make any difference what church you go to; we're all headed for heaven, but by different paths”?

I wonder if Jesus Christ would agree. He came to earth and lived with us about thirty-three years. And He felt very strongly on some points. For instance, He told Nicodemus—“Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Jn. iii, 5). That's pretty strong. It's a case of either-or. No two ways about it. And at first all Christians read it just as it stood, and they had their children baptized as soon as possible. But how many Christians still believe in Baptism? Jesus did not change. Some of us must have. Then Baptism must be as necessary right now, as it was in Christ's time—and some of us must be wrong.

FROM the Scriptures, it's as plain as the nose on your face that Jesus was God. Just look at these texts:

Matthew x, 33; xi, 27; xvi, 13-17; xxvi, 63; Mark: viii, 38; Luke: x, 22; xxii, 9; xxiv, 49; John: i, 1.5; iii, 35; v, 19-21.22- 25.30; x, 30-37-38; xiv, 9.10.12; Romans: ix,5; Colossians: i, 13-20; Phillipians: ii, 5-11.

And still many, many Christians deny that Jesus was God. Now, He either was or He wasn't, and someone must be wrong. And what a whale of a difference it makes! If He was God, then I believe that by doing His bidding, I can save my soul. If He was not God, then I'll do just as well to sit home Sunday mornings and read the paper. I'd as soon do honour to the memory of Caesar or Napoleon as to Jesus Christ—that is, if He wasn't God.

It is not right, then, to say that we are all going to heaven, but by different roads. Suppose four of us want to get to Sydney. One of us takes a southbound train—another drives due north; one starts westward on a bicycle—and one of us goes to the station, asks about the proper direction, buys his ticket, and gets there in the surest possible way.

There is a right way of doing things; and if Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity, came to earth that He might lead men back to God, then you may be sure that He mapped out the surest possible route, and told men all about it. He couldn't do otherwise. He was God. And if the idea of four people starting off for Sydney in four different directions strikes us as queer, how must it seem to God, looking down on us struggling toward heaven—one believing that Baptism is as necessary to salvation as the battery to a car, another believing that it is about as necessary as the cigar-lighter; one believing that Jesus was God—another, that He was not; that there is a hell—that there is not; *all this, after Jesus came to earth and told us just what was what about the whole thing.*

No—there are Methodists and Presbyterians, Baptists and United Brethren, Episcopalians and Catholics, Mormons and Christian Scientists, and all kinds of people teaching all kinds of things. *They can't all be right.* If they all agreed, they could all unite; but they are all different and, what's worse, they all claim to have the truth.

If a man has any kind of a head on his shoulders, he'll see that Jesus would want him to nose around and get hold of the right church—*the best, the authorized, God's own roadmap through life.*

It is not enough to say— “My father's church is good enough for me.” Suppose St. Paul had said that! Suppose the Romans, and the Ephesians, and the Corinthians had felt that way when the apostles first preached to them! It might be that one of our forefathers made a mistake — or let politics get in the way of his better judgment—or was forced against his will from one church to another.

No.—Each man must make the quest for himself.

Suppose, now, that you were commissioned—as Christ was—to spread the good news of the Gospel from one end of the earth to the other. How would you go about it?

WELL, you would work as long as you could, and then you would probably appoint a superintendent, to take over after you had died. You would show him just how you wanted things to run after your death. You would set up a regular organization, with power to let people in and keep crackpots out of your society. In any event, it would be a definitely organized Society, with one head, and various men beneath him, in charge, to see that things went properly, each in his own corner of the globe—just as men do today. In every great business enterprise there is some kind of manager at the head with power to hire and fire, with authority to give orders and have them obeyed. Under him there are heads of various departments and managers of various territories in which the business operates. Under these are clerks, salesmen, etc. And every small business has at least a head. You can't run even a corner grocery store without a responsible head.

And that is just what Christ did. He appointed one man and gave him power to superintend the whole Church. This

man was St. Peter:

“I say to thee: that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt. xvi, 18.)

This superintendent was to have all the power he needed for his office. What good is the head of a house if he cannot say who is to come in and who to stay out of his house?

“And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven” (Mt. xvi, 19.)

YOU can see, then, that Christ had one definite society in mind, and that one cannot become a member of that society just for the saying so.

I can call myself a member of the Y. M. C. A., or Rotary, or Apex, until I'm black in the face; but my saying so doesn't do a bit of good. Until I have presented myself to the local secretary, and agreed to abide by the rules, and have been accepted, I'm just plain, ordinary Citizen John Doe.

Listen to this:

“If thy brother shall offend against thee, go, and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee, thou shalt gain thy brother.”

“And if he will not hear thee, take with thee one or two more: that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand.”

“And if he will not hear them; tell the Church. And if he will not hear the Church, let him be to thee as the heathen and publican.”

“Amen I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven” (Mt. xviii, 15-18).

WHOM did Christ mean by YOU in that last verse? He was speaking to the apostles—the governing body of His Church. He could not have meant everybody, for where everybody can bind and loose, then there is no one left to be bound or loosed.

There must be a church—a definite organization—with power to admit and reject members: to consider unworthy brethren as “the heathen and the publican.” And there must be a governing body with power to bind and loose the members of that church.

NOW: what is to prevent the rejected of the Church—the one accounted a “heathen and a publican” by the faithful—what is to hinder him from starting up his own little church?—and running competition to the mother Church? It would be a grand way to get square! But see how foolish the idea is. Because there can be only one church with the authority of Christ—only one church with the power to bind and loose. How could there be two? For what the one bound, the other would loose and you would have contradictions and confusion instead of a straight road to heaven.

To speak of, say, myself starting up a new church is like speaking of starting a new government here in Australia. I could coin money and print banknotes; they might look like the genuine articles—they might feel all right—but they would be worthless all the same. There is one government with the authority to coin money—the federal government. *And* there is only one church with the authority of Christ.

BUT which is the Church with the authority of Christ? Right here and now—which is the Church founded by Jesus Christ?

THIS is an important question—the most important issue you have ever faced. This is a matter which involves eternity—your own everlasting soul. You must face it fearlessly, resolved to follow the result of your findings wherever they may lead you. The answer may be unexpected—it may be unpleasant—but remember: “What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul” (Mt. xvi, 26)?

You are resolved to follow Christ, whatever the cost. This little pamphlet, however you came by it, may well be the very Providence of God, intervening on your behalf.

The question of the true church is a matter of pure history. Just take any one church and follow it back to the time it received its charter from Christ; that is, you must find out whether St. Peter and the apostles were members of that church. If not, then you must find out what sect they did belong to. *For their church is the Church of Christ, and the*

one you should belong to.

Very well. We'll demonstrate this idea, choosing a sect at random.

Perhaps you are a Methodist. Who was the founder of Methodism? John Wesley, of course. But John Wesley was not born until 1703, so that Christ and His apostles never even heard of Methodism. They lived sixteen centuries before.

But what was John Wesley before he founded Methodism? He was an Anglican (Episcopalian, in the United States). So then Methodism was an offshoot of Anglicanism. But who founded the Anglican Church? Its head, since 1534, has been the King of England. It was in 1534 that an Act of Parliament declared the English sovereign "the only supreme head on earth of the Church of England" —which is the Anglican (Episcopalian) Church.

AND who had been "the only supreme head on earth" of the English Church before 1534? History says it was the Holy Father of Christendom, Clement VII, the Bishop of Rome, even as St. Peter had been Bishop of Rome. Clement VII, then, through the successive laying on of hands from the time of St. Peter, received his function as foundation stone of the Church, with its attendant power of binding and loosing its members.

And when Clement VII heard the news of King Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy, he called together his bishops, the successors of the apostles, and sadly announced that, as the King of England would no longer listen to the Church, then the Church must regard him as a heathen and a publican. Henry was out of the fold, with no more power to head a church of his own, than I have to print postage-stamps.

And in some similar way each of the 250 and more Christian sects now operating throughout the world came into existence. Each one of them stemmed out from the Church of Rome or from some group that had stemmed out from the Roman Church.

CAN it be, then, that the church presided over by the Bishop of Rome is the true Church?

Well, the Bishops of Rome are the successors of St. Peter, who was the first Bishop of Rome and the Chief of the Apostles, whom the Lord commanded to feed, not only His lambs, but His sheep as well (Jn. xxi, 16-17). They inherit the power of binding and loosing, besides the special assistance of the Master—"Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and thou being once converted, *confirm thy brethren*" (Lk. xxii, 31-2) -

THE Bishops of Rome have carefully kept the heritage of truth, left by Jesus, from contamination. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit ("Behold I am with you all days, even to the end of the world" Mt. xxviii, 20; see also Jn. xiv, 26; xvi, 13; Acts i, 8; Ps. cxliv, 13; Jn. xx, 21.3) —under this guidance, they have carefully examined all the teachings in the Church. Where they have discovered error, they have reproved it and, where necessary, dismissed those in error from the ranks of the faithful as they were forced to do, for instance, in the case of the King of England.

The Bishops of Rome have always presided over the Church of Christ. One bishop living in the early centuries of the Church, expressed the rallying cry of Christianity when he wrote—"Where Peter is, there is the Church."

The Bishop of Rome still presides over the Church of Christ. Our Holy Father, the Pope, successor of St. Peter is vested with those original powers, given to the Chief of the Apostles.

Most probably there is a Catholic church near you, or if not near, then not many miles away. There must be. Christ commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations (Mt. xxviii, 18-20). Not just to England, or to Scotland, or to America. The Gospel is for everyone. Columbus, when he came to America, brought Catholic priests with him; there were no non-Catholic ministers then.

From Hudson Bay all the way down to Cape Horn—in China, in Africa, in Australia—everywhere, heroic men are going on with the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as He gave it to His apostles.

Look into your own heart. Think the thing through.

One last word: pray, pray in this fashion: "God, that I may see the truth and have the strength to accept it!" — "God, grant that I may see the Catholic Church as you see it."

**If I am right Thy grace impart
Still in that right to stay.
If I am wrong, then give me heart
To find a better way.**