

THE GREENWOOD BULLETIN

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The Man Who Tried Three Religions

By W. Frank Walton

"Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task" ([Acts 6:3](#)).

The growing Jerusalem church consisted of converted Hebrews from Jerusalem ([Acts 3:13; 4:50](#)) and Hellenistic Jews "from every nation" ([Acts 2:5](#)). The Hellenistic widows' needs in the church were being overlooked, so the apostles' put seven spiritual "men of good reputation" in charge of this benevolent task ([Acts 6:1-12](#)).

How many can you name from memory of these early benevolent servants in the Jerusalem church? Probably Stephen, later the first martyr (Acts 7), and Philip, who later devoted himself to evangelistic work ([Acts 8:5](#)). All seven men in this list have Greek names. These are Hellenistic Jews,

except one man listed last: ... Nicolas, the proselyte from Antioch" ([Acts 6:5](#)).

Nicolas is the first Gentile convert documented in Acts. Previously, he had converted from Gentile paganism to Judaism. Greek paganism was frightfully superstitious and morally bankrupt. In this idolatrous darkness, Nicolas the Gentile was attracted to the goodness and righteousness of the Jewish religion ([Deuteronomy 4:6-8](#)). He became a practicing Jew that meant annually going up to Jerusalem for feast days ([Exodus 23:17](#)).

Hence, it is most likely he was among that international crowd of Jewish worshippers on Pentecost ([Acts 2:5](#)). If so, he was touched by the gospel of Jesus, by penitent faith in the Messiah, and gladly obeyed Christ in baptism ([Acts 2:36-41](#)).

What an exciting conversion story out of the wilderness of religious confusion! I like and

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admire Nicolas. He grew amid Gentile idolatry, converted to Judaism, and then became, upon hearing the gospel, a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Here truly is a "good" man, willing to be led and controlled by "the Spirit" ([Acts 6:3](#))! Having been in two other religions, he again was willing to change when faced with the truth. At last, he discovered the true religion of the Son of God and obeyed "truth as it is in Jesus" ([Ephesians 4:21](#)).

This is the spirit of an idealistic truth seeker ([Acts 17:11](#)). "Lord, what will you have me to do?" ([Acts 22:10](#)). Every person is his or her own "restoration movement" to be all the Lord wants us to be.

In seeking to be right before God, we must be willing to change wherever we err. This is the final test of a good heart's true sincerity: obeying the truth where it leads ([Matthew 5:6,8](#); [Luke 8:15](#)).

Do We Lay It to Heart?

By Robert Turner

Every parent knows the difference in "Do I have to go?" and "Do I get to go?" "Do I have to go to bed?" means the child

wants to stay up. "Do I get to go to the show?" means the child wouldn't miss it for anything.

Isn't it strange that some of us will wave those same clear signals with reference to the Lord's services, and not see that we are being just as transparent as our children? "Do we have to go to Bible study?" says the same thing about our desires as it does when voiced by our child. When one asks, "How much must I give?," he is clearly saying, "I do not want to give anything, and would like to know how little will pay the bill." Either that, or he has failed to grasp the most fundamental and essential element in the spirit of acceptable service unto God.

There can be no coming to Christ except we deny or give up self ([Matt. 16:24](#)). Translated into the context of "doing" this means we must first want to do all possible (100% committed) to serve the Lord. The proper spirit must motivate the doing, or it is shallow and empty -- may even be an abomination in His sight ([Hos. 6:6](#)). God told the priest of Judaism, "If ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name...then will I send the curse upon you, and I will curse your blessing; yea, I have cursed

them already, because ye do not lay it to heart" (**Mal. 2:2**).

Lay it to heart! That means truly respect God; take Him seriously. The priests had offered polluted bread on the altar (**Mal. 1:7**); offered blind and lame animals as sacrifice (Mal. 1:8). They said of worship, "What a weariness it is!" (**Mal 1:13-14**). To make this current, they said, "Do we have to do or give?" "Do it any old way, just get it over with; we want to go home to the TV." And to top it off, when rebuked, they acted so innocent and said, "When did we ever do that?"

"Oh, that there were one among you that would shut the doors, that ye might not kindle fire on mine altar in vain" (**Mal. 1:10**). Better to close up shop -- call it off -- than to play at worship, and not "lay it to heart."

"Where Did We Fail?"

By Robert Turner

A mother or father tells me, "My son (or daughter) obeyed the gospel when twelve years of age. He never missed Bible class or worship, and made talks on Wednesday nights. When he went away to college and began to hear arguments on evolution and all that junk, he really stood up for the Bible. I remember the first Thanksgiving holiday he

came home, he told us all about the discussion he had with his teachers. He even tried to convert his room-mate. But now — the boy has finished college and is married. He never goes to church, and he won't let us talk to him about it. Bro. Turner, our boy has lost his faith."

The dad is terribly hurt about the matter, and certainly thinks he is telling me the truth about everything. But let's run it through again — if we can bear the pain of doing so.

The boy (or girl) was "brought up in the church," and from early childhood was impressed with the fact that as soon as he was old enough he would be baptized and partake of the Lord's Supper. So he did! He never missed a service, because his parents wouldn't allow it. He "made talks" dutifully, being true to "the system," just as he studied and recited at school. His parents, their social circle, peers of his environment, all, "believed in God and the Bible" so he thought he believed also. Evolution was "that junk" but if he ever heard it intelligently discussed it was ridiculed in specious arguments, or in labored terms he didn't understand.

When he first met evolution, modernism, social theism, etc., as real live concepts, espoused by those he now respected (teachers), or his social peers (students), he dutifully responded. (He spent an

hour finding **2 Tim. 3:16-17**, and was shocked at its seeming incongruity in this new setting.) They didn't even believe the Bible!! Or, he sought to meet a Ph.D. on the professor's ground, and of course was unprepared. At thanksgiving he may have passed the questions on to his parents, and they said, "Oh, you know that is wrong." Did he?

His bride came from this setting, or maybe a generation later; but do not blame her. (He selected her, remember!) The truth is, he has never had a mature faith, has never really obeyed the gospel. Inherited religion is a poor substitute for the real thing! The boy may never have seriously appraised himself, the scriptures, or the gospel. He probably blames his parents for the inner conflict he feels at times — and yet he treats his own children the same way, with different standards of course. He tries to teach them what he thinks is best for them, in the best way he knows how. He can't believe his dad faced such situations as he has had.

We can't dismiss the matter by saying, "Let children grow up absolutely free to believe and act however they please." We may not teach them, but none live in a vacuum. Also, this is an abdication of responsibility, and assumes that man is an authority unto himself. Godless societies certainly do not recommend themselves upon

honest investigation, even in this world. In a future article we will consider some things we believe would help.