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# WHY THIS SUDDEN WILD ENTHUSIASM FOR THE DOCTRINE OF APOSTASY?

Many sects and some individuals have a doctrine of apostasy by which they mean the loss of salvation. The Scriptures have no such doctrine. These sects believe that you can be saved and then unsaved, have salvation and lose it, any number of times. The Bible doesn't. It affirms that the life of the believer (one who trusts the Lord Jesus Christ and his finished work on the cross, his resurrection and abiding presence and intercession for his people) is eternal, wrought once for all in the soul and written in the book of life, shall never give place to condemnation to that lost state that ends in hell, and that such a believer is kept by the power of God. There is a first birth (physical) and a second birth (regenerating), but there is no unbirth, no third birth. The word salvation is never found in the plural in the Bible. Nobody ever experienced **salvations** of the soul. Salvation comes once for all and forever; and, after that, growth in grace, teaching, learning, fellowship, stewardship, faithfulness, witnessing, all in varying degrees at different times, and with backsliding, coldness, amazing moral lapses some times, errors in thinking, and spots or periods of rotten life in domestic, business, civic and religious realms that shock us in our own experiences and in those of others.

The thing is, we have two natures in us, the new and the old. We have to learn to mortify (kill off) the one ("the flesh") and fortify, vivify, develop the other, the life in the Spirit. But the Bible does not allow us to think loosely or foolishly about that. All saints show both sides of this double nature. Abraham's combining with Sarah to lie every time they came into a new town; the meek man Moses' sudden loss of self-control, and his haughtiness, boasting and pride, for which he was killed by the hand of God himself on Nebo; David's having a patriot in his army murdered so that he could steal his wife; Peter's lying, profanity and swearing that he didn't even know Jesus, a few hours after the Lord's Supper; the many faults of the Corinthian saints, and so many other examples in the Bible, teach us both natures live on in the saved man and manifest themselves in life. We fight an unending battle with our own souls. This fact is not at all an excuse for giv-

ing the lie to Jesus when he says that every believer has eternal life and shall never come into condemnation. Since we were never saved by our own goodness, to start in with, we are not lost for the lack of it, in some given moment. "By grace are ye saved" and grace is always unmerited, bestowed on the bad but penitent unbeliever, at faith, and sufficient to keep him in his sonship in the family of God in spite of that bad nature in us by the side of the new nature which we received in the new birth. We develop as babes in Christ, growing slowly on to maturity and spiritual strength. All this is Bible doctrine, perfectly clear, constantly reaffirmed in the New Testament, evident and available to all readers of the Bible. There is not the slightest excuse for the contrary doctrine, misnamed "apostasy".

I said "misnamed **apostasy**", because the Bible has a real doctrine of apostasy. The word means a departure from truth into the vast, deceptive realms of false doctrine. That is apostasy, in the Bible sense of the term. So this Methodist, Campbellite and Episcopalian doctrine to the effect that the saved man can be lost and saved, lost and saved, on and on, is itself the grossest kind of apostasy, in the Bible sense of departure from the truth. The man who preaches the sectarian doctrine of apostasy (loss of salvation) is himself an apostate at that point.

The biblical use of the word **apostasy** is found in one Scripture, II Thes. 2:3, about Christian doctrine, and once about departure from Jewish doctrines, Acts 21:21. The following versions translate the word: "apostasy"—"the apostasy"—in II Thes. 2:3—Weymouth, Williams (mg.), Berkeley, Kleist and Lilly, Fenton, Spencer and various Portuguese Versions which I studied in Brazil. Others translate "the falling away", "rebellion", "the rebellion against God", "the defection", etc. It is associated with "the Man of Sin" and the second coming of Christ. So the meaning is a wholesale, widespread, final abandonment of truth, in revolt against God, that will usher in the final era of human history here below. Clearly this meaning has nothing to do with the

lying doctrine of the loss of salvation, popularly called "apostasy."

In times past the **apostasy** errorists have sought to prove their doctrine by citing examples of evil in the life of the saved, such as have been named above, or by torturing various Scriptures, such as the Epistle of James or Old Testament passages. But just now the favorite passage to prove the loss of salvation of the erring saved is Heb. 6:4-6. To that, then, let us give our attention. It teaches truth that is not at war with other truths.

Let us suppose that advocates of the current doctrine of "apostasy" could really prove that this Scripture teaches the doctrine of **apostasy** (loss of salvation once possessed). Would that prove the truth of their doctrine? Absolutely not. Never. It would only prove their Bible to be a pack of lies, teaching one thing on one page and the opposite on another, a book of alternating lies and truths, page by page. You can't have any respect for a Bible like that. So your real warfare, in such propaganda, is not for or against this doctrine of the Bible or that one, but **against the Bible itself**. You become its number one slanderer.

According to this false doctrine, due to some human change in conduct or attitude, justification suddenly turns into condemnation and regeneration into sonship of the devil. Sanctification turns into a new reign of depravity, the new birth into unbirth and sonship of the devil. Hope becomes hopelessness and flickers back and forth between salvation and its loss, till a man may have as many salvations as he has summers. The guarantee of the Savior that the believer has once for all passed from death unto life gets inverted, and becomes the opposite doctrine that he lapses from life into death, spiritually speaking. The comfort of the promised "house of many mansions" becomes rather the similarly fickle threat that you may land in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. The certainty of heaven becomes the dread of hell. All the great vocabulary of the New Testament on the subject of salvation oozes out of the Christian life and loses all meaning. The doctrine of **apostasy** is virtually a total repudiation of all truth, directly or indirectly.

The **apostasy** advocate advances the excuse that the word **eternal** does not mean eternal, but can cover the brief time of the alleged case of salvation and subsequent **apostasy**. This repudiates their known Lord and Savior countless times, and his veracity, in one of his most repeated and most solemn affirmations. That is near blasphemy. Such a doctrine makes a liar of Jesus.

Furthermore, it gives him the lie in his most solemn way of teaching truth. The Psalmists, in concluding a Psalm, would say sometimes: "Amen and

Amen." But Jesus uses the "Amen" in the **beginning** of his most solemn declarations. 152 times we have this "AMEN (VERILY)" in announcing solemn truths. Twenty-five times in John's Gospel our Lord is quoted as saying: "AMEN, AMEN" (Verily, verily) to start off some great utterance. There are 152 "Verilys" in the Gospels, though in the Nestle Greek text the "Verily" is lacking in 25 of these references. There are 55 statements of Jesus, thus introduced, that refer to time, 8 that refer to eternity, and 10 that refer to time and eternity. One of the latter is John 5:24, "AMEN! AMEN! I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." Now couldn't you possibly be mistaken in your interpretation of Heb. 6:4-6? Must you force upon this Scripture, in a rather difficult Epistle to interpret, a doctrinal meaning that gives the lie to Jesus our Lord, in a Scripture that he affirms his veracity in, with so solemn an introduction and meaning of the terms used? Rather, your interpretation of Heb. 6:4-6 to teach apostasy (loss of salvation) is an utter perversion of that Scripture, to give the lie to the Savior.

What is the excuse of the advocate of "apostasy" for denying the word **eternal**, so often taught by Jesus? It comes from a silly and impossible abuse of John 17:3, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Somehow, the word "eternal" is supposed by this to lose its sense, and not to refer to extension of time at all, but to qualities of Christian experience. So, in all the other cases of the use of "eternal", the sense is emptied out and we lose all those mighty affirmations by Jesus himself of the **ETERNAL SECURITY OF THE BELIEVER**.

But this is horrible, utterly ridiculous as interpretation, and false to this passage and nearly a score of others. Jesus is not changing the meaning of "eternal" in John 17:3. He is defining eternal life, his usual name of the salvation he gives. And the penetrating insight into life, shown by our Lord, is found in that he defines life, essentially, as to know, **TO KNOW PERSONS**. That is true of human life, in general. Suppose you were alone in this world, did not know a human being or any other intelligent being. Suppose on your horizon there were no mother, no father, no brother, no sister, no wife, no husband, no children, no schoolmates, no friend, no physician, no nurse, no partner in business, not a single acquaintance, no neighbor, no teacher, no playmate, **NOBODY IN ALL LIFE** on the earth below or in the sky above. Would that be life? Never. It would be a meaningless hell, of stark and utter loneliness. **TO LIVE IS TO KNOW — TO KNOW PERSONS**. This is **LIFE**. And **ETERNAL LIFE**, our Lord's favorite name for salvation and its blessings, is likewise **TO KNOW**. And it goes beyond ordinary

life, which is to know people, and adds TO KNOW THE PERSONS OF THE TRINITY, here mentioning God our Father, and Jesus our Savior, as he had already mentioned God the Holy Spirit in Chapters 15 and 16. Now Jesus is not in the slightest degree changing the meaning of "eternal" here. "ETERNAL LIFE" is his name of salvation, and he is affirming that it goes beyond mere human life in general and adds, in salvation, the knowing of God and Christ in our Christian experience. Anybody who would pervert that language to empty the word ETERNAL of its content of meaning, is either very incompetent or very perverse, or both.

**Eternal** is defined negatively by Jesus in the word NEVER. Where you are said to have eternal life, it is added that you shall NEVER PERISH. Suppose your salvation lasted ten billion years and then you lost your status, like angels in heaven did in pre-historic times, and were lost. You could honorably accuse your Savior of lying to you: "Jesus, you said NEVER. **Never** is unending, means **at no time**. Yet at this time I am lost, and your word is forfeited and false." It is a far graver loss to Jesus, if any believer ever loses his salvation, than it is to that believer, for Jesus will have lost his character, his veracity, his honor, his Saviorhood. His salvation has turned into damnation. His oath is valueless. He is a covenant-breaker, if the doctrine of **apostasy** be true.

John is our FIRST GOSPEL, in point of time in relation to the ministry of Jesus. It tells of his first year of ministry, before he went back home to Galilee for the major ministry the Synoptics tell of. Here we have Jesus challenging his official people, in their capital, in their temple, in their feasts, in the most solemn and demanding fashion. Here we have his greatest conversations with individuals in his winning of disciples. John tells of this ministry in due time, when there was a seasoned Christianity that could take it in, treasure it and pass it on. It has passed on through the ages to you and me—the very heart of the gospel, the climax of revealed truth.

Now let us come to this Epistle that contains the favorite source of the current teaching of **apostasy** (loss of salvation).

Here are its definite affirmations on this subject:

1. This Epistle has its own doctrine of "salvation". And what is it? We are heirs of salvation; and, as such, angels minister to our security and blessing (Heb. 1:14). It is "so **great** salvation", not a come-and-go fickleness like April showers (Heb. 2:3). Jesus is the "Captain" ("Prince Leader", Weymouth) of our Salvation, very responsible, very much a failure, defeated and whipped out as Captain, if our salvation fails (Heb. 2:10). He is the Author of "eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9). So far as Hebrews knows, if you have not obtained from Jesus "eternal salvation", then you have no salvation at all, for "Hebrews"

knows absolutely nothing of any kind of salvation except "ETERNAL salvation", just exactly like the Gospel of John. How dare you advocate a theory of men that gives the lie to this very witness in the Word of God? Then we find, IN THIS VERY CONTEXT, that there are "things that accompany salvation", and they belonged to these saved Hebrews, but not to the people you allege to be apostates, in the very context of the passage you would pervert. **Hebrews** gives the lie openly and directly to your interpretation of your pet Scripture for false doctrine (Heb. 6:9). And Hebrews looks on to the second coming of Jesus, as the consummation of his salvation in all its promises (Heb. 9:28). HEBREWS gives the lie to the doctrine of apostasy in its very name of salvation, "ETERNAL salvation", and in the sum of its testimony about the subject. And besides all this, the author of this great Epistle preaches not only ETERNAL SALVATION—the only kind it knows anything about—but ETERNAL REDEMPTION (9:12), ETERNAL INHERITANCE (9:15), and "the blood of an everlasting covenant" (13:20).

2. Hebrews is the supreme inspired deposit of the heartening doctrine of "ONCE FOR ALL", as an aspect of our salvation. Out of fifteen times that the Greek New Testament has the word **hapax** (**once, once for all**), eight of them are in this Epistle. Read Heb. 9:24-28 for the beauty and the majesty of this once-for-all objective and finished work of your Savior.

3. Also, you have the firm, unhesitating declaration, right after the words of Heb. 6:4-6, that those renegades therein described **were not saved!** For they were willing to be the authors of a new Calvary for Jesus (v. 6). They were land that brought forth only thorns and briars, never the fruit of grace and salvation. Thus they are declaredly classified in the context.

Who were THE HEBREWS here addressed? They were the unbelieving nation that had received in its midst, in one generation, two Advents of Persons of the Holy Trinity. One of these Advents was the double Advent, from womb and tomb, of God the Son, whose advent from the womb was that of One who was Virgin-born, and whose advent from the tomb was the same God the Son, reappearing in human life, Conqueror of death and the grave, demonstrating the all-availing efficacy of Calvary in his finished atonement for sin. The second of these Advents was that of God the Holy Spirit, coming with Pentecost's miracles, whereby literally and meaningfully, human tongues, spoken without previous study, repeatedly demonstrated that this was the Age of Missions, wherein the supreme purpose of human tongues is to bear witness to the Savior and evangelize the world. How great the race and nation, how great the privilege, of a tiny people in a tiny land, who has been given two Advents of

Deity in human manifestation within their favored days of "the fulness of the time". Yet they rejected the Trinity of their Scriptures and of these concrete and open revelations in life.

You see Jewish apostasy also in the great missionary era to Jerusalem and Judea, and to their millions of Jewish guests at the feasts. These came from the ends of the earth, when God gave them the ministry of the 12 apostles for over 30 years, and multitudes were saved as they preached in the Temple, on Solomon's Porch, to the thousands who came there from all over the world, and carried back salvation, as had Apollos in the days of John the Baptist, and as did the Ethiopian eunuch whom the evangelist Philip evangelized and baptized. Gradually that generation of Jews, of official Judaism, became hardened against God and their Christ. Nationalism became their religion. It hurried on to take the form of a revolt against Rome. The issue was to come in 70 A.D. The Christian Jews would not accompany that folly. When they refused, they were considered as without patriotism, traitors to their nation and their land. This vast, deep gulf opened before all eyes. James, the Lord's brother, hitherto great in the eyes of all Jews, believers and unbelievers, became hated and was hurled down from a certain height in the temple to the court below and dashed to pieces, in 62 A.D. Every day the tragedy grew more terrible. The siege came on. Starvation blighted life. Two women would agree: "Today we will eat my baby. When we have devoured him entirely, then we will eat yours." So they did. Men, too, were sacrificed to hunger like animals slaughtered for the market. The Christians had been instructed by Jesus to flee the city at the first sight of Roman armies about its walls. So they did, the Jerusalem church passing over Jordan to Pella. Never were there such awful times in the history of the human race. The Epistle to the Hebrews is one last effort of divine inspiration to avert this breach of all relations between Christian Jews and faithless Jews, enemies of their Savior. Never was tension so keen, in all human history. HEBREWS enheartens the believing Jew, and makes one last appeal to the unbelieving mass of the nation. It was the Jew's last chance, as a people, for twenty centuries, hardened forever into two separate peoples, as we see them today. Heb. 6:4-6 is the tragic picture of that apostate body of Jewish unbelievers, in the nation's darkest hour.

Now to the exegesis of the passage most relied on to teach the loss of salvation by the saved. It doesn't come within a thousand miles of teaching any such lie of the devil. Here is the description of those in question. Let us study it. They were "once enlightened, have tasted of the heavenly gift, were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, have tasted of the good word of God and the powers of the world to come."

Certainly a profound religious experience of some kind! They they "fell away" and it is declared to be "impossible . . . to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." So King James.

If these people really experienced saving REPENTANCE and that inseparable **faith** which comes with it, then the doctrine of apostasy is false from another standpoint. The apostate has no hope. He can't "get religion" and salvation again at the next protracted meeting. This nullifies the doctrine of apostasy, as generally held. The teacher of apostasy won't accept his own Scripture. It takes all the heart and the hope out of his own doctrine and dooms to hell, once and for all, countless people enrolled in his churches after one or more experiences they called "apostasy". If you are not prepared to take **all** your doctrine, then you had better repudiate it, once for all.

I have seen many cases, on the mission field, that this language exactly described. A man can stretch every muscle to attain a given height and yet fall back from it, as his fingers almost reach the pinnacle. T. T. Martin used to preach a great sermon, from Heb. 6:4-6, to lost men, near the kingdom but hesitant, at the crisis of his evangelistic meetings. His subject was: "When the Lights Go Out on the Road to Hell." Here is a politician in the interior of Brazil. He hears me thoughtfully night after night. One night he comes to me and says goodbye, with these words: "I shall not come to hear you again. It merely tortures my spirit. I am a politician. I depend on the Catholic vote to elect me to any office for which I may aspire. If I were to become an evangelical believer, I could never be elected again. This is my life, I have no other. Therefore I must reject your gospel, for my own soul. I know it means hell for me. But there is no other course open to me. Farewell." He is exactly the type described in Heb. 6:4-6. I have preached to Catholics, rich men's sons, in our Baptist schools in Brazil, attending our **colegios** because they give the best education available. They come under profound conviction. They wrestle with their souls agonizingly. They say: "If I became a heretic, converted to your faith, my parents would disown me. I do not know how to work. I could not earn a living. I dare not take such a step. I must reject your plea to accept Christ as Savior." With agonizing tragedy, I have seen such young men reproduce Heb. 6:4-6 in superlatively awful, final decisions.

Look and see. They were thoroughly "enlightened", by the Word and by the convicting Spirit. They tasted of the realities of the heavenly gift of that Spirit, in conviction for sin and understanding of the issues of salvation. They were "partakers of the Holy Spirit", in his double work of illumination

of the gospel to the soul and conviction of sin, with drawing power toward Christ as the only and all-sufficient Savior. They "tasted the good Word of God" so often, so eagerly, so feelingly, but turned away from the consequences, in case they should make the great decision. "The powers of the world to come" were all about them, within them, upon their consciences, driving them on to the dividing line between penitence and impenitence, between faith and continued unbelief, between rejection of the Savior and salvation. But when they came right to that line, they refused to cross over. Fear of consequences or dread of the supernatural pulled them back. So they fell away. They nullified the once-for-all historic Calvary. There is no other. To have any hope, there would have to be offered a new Cross of Christ, another atonement. They aligned themselves against Jesus, in the ranks of unbelievers, so putting him to an open shame as they faced the supreme issue of life, of time and eternity. Their life is fittingly described thereafter in verses 7 and 8. This Scripture is a perfect picture of such decisions as were made by the mass of Jews, and by their nation incorporated, soon after 60 or 62 A.D. This is the import of the Epistle to the Hebrews. We may hope that that great Scripture yet saved many a Jew in time, whom we shall come to know in heaven. Never was the human soul put to such a crucial test, as to Jesus the Messiah, the Savior.

Now, exegetically, can this Greek preposition EIS be used of a goal which one approaches and draws back from, of a pinnacle one climbs to and then falls back from, of a decision almost made and then refused because of foreseen social consequences? I say it can. This preposition EIS is used in the Greek New Testament some 1700 times. You will find it used of a goal approached, but turned back from, fallen away from, never reached. "Whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire", "liable", but not finally doomed, with room yet for repentance, which Jesus was urging (Mat. 5:22). Jesus came "to call sinners to repentance" (Mat. 9:13). Yet how often was that goal not reached. Jesus is called "a light to lighten the Gentiles" (Lu. 2:32), yet the vast majority of them have never been enlightened. And so in many cases. Mr. Dewey was almost elected President, announced as elected, then fell short in the final count by a few votes. You can fall back from what you almost attained. That is the situation in Heb. 6:4-6. Jerusalem is in an awful indecision, vacillating between patriotism and faith, almost persuaded, agitated by rival claims, hesitating at the crossroads which way to take. **Hebrews** is God's final appeal. We sing tenderly, "Almost persuaded — almost, but lost."

In conclusion, a practical matter. Some of our theologians wobble in their language, on this point. Let's be perfectly clear: if Strong or

Carroll or Mullins or Robertson or Dement, or all of them together denied the veracity of the Savior and taught that the believer, in given circumstances, has not eternal life, I would stay with Jesus, not with any theologian. No theologian went to Calvary for my salvation. Their opinion, against truth revealed by Jesus, is absolutely worthless.

Our Southern Baptist theologians all sign confessions of faith that affirm the eternal security of the believer. If they then teach the contrary, they are perjurers, men devoid of veracity and character. Dr. Duke McCall has just published these words (**The Tie**, Sept., 1961): ". . . the uniformity of the teaching of the Seminary reflects the Abstract of Principles, WHICH IS THE UNAMENDED CONTROLLING THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT ADOPTED APRIL 30, 1858, AND IMBEDDED IN THE SEMINARY CHARTER." Then he shows by the results of a questionnaire among his students, that every single student replied affirming his faith in "the unique deity of Christ", and most affirmed the fact of heaven and of hell, the resurrection of our Lord, the virgin birth of Jesus, and all gave an "affirmative reply to a question about believing in the assurance of everlasting life for those who receive Christ as Savior." We can believe in our future pastors and their teachers.

Theologians have a vice, common in their profession, as other professions have their characteristic vices. This vice is that they live so constantly in the Greek language and mentality that they are constantly harking back to Greek wording of many Scriptures and quoting the like-sounding English words, though these oftentimes signify something vastly different.

I use A. T. Robertson's books more than any other writer's. Yet I often find this vice in him. He endlessly quotes Greek in English letters, similar words but sometimes with vastly different meanings. So he does with this word **apostasy**. He speaks of John Mark as having "apostatized from (our very word 'apostasy')", when he left Barnabas and Paul at Perga, (**Word Pictures in the New Testament**, vol. 3, p. 240). Now do you suppose Dr. Robertson thought John Mark **lost his salvation**, when he decided to go home? Can you imagine such a thing? Yet he carelessly throws in the word **apostatize**, so easily twisted by the uncautious, time and again where the similarly sounding Greek word is in the original. But he repeatedly assures the reader that the word translated ETERNAL, in Christ's promises of eternal life to the believer, "comes as near to the idea of eternal as the Greek can put it into one word", "**Word Pictures**", Vol. 1, p. 202. You are left to believe contradictory doctrines thus, on different pages of the same work. That was a needless, irreverent, evil sacrifice of the truth by Dr. Robertson, due often to this mania to use **apostatize** in English where a similar sounding word is used in the Greek. For this

mania of the theologian, he has probably already apologized to the Lord Jesus in heaven. Don't be fooled by it. Your Savior can be trusted as truthful when he makes his repeated declarations of the eternal life of the believer.

WILLIAM CAREY TAYLOR  
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P.S.: — My Letter 29, on the New English Bible, has been published in tract form, to satisfy requests for further copies. You can get copies, at this price: 35 cents per dozen, \$3.00 per hundred, \$28.00 per thousand, by writing me at Box 1504, Louisville, Ky.