



Can You Recommend Your Religion? Parts 1 & 2 by Gerald Cowan

All Scriptures and comments are based on the **New King James Version**, unless otherwise noted.

THIS IS A SERMON. READ THE TEXT CAREFULLY

Acts 20:25-27, 31-35

INTRODUCTION:

A commendation or recommendation implies good quality, good service, that it gives pleasure, satisfies a need or requirement, is dependable and consistent, etc. Everybody gets asked to recommend a restaurant or other eating place, a motel, etc.

I get many requests for a recommendation. I am often asked to recommend a book a commentary, or a translation of the Bible. Occasionally I am asked to recommend a congregation of the church. I sometimes get calls about preachers. Sometimes I am asked to recommend a member of the congregation for school or a job. I have been asked to evaluate prospective adoptive parents. Occasionally someone will just "give my name" as a reference – sometimes I will be told and sometimes not. Sometimes, not always I will be contacted for the reference. It is not difficult to recommend some things, and some persons. One is glad to do it. But there are some things and some persons one simply cannot recommend, and would rather not be asked to do so. I sometimes tell one who wants a letter of recommendation from me, "Just type it up the way you want it. If I believe it and agree with it, I'll sign it." I have never had anybody take me up on that offer.

Would you recommend yourself? Paul gave himself a good recommendation. First he recommended God and His word to his audience. Then he showed how commendable his own example was (**Acts 20:32, 33-35**). He also offered himself as a pattern and guide for others (**1 Corinthians 11:1, Philipians 3:15-17**).

Reading Paul prompts me to ask: could I and would I recommend myself and my religion? Could you recommend yourself, just as you are now? I'm not much concerned about your work position or prospects – but, you know, when you apply for a job you are required to recommend yourself. The résumé you are asked to submit with your application could contain your education and background, your experience, your desires and ambitions, and a brief statement of your qualifications for the position you request. So, you see, you do have to recommend yourself, even if and when others recommend you. My question to you today is not about your work, your family, or your place in the community. My question is about your spiritual condition, about how you could and would recommend yourself spiritually, either as a Christian or as a candidate for a Christian vocation. Remember that anyone who accepts you will seek to verify any and all recommendations for you, including your own recommendation of yourself.

CAN YOU RECOMMEND YOUR RELIGION? WOULD YOU RECOMMEND IT, AS IT IS, IT TO ALL OTHERS?

- Notice that I am not asking if you can recommend the church of Christ.
- I'm not asking if you can recommend the local congregation of the church, the members or the preacher. I'm not asking if you can recommend the worship services or other activities – I'm not asking at this moment how you feel about the church of Christ, or the church of Christ where you are in particular.
- **I'm asking if you can recommend your own religion, your own relationship to God in Christ, your personal involvement in the church, your perception of truth, and your way of life.**
- Your religion is your personal faith, the way you live, what you hope to have, and the methods you use to achieve your goals now and eternally. That is your religion, and everyone has one. Even atheism, the effort to get by without God, is religion.
- So, here's the question again. **Can you recommend your religion? If so, how would you do it?**

YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO RECOMMEND IT BY THE SCRIPTURE, THE WRITTEN WORD OF GOD.

- There are hundreds of written authorities on food, lodging, consumer products, etc. Travel Guide, Gourmet's Guide to Good Eating, Auto Buyer's Guide, Guide to Antiques, Consumer's Guide – there seems to be an authoritative guide for everything.
- In religion there are endless guides too, all claiming to be authoritative, all written by "experts."
 1. Some are strictly commercial enterprises. George Barna and many others are getting rich teaching people **How to Market the Church** successfully, **How to Grow a Super Church**.
 2. Of course there are many "scriptures" set down by people who claimed inspiration from some god, and billions of people follow them earnestly, with sincere belief, trust and devotion.
 3. And there are endless commentaries written to explain all the various scriptures, including and not limited to what we call The Bible. Most of these are written to present or defend a particular point of view, to strengthen a denomination or other sectarian group.
 4. The "commentary" I am presenting now in this sermon would be incomplete if we did not mention the chaos created by the plethora of "versions" of the Bible.
 - a. Some are good translations. But many are poor – narrow, opinionated, or produced by individuals who have more ego than expertise.
 - b. Some are patently denominational, produced to prevent the departure of the "faithful." The most notable examples of this include various Catholic, Mormon, and Jehovah's Witness versions. But there are many lesser lights too.
- **In religion there is only one valid standard – the Book of God, the Bible, accurately translated from the original languages spoken by those God inspired to write it.**
 1. It alone is scientifically and historically accurate, among all religious books.

2. It alone does not contradict itself, but presents one coherent and consistent report of God's dealings with the world and the people He created to live in it.
3. It is sufficient for all of one's spiritual needs. **2 Timothy 3:16-17**
4. It contains the standard by which all are to be judged, eventually.
John 12:48, Revelation 20:12

- So, we have a few questions about our relationship to that Book if we are going to be able to recommend ourselves and our religion by what it teaches.
 1. Are we in the church of Christ – are we – truly “people of the Book of God”?
 2. How about you? Is your religion, your faith and hope and way of life, validated by the Bible?
 3. Do you see what I mean when I ask, “Can you recommend your religion by the written word of God?”

We asked in Part 1 if you could or would recommend your own personal religion to all others, just as it is and without any changes.

We have also asked if you can recommend it by the scripture – does it conform to the standard of God as set forth in the Word of God, the Bible? We will notice next a few other ways to recommend it to others and encourage them to accept it and practice it with you.

CAN YOU RECOMMEND IT BY YOUR PERSONAL SUPPORT OF IT?

- You can usually tell how valuable or important a thing is by how much of himself one gives or devotes to it.
 1. The amount of money spent or given to it can be a factor.
 - a. It does not necessarily follow that the relative amount reveals the relative value one places on things, but it can give a fair indication of one's values.
 - b. A certain man buys and maintains expensive personal toys – a boat, guns, fishing gear, a pickup truck that he keeps looking like new. He spends a lot of time and money playing with his toys. But his wife and children are ill-clothed, ill-fed, and ill-housed. They get around in a beat up old car that is broken down more often than not. The man says his family is the most important thing in the world to him. Who would believe it?
 - c. The preacher was telling about his hopes and plans for the congregation. “This church has been walking and limping along doing nothing. We're going to become more active. This church is going to stop walking and start to run.” An old man in the audience shouted out, “I'm with you preacher. Let's make 'er run.” Then the preacher said, “This church is capable of great things. No reason for this church to run. This church can fly! We ought to fly,” the preacher said. The old man responded, “Amen, preacher. Let 'er fly.” Greatly encouraged now the preacher continued, “But we can't run and we can't fly without support from the congregation. It takes money to run. It'll take a lot of money to fly.” The old former supporter said, “Let 'er walk, preacher. Keep 'er walkin.’”
 2. But it takes more than money to walk, run, or fly. One who gives most of his time, energy, and attention to others and little to his family would be hard pressed to convince anybody that his family was very important to him, or that he really loved his family. This is true for mothers, fathers, and children too. What about the church?

- The church is one's spiritual family. Would not the amount of money, time, energy, and other kinds of support indicate its relative importance and the value placed upon it?
 1. Participation in the church's worship activities and assemblies is an indication of one's support.
 - a. One who does not attend when he is able to do so, or who attends only when there isn't something else he wants to do, is not a supporter.
 - b. One who attends but doesn't participate when he is able is not a supporter.
 2. Participation in the church's work and service programs is an indication of one's personal support.
 - a. In the family responsible parents would never say, "Let the children take care of themselves." Parents and older children would never say, "Let the younger children and the babies do the work."
 - b. But many older Christians are willing to let "babes in Christ" do most of the work. A certain capable Christian woman would not teach because she was retired.
 3. How highly would others estimate the value of your religion based on your support of it?

CAN YOU RECOMMEND YOUR RELIGION BY THE WAY YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE?

- Put the Lord first in everything. **Matthew 6:33, Romans 12:1** "living sacrifice."
- Be salt and light for the Lord in the world. **Matthew 5:13-16**
- Demonstrate a love for the law of God. No complaints about commandments. Do you enjoy serving God and obeying His commands? If so, it will show. **Psalms 119:97, 127**
- Be honest in everything with everybody. No compromises and no deceit. Would you be embarrassed for anybody to find out what you are doing? **Romans 12:17**
- Seek to promote others and bring them nearer to God, and not just to help yourself. Build up the body of Christ wherever you are. **Romans 12:10, Philippians 2:4, Ephesians 4:15-16**
- Be kind, tenderhearted, merciful, and willing to forgive. **Ephesians 4:32, James 2:13**
- Do only what you can recommend. Do not do anything you cannot or would not recommend to everybody. **1 Corinthians 11:1**. That is apostle Paul's equivalent to saying: "Go where I go, say what I say, do what I do and you'll be safe."
- There's much more, but you surely have the idea now of how to do it.

CONCLUSION:

1. Would you want all others to share your religion? **Acts 26:29**
2. Would others who know you well be able to recommend your religion? Would they want to share in it?
3. You cannot really recommend something you do not obey from the heart. **Romans 6:17, Ephesians 4:1**
4. Would God recommend you and your religion? **Job 1:8, James 5:11**

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