

I am Bill's Soul

By Mark Roberts, editor • robertsmark@sbcglobal.net

Editor's Note: one of the most famous and often reprinted series in the history of Reader's Digest was the "I Am Joe's ——" series. Those articles took a first person look at various parts of the physical body, i.e. "I am Joe's heart" in which the heart described its functioning and how it related to the rest of the body. Of course, RD never undertook to describe the spiritual nature and side of Joe so several years ago Dee Bowman took a cue from RD and wrote several articles about Joe from a biblical perspective (renamed "Fred" in Dee's wonderful articles). I liked both series and would like to further expand upon them so, from time to time, we'll talk a little about "Bill" and his conscience, his heart, his hands and more. This month we are introduced to his soul.

I am Bill's soul. What everyone sees and describes as Bill is nothing but a shelter for me. I live in Bill's physical body, but that body is no more Bill than your three bedroom brick house with its two car garage and a big front yard is you. I am the essence of Bill. I am his soul.

The Bible uses different terms for me like "spirit" or "soul." Some religious groups play off these different terms to confuse people into believing I don't exist, but they are mistaken. I get offended at that because the Bible says *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Matthew 10:28). There is more to Bill than just his body. There is me, his soul — and the Bible has much to say about me.

I was created by God – the only One who can manufacture a soul. *"Then the dust will return to the earth as it was, And the spirit will return to God who gave it."* (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Modern science has tried everything imaginable to make a soul because when the soul is put into a body that animates the body, and makes it come alive. *"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."* (James

2:26). If Bill's body without me is dead then Bill's body with me is alive, isn't it? Science would love to make a genuine living being but Frankenstein exists only in movies and books. Only God can make alive, and that means only God can make me, a soul.

I am conscious and have personality. I am not just an impersonal "force," energy or ghost. Revelation 6:9-11 shows the souls of martyred saints crying out in heaven. They are aware of where they are, what is going on around them, can speak and be comforted. Souls can be anchored with hope (Heb. 6:19). 1 Peter 3:18-20 speaks of "spirits in prison" and 2 Peter 2:9-10 and Matthew 25:41, 46 show that souls can be punished and even know pain. I don't like to think about that, but it is true: I can suffer and hurt, just like I can know joy and happiness.

This is important because ***I will live forever.*** Unless the Lord comes first, eventually Bill's body will die and decay, but I will never die. The story of Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:22-23) or Jesus' words to the thief on the cross (Luke 23:42-43) show that the soul transcends physical death. Paul yearned to be out of his body and with the Lord (Phil. 1:23), which is more proof of how I won't die. Some use the term "immortal" for me and it fits well because it means something that never dies. I am not like God in that I have beginning (and He doesn't), but I have no end. Talking like that boggles Mind something fierce, but it is so!

I want to live forever in heaven. The scary part about being a soul is putting these truths together. I will be alive forever, but where? Where will I spend eternity? I want so much for it to be with *"the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect . . ."* (Hebrews 12:23). That is what I was made for: to live with God for all eternity and praise and glorify Him (Heb. 2:10). That is what I was redeemed for (1 Peter

10 Dominant Moods in American Religion

By Warren Berkley • via Expository Files - http://www.geocities.com/w_berkley/

This article is an effort to identify ten dominant moods in American religion today. I have no purpose to exhaust every possible trend and things change so quickly today this list will soon be outdated. Nevertheless, consider what is happening in America today:

1. Non-judgmental; resistant to discipline. Cultural pluralism and the pressure of being politically/religiously correct results in exalting as a principle, the spirit of being “non-judgmental.” Whatever anybody wants to do about anything or everything, there is cultural pressure to relax, be accepting and never ask anyone to examine their beliefs and behavior. Yet the kindest thing you can do for anyone is tell them the truth. And “those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the test also may fear,” (1 Tim. 5:20). Sentimental silence is the best friend sin ever had. The friendly, diplomatic spirit toward error hastens the progress of apostasy, in whatever form it may assume.

2. Subjection, Emotional. That which is subjectively based proceeds from or takes place in a person’s mind, rather than from an external, objective source. When you do what you think and feel, rather than believe and obey the Word of God, the basis of your religious life is subjective and emotional; therefore, relative to how you feel at any time. “But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does,” (Jas. 1:25).

3. Coveting Excitement, Entertainment, Drama, and Style. With the advent of television, movies and internet media, there is greater demand for visual, external excitement. To be entertained is “more fun” than reading and studying. So we are constantly working on ways to supply more dazzle, sometimes with a loss of scriptural content. Popular worldly methods are being demanded in religious settings. Our commitment must as Paul expressed: “we preach Christ crucified,” (see 1 Cor. 1:18-2:5).

4. Ecumenical. The ecumenical spirit is to accept everybody as brothers and sisters, without regard to differing teaching and practice, as “the loving thing.” With only a confession of your faith in Christ accompanied by some involvement in “Evangelical religion”, the ecumenists embrace you with a claim of joint fellowship. “Unity in diversity” is the plea, and the discernment between truth and error required by Scriptures is set aside. Though not in a religious setting, Rodney King’s statement during the LA Riots captures the premise of ecumenical religion: “Why can’t we all just get along?” Of course we can, but how? The desire for unity can only be fulfilled by letting God’s truth be our authority. By our commitment to what God’s Holy Spirit has

revealed, we can effectively endeavor “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” (Eph. 4:3).

5. Informal, Casual. Comfort has been put above reverence in our age. Being casual, relaxed and sporty it is argued is of greater significance than being reverent, fitting, appropriately dressed. Society is in a dressdown, casual mode. The danger lies in the message that worship is just like anything else. A change in dress code generally signals a change in attitude. Are we willing to regard worship with a leisure attitude? “Guard your steps as you go to the house of God and draw near to listen rather than to offer the sacrifice of fools; for they do not know they are doing evil,” (Eccl. 5:1).

6. The Social Gospel. Interests in serving social needs and financing social causes is a ruling power in American religion. Today, the social gospel is alive in churches with social and benevolent programs to make this world a better place to live through counseling, physical fitness, various kinds of therapy, community involvement and sometimes political activism. Paul had a plan far more comprehensive and reaching to the cause of man’s problem: “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for every who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek,” (Rom. 1:16).

7. Biblical Ignorance. In American religion today, there is little interests in serious Bible study. Researchers George Gallup and Jim Castelli concluded, “Americans revere the Bible but, by and large, they don’t read it, they have become a nation of biblical illiterates,” (www.crosswalk.com/faith/1218766.html - by Albert Mohler). Only when we read, can we enjoy a true knowledge of the mystery of Christ (Eph.3:4).

8. Less preaching. Is preaching “a dying art?” In some places there is movement away from preaching toward a more popular (relevant?), multi-media presentation. There is a mood that seeks to gradually replace preaching with some form where entertainment and audience appeal has a higher place than instruction (diminishing the need to “convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching,” 2 Tim. 4:2). Talks that make people feel good enjoys greater popularity than the boldness of divine truth.

9. Worldly. To be worldly means to find your life in what the world offers instead of what God offers in Christ. To be worldly means, to seek the temporal thrills, ambitions and pleasures, with that priority ranked above godliness. Those captivated by the world may have “a form of godliness,” but by their attachment to the world they deny its power. “And from such people turn away,” (2 Tim. 3:5).

10. Misplaced emphasis on Numbers. Bigger is better. The emphasis on numbers leads directly to the introduction of modern marketing strategy into the church. The outcome is, we sell customer satisfaction instead of preaching the gospel. Instead of being followers of Christ, we follow the crowd and give them what they want to increase our attendance and contribution (so we can enlarge the crowd).

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BACK TO BASICS

By Pat Farish • farish@peoplepc.com

Worship

To “worship” is, to “kiss toward” (from *proskuneo*). Other words are translated “worship” and other, more technical, definitions can be advanced, but this one gets the issue before us adequately. Our purpose in this article is not to lead in an academic study of worship, but to examine what individuals are supposed to be doing when, collectively, we “worship” God.

As we worship God, then, by definition we are “kissing toward” Him. The expression calls to mind my granddaughters’ “blowing a kiss” to me. It suggests affection and adoration. It is a way of saying to the Father, I adore you.

So, whatever our activity, whether singing, giving, praying, reading Scripture or communing, as we participate in that activity if our heart is in it, we are expressing adoration to God.

Acceptable worship is not an “*ad lib*” activity. It is not a matter of our offering to God whatever seems good to us – and Him **having** to appreciate our thoughtfulness. King Saul comes to mind, as an example of one who seemed to think that way. He was instructed (I Samuel 15) by Jehovah through Samuel to exterminate Amalek: all the people, and all the flocks. He killed all the people – except the king. He killed all the livestock – except the good stuff. When called to give account for his behavior, he said the animals were spared for worship (verse 21). In response to this, “Samuel said, Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to listen than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of divination, and presumption is as iniquity and idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has also rejected you from being king” (verses 22, 23). God has never left worship to be designed by man. God has never allowed worship to substitute for obedience.

We acceptably communicate adoration of God only with heart (spirit) and mind (truth) attuned to the sovereignty of our God. This is but another way of saying we walk by faith (II Corinthians 5:17), which faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). When we worship, then, it involves us in activity prescribed in the word of God; not activity that just seems to us to be good.

Acceptable worship is not a matter of tradition. What we are to do, and what we are to abstain from doing, are revealed in the Word of God. Thus the things in our worship which may be thought “peculiar” are actually peculiar only to the eyes of human wisdom. If our worship in song is a *capella*; if we commune every first day of the week; if in our public assembly it is the “men who pray” (I Timothy 2:8); if our funds are raised by free-will offerings of members; if our sole and sufficient guide for instruction is the Bible – in all these things we say “Father, we adore you” **in the manner He has prescribed.**

Acceptable worship does not cater to fads. In many places today bright and talented people are imposing their bright talent on the worship assemblies of the saints, and what occurs then may be called exciting, startling, breathtaking, stunning, astonishing, marvelous, amazing – surely there are other words of the same genre to be supplied to describe the avant-garde nature of this “worship” – but “truth” and “faith” are not among them.

Worship to God must be expressed in harmony with His will. Jesus quoted Isaiah, who wrote “In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). Our hearts must be involved in sincere expression of adoration to the Father; but our minds also must be there, in genuine submission to His will. “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). †

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Instead of worshipping in Spirit and truth, we adapt our worship to the changing needs of the public. This inordinate emphasis on numbers eventually let’s men determine the work of the church instead of God. “The tendency to make Christianity fashionable, and carnally respectable, must be met at the cost of sneer and ridicule from any quarter,” (Millennial Har., 1868).

If these “moods” I have identified can be viewed as soil, it is rich and fertile to receive the Charismatic seed. It is ripe to re-generate Calvinism and advance Ecumenism, with every attending error. To the extent these things play out among us, we stand at risk and the next generation stands at even greater risk. The answer is, teaching and practicing the inspired, sufficient Word. “I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all the sanctified” (Acts 20:32). †

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2:9). Yet sometimes Bill's body forgets its temporary status (or tries to ignore it) and wants to sin and have a few moments of bodily pleasure. Conscience and Mind and Heart have to go work then on Bill to remind him not to give in to evil that would lead to an eternity without God.

All this matters more than anything else on earth because **I can die**. Those who don't believe I exist like to trick people by asking if the soul can die, getting an affirmative answer, and then showing a passage from the Bible that speaks of souls perishing. Such is foolishness. These people simply use scriptures where the term "soul" refers to a physical person, not to me, the immortal part of Bill that cannot die physically. That understood, you must know I *can* die. "Death" means "separation" and I can be separated from my Creator who I belong to: "**Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.**" (Ezekiel 18:4). This passage doesn't mean every person who sins will be struck physically dead for their iniquity. You see sinners every day who live outside of God's law who go right on

breathing and living. This verse refers to *spiritual* death, to being separated from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Because my Creator is perfect and holy He cannot tolerate or be in fellowship with darkness (1 John 1:5). If Bill chooses darkness and doesn't ever repent of that then I cannot live with God in heaven. I will be lost and spend an eternity in hell (2 Thess. 1:7-9). It makes me shudder to think of it!

Thus I am Bill's most valuable possession. Jesus said "*For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matthew 16:26). Bill should filter all of life through the simple question "Will this get my soul to heaven?" If Bill gets distracted from the real pursuit of life he can end up in sin and then I could be lost! But when Bill sets Mind on things above (Col. 3:2), reads his Bible and prays for God's help then he knows what is right and he does right. That is when I feel the very safest.

I can't wait for that sweet "Home of the Soul." What a joy it will be to finally reach heaven. You have a soul also. Will I see your soul in heaven?

Mark

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