Are There a Salvation Outside the Church?

Dear Uncle Victor,

Peace and grace.

I know that I have a bad reputation now.  However, given the events that are going on in Egypt and in the world, the Second Coming may be sooner than you think.

What I have been taught with questions like this is to be 1) factual and 2) distance the question from a personal idea or opinion.  So instead of saying “yes” or “no” which immediately attaches the opinion and answer to the person answering the question, we say something like “our Lord Jesus Christ taught us …” or “the Bible is clear that….”.

So in answer to Keith’s questions:

1) It is not any person’s responsibility to say who goes to heaven and who doesn’t.  This is God’s judgment alone.  However, we have the teaching of God in the Scriptures and in the tradition delivered to us from our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles.  These have taught us that salvation is a process that involves many steps: 1) belief in our Lord Jesus Christ; 2) repentance; 3) baptism; 4) receiving the Holy Spirit through the Church/priesthood; 5) partaking of His True Body and Blood in the Eucharist; 6) faith; 7) good works, etc...  There are multiple verses in the Holy Bible for each of these points directly relating them to salvation.

2) For those who have not been exposed to Christ at all by any means whatsoever, again we do not take the place of God in saying if they go to heaven or not.  However, the question becomes – have they never been exposed at all?  For those who are sincere in following God’s teaching, we have the Holy Bible, i.e. God’s word, available.  We must include in this equation what our Lord Jesus Christ said:  “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.  NO ONE comes to the Father except through me” (*John* 14:6).

3) As for those who have not set the right example or created an obstacle to those who would be ready to believe or follow Christ (or those who already believe in Christ), they will receive their judgment – but it does not excuse the sin that is committed.  I will refer you to *Ezekiel* 3:17-21; 33:7-20.  Also, our Lord Jesus Christ spoke about obstacles and the result on both the one creating the offense and the one who commits the sin (e.g., *Matthew* 18:6-7).

4) In terms of the rites of the Church – there is no question that the Holy Bible teaches us about the importance of rites and the Church practiced them from the very beginning as delivered from our Lord Jesus Christ through the Apostles and throughout the generations.  Our role in the Church is to receive, live, and deliver all that was given to us by our Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles – all that is included in Christianity.  However, one must distinguish in the rites between theological differences and ritual differences.  From the very beginning there were different rites in various places, but the faith and the theology were the same.  I will give you a couple of examples.  Orthodox Churches use icons and the West uses statues to represent the saints or Biblical stories and events.  This difference is not a theological one, but a ritual one.  They are both images, but used with different art.  Also, different Churches have some differences in the days that they fast.  However, this does not change that they all believe in the importance of fasting and the teaching of the Holy Bible about fasting and established fasts set by the Church from the very beginning of Christianity.

The email is already very long and there is much more to be said about each of these points for which an email is insufficient.  But I pray that this has clarified some issues.

Pray for me.

In Christ,

Antonios

**From:** Victor Beshir [mailto:[vbeshir@gmail.com](mailto:vbeshir@gmail.com" \t "_blank)]   
**Sent:** Monday, November 14, 2011 10:06 AM  
**To:** Br. Antonios the Shenoudian  
**Subject:** Fwd: Is Church Important?

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Dear To My Heart Brother Antonios,

You really answered it before the second coming of Christ.  Thank you for the answers. The question that could be followed:

How about all baptists, methodists, ..etc, do we think they're deprived from the Holy Spirit because they did not follow the Apostolic succession? Do they considered baptized or not?

The other question is: When a bishop was so corrupted-as it happened in Rome-that he had illegetimate children, is he still a good channel for passing the apostolic succession?

Thanks in advance, especially if you answered before the second trumpet  https://mail.google.com/mail/e/338    
Love in Christ,

Victor Beshir

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Victor Beshir

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Dear Uncle Victor,

The work in the Holy Spirit is varied and is on different levels:

1)  “…no one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit” (*1Corinthians* 12:3).  So even the belief in Christ is by the Holy Spirit.

2)  The Holy Spirit also rebukes, reminds, intercedes, guides, teaches for repentance and doing good works (many verses, mainly *John* 15 & 16).

3)  Then there is the work of the Holy Spirit in baptism for the new, spiritual birth for salvation:  “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (*John* 3:5).

4)  Then we receive the grace of the Holy Spirit in Confirmation where I become attached to Christ like the branch to the True Vine (*John* 15, *Acts* 2, etc…).

5)  Then there is the work of the Holy Spirit in the Eucharist (*Luke* 1:35; *John* 6, etc…)

6)  Then there is the work of the Holy Spirit that works in me for becoming in the likeness of God and being complete in Him (many verses).

7)  Then there is a separate grace and breath of the Holy Spirit working for the sake of the priesthood and which is related to Apostolic Succession (*John* 20:21-23).

These are all the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Holy Bible as practiced by the Church delivered from the Apostles.  So are they deprived from the Holy Spirit – not on all levels.  But to be complete in Christ for the sake of eternal life – are they following all of these principles or not?

Concerning whether or not the sacraments are effective from a priest who sinful – we believe that the sacrament is effective due to his priesthood, but that he himself, if he does not repent, may perish.  Not only that, but others that he is responsible for may perish as well as a result of his negligence in his own spiritual life and service.  The analogy given by the fathers is that if you have a seal, it does not matter what material that seal is made out of – wood, silver, gold, etc… -- any one of them will still give the same imprint.

I pray that this is an acceptable answer.

Pray for me.

In Christ,

Antonios

**From:** Victor Beshir [mailto:[vbeshir@gmail.com](mailto:vbeshir@gmail.com" \t "_blank)]   
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 15, 2011 1:04 PM

**To:** Br. Antonios the Shenoudian

**Subject:** Re: Is Church Important?

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This is more than an excellent insight which means the Holy Spirit works on those outside the Church even though they do not have the sacraments (mysteries) we have.  Thanks a million.  
In Christ love,  
Victor Beshir

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Victor Beshir

Yes, but it is important for them to realize that the Holy Spirit only works on the first and possibly the second levels mentioned.  The others require the work of the Church.  So although the Holy Spirit works in them, the work is not complete except through the Church.  I guess that is what I was trying to say.

**From:** Victor Beshir [mailto:[vbeshir@gmail.com](mailto:vbeshir@gmail.com" \t "_blank)]   
**Sent:** Tuesday, November 15, 2011 8:00 PM

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Thank you. So wonderfully stated and in a prompt answer that even comes before the first trumpet of the Revelations.  You enlightened me.

Love in Christ,  
Victor Beshir

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Victor Beshir

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