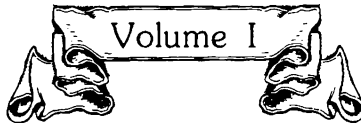


Vital Doctrinal Essays



*A compilation
of doctrinal essays
by twenty-one authors*

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DEDICATED TO ETERNAL TRUTH—
the standard of the righteous;
the ransom of the sinner;
the illumination of Love;
the very eloquence of God.



Introduction

Truth deserves both promotion and defense. Realizing there is so much error taught and practiced in the religious world, it is always in order to defend the Divine Will. The church is the pillar—the support—of truth (1 Tim. 3:15). This being so, the responsibility of promoting truth rests upon the Christian individual, the Christian family, and the Christian assembly. Promoting and defending truth is the intended purpose for this volume. Other excellent material by brethren, and touching some of these same topics, is available. But different approaches, new points, different emphasis are always good. We learn when we probe another's mind.

This material will likely hold little appeal for the "scholar." It has been prepared for common people by common men, howbeit, we trust by men having a high regard for truth. Truth is the supreme thing. Churchill observed; "Truth is incontrovertible. Panic may resent it; ignorance may deride it; malice may distort it; but there it is."

Some of this material will be observed to be more informative than doctrinal. In such cases, the reader is left to his own studies for proper and useful application.

Please note this: *Each author's work is his own responsibility.* What one writer produces is not necessarily the conclusions of other writers or the publisher in every particular point. In the main, the writings are representative, but it would be quite presumptuous to suggest they be considered by coming generations as documentation of what the church as a whole stood for in this generation. Only the Sacred Text is above error.

I acknowledge with extreme gratitude, my indebtedness to the many brethren who contributed so freely of their time in preparing material for this endeavor. A few brethren declined writing. Others were a bit negligent in meeting the deadline. We hope to see work from their pen in Volume II.

It would reflect inexcuseable ingratitude if I failed to acknowledge the invaluable help of my family in preparing this volume. They have spent many long hours in typesetting, proofreading, preparation for binding, and numerous lesser tasks in this book's preparation. Together, our desire is that this work will accomplish only good. But above such fallible works of men, may Divine Truth be read, studied, revered, obeyed, and shared with the world.

Jerry Johnson, *Publisher*

May, 1984

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The Writer's Prayer

by George Bentsch

*Let truth and wisdom guide my pen
While writing to the sons of men;
The awesome story to relate
Concerning their eternal fate.*

*Oh, Lord, You viewed this earth and saw
So few obedient to Your Law.
Then ordered Noah, "Build a boat
Upon the coming tide to float."*

*The world with water You destroyed
Where men with evil were employed.
And as you see the earth these days,
Most men still walk in evil ways.*

*And yet Your mercy lingers still;
Your Word gives knowledge of Your Will,
So that we may avoid Your ire
When this world is destroyed by fire.*

*So guide these feeble hands of clay,
Let us in truth your Words portray.
Help us lead others on the road
That leads at last to Your abode.*

God's Supreme Legislative Authority

by Darryl Kirbo

The distinguished blessings which God wrought for His ancient people were emphatically great. They were even so in His estimation, for He frequently speaks of them as demanding and displaying a mighty hand, and a stretched out arm. In the performance of these works, most of the established laws of nature were repeatedly counteracted and miracles became events of daily occurrence. Rocks poured out water, and waters were turned to blood; the clouds rained bread, and the winds brought flesh; rivers and seas divided, and the earth opened; the regular succession of day and night was, in a part of the world at least, interrupted, and the sun and the moon stood still in their habitations. A powerful nation was nearly destroyed by an unexampled series of miraculous judgments. Other nations were exterminated, or driven from their territories, and a new nation, of a peculiar character, was formed, and planted in their place.

Nor was this all. Events of a far more extraordinary nature and interest occurred. Angels descended from their celestial abodes; disclosed themselves to the eyes, even addressed themselves to the ears—and Jehovah Himself, coming forth from that unapproachable light which He inhabits, visited and dwelt among men, going before His favored people in a pillar of cloud and fire, conversing face to face with man, as a man talketh with his friend. Then on Mount Sinai, he displayed His presence, His perfections, and *His supreme legislative authority*, with such attending circumstances of grandeur and terror as will never again be witnessed on earth till the day of final retribution shall arrive. Even the great Moses said, "I exceed-

ingly fear and quake” (Hebrews 12:21).

Respecting Revelation

Now, why was all this done? The all-wise God who does nothing in vain, and who never acts without an adequate motive, designed to effect some important object by these unparalleled works of wonder and power and love. He did so, and has informed us what it was...to glorify Himself by displaying His power, His faithfulness, and the riches of His goodness to His favored people.

These promised blessings justified a profusion of miracles. They must have been great indeed! They included the deliverance of the nation from Egyptian bondage, their settlement in a land flowing with milk and honey, the formation of a national covenant between them and their God, and the establishment of His worship and of the true religion among them, while all other nations were enslaved by the gross ignorance of superstition and idolatry. Such advantage had the Jew! The apostle informs us in Rom. 3:1-2 that the chief blessings enjoyed by his countrymen consisted in their possession of the sacred scriptures, here styled, the oracles of God. It must be remembered that in making this statement, he expressed the mind of the Spirit by whom he was inspired. The scriptures, then, are one of the most valuable gifts which God can bestow; one of the richest blessings which men can possess. If they held the first place among the gifts which God bestowed on His ancient people, they certainly ought to hold the same place in our estimation. We ought to prize them above our temporal possessions, our liberties (which are so many), and should regard them as the richest blessing which is enjoyed in this land.

Why should we value the scriptures less highly?? The same God who spake by the prophets, has spoken by His Son, and by the apostles, whom His Son commissioned and His Spirit inspired. The New Testament is, therefore, no less than the

Old, an Oracle. In possessing the Scriptures, then, we possess every real advantage as did those early worshipers where God gave answers to them by an audible voice (as He formerly did to the Jews).

In the scriptures we possess an oracle, which may be brought home to every family and every individual, which may be placed in our habitations, in our closets, and consulted daily or hourly, without fatigue, expense or delay. By consulting it aright, we may make them to us all that the Holy of Holies was to the pious Jew; a place where God will meet us, converse with us and answer our inquiries. In fine, we have in the scriptures, the very mind and heart of our Creator. The thoughts and purposes of His mind lie many times even in His silence. So, whenever we open the Scriptures, we do in effect, open the lips of God, and the words of Eternal Truth. God speaketh, but man perceiveth it not. The voice of God Himself, bursting in thunder from heaven, could scarcely speak in accents more powerful, commanding, and impressive. Is this language too strong? What then means the interrogation of God? "Is not my word like a fire, and like a hammer, which breaketh the rock in pieces?" Indeed it is! It has been the instrument of breaking all the flinty hearts that ever were broken.

Consulting the Word

It is, however, readily acknowledged that thousands, who possess and peruse the scriptures derive none of these benefits and receive from them no satisfactory answers. But the reason is obvious. *They do not consult them in the manner which God has prescribed.* They do not consult them as an oracle of God. They do not consult them with becoming reverence. They do not feel, when opening the sacred volume, that the mouth of God is about to open and address them. On the contrary, they consult the scriptures with little more reverence than the works of a human author. They are consulted as they would consult a

dictionary or an almanac. Indeed, many in this respect are criminally deficient!! Let us appeal to our consciences here for a moment. Had you seen an Israelite approach, and address the words of God in the same manner, and with the same feelings with which many peruse the Scriptures, would you not have expected to see him, instead of receiving a gracious answer, *struck dead* by a flash of that fire which consumed Nadab and Abihu, the irreverent sons of Aaron?? If then, we would consult the oracles of God in a manner acceptable to Him, and beneficial, or even safe to ourselves, we must remember the declaration which He made on that awful occasion. And the language of our hearts, when opening the sacred volume must be *“I will now hear what the Lord my God shall say: speak Lord, for thy servant heareth.”*

Back under the Mosaic reign, the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night was sole guide. If the cloud moved, the people likewise moved, but when the cloud stood still for two days or two weeks or two months, the host of Israel broke not their camp. They were governed by what the cloud did. Where it moved, they moved; where it stood, they stood.

God’s Word is the guide and the cloud unto the people of today. It is time enough when He says do a thing for us to act. *“Where it speaks, we speak; where it is silent, we are silent.”*

Let us not be wise above that which is written. In 2 John 9 it says, *“Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.”* God forbid that we should be led by our own lust, our own appetites, our own pleasures, to transgress or go beyond the authority of God. But many today, as in times past, go beyond the Holy Word of God. They are continually adding to or taking from His Word.

The Silence of the Scriptures

Many presume upon God in matters of religion and worship . . . the name by which the called out body of Christ is called, the singing, the teaching, the communion service, etc.

But what of the man on the Sabbath day who started out to pick up sticks?? He may have reasoned about it and said, "I have no disposition to disobey God, and there is no harm in picking up sticks on the Sabbath day." But we must remember God's law! Because this man simply undertook to pick up sticks on the Sabbath day God Almighty had him put in prison that night and commanded the people to stone him to death. Why? Because he had not respected Heaven's Constitution. Well, does God's law state that you must not pick up sticks? Oh no. Show me where God said, "Thou shalt not pick up sticks." But it is not there, which is evidence of the fact that *we are to be governed by what He says* and not privileged to do that which He does not say.

I think the principle is clearly shown in the temptation of the Saviour and his escape and victory. When the devil came and said, "If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." I want to ask you, what is wrong with the suggestion made? "Lord, are you hungry?" Indeed so. "Do you see anything wrong in bread?" Oh no! "Has God ever said: Thou shalt not turn stones into bread?" No. "Has God ever prohibited it?" Let us reason! If there is no harm in it, if you like it and it strikes your fancy . . . then what?? Are you at liberty to do it just because God has not specifically forbidden it?

Christ lays down the principle. He says, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." That is to say this: "I am not my own, not my will but thine be done. I am in the custody, under the guidance of God Almighty; and if God wants stones turned to bread He will say so; and when He so announces, that will be time enough. In the absence of such commands and of such authority, I will still endure the pangs of hunger because I propose to be governed by what God's Word says rather than by my own personal preference." Even in what seems to be an insignificant passage, the silence of the Scriptures is held in sacred honor. We cannot do less.

Let us have a real sincerity and desire to know our duty, with a full determination to believe and obey the answers we shall receive *how ever contrary* they may be to our natural inclinations, our favorite pursuits, or our preconceived opinions. How useless!! How much more than useless it is to consult the Word of God with such attitudes. We may learn from the divine declaration recorded in Ezekiel 14. Some of the elders of Israel, it appears, visited the prophet, professedly with a view to inquire of the Lord. But the only answer which they obtained was this; "Are ye come to inquire of me; As I live, saith the Lord God, I will not be inquired of by you." He also informs us what were the reasons of this determination. "These men have set up their idols in their hearts, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face; and should I be at all inquired of by them?" He then proceeds to declare that if any man, of any nation, shall presume to consult Him with idols in his heart, He will set His face against that man, and answer him according to the multitude of his idols. So, if we consult the Word of God with a view to draw from thence an answer which shall gratify our sinful inclinations, or justify our questionable pursuits and practices, or support our favorite prejudices, we do, in effect, come to inquire of the Lord with an idol in our heart. Bias.

Conclusion

Our obligation toward the Bible is the obligation that President Jefferson felt toward the Constitution. "It is the supreme law of the land!" Spiritually speaking, the Bible is man's constitution; a road map from the transitory scenes of this life to one that is everlasting. We must do what it says, and not presume to go beyond it—which is the only safe action. Believe what it says, become and be just what God requires; live as He directs, worship according to His decree. As the Scriptures say, that we "...might learn not to go beyond the things which are written" (1 Cor. 4:6, ASV). Practice those

things, and those only, which God has decreed lawful by His *supreme legislative authority*.

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

The Faith

by Frank Garner

“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6).

The Problem

The truth, the doctrine, the belief, the gospel; all of these are entwined in the term the Bible calls “the faith.” Men and women have devoted their very lives to its defense. Brave men and women, through the power of Christ, have gone out to do battle with the hordes of Satan over this thing called “the faith.” These victorious souls knew what the faith was in all its aspects. Today, fewer and fewer are those who hold the faith so dear. The problem results from ignorance of the term and its full impact. People falsely identify “faith” with “*the faith*.” Such a vast majority of religionists expound the virtues of faith and neglect the subject of *the faith*, that people just assume the two terms are synonymous.

Some may scoff and say, “Surely we know what the faith is. We hear the term all the time. Of course, we know what it means.” Do you? Look at the common usage in today’s literature. Faith is a popular subject. But what of *the faith* as a subject? *Nave’s Topical Bible* has seventeen pages of listings for the word faith. The only verse cited where *the faith* is used is Jude 3. This verse is not quoted but cited under a sub-title at the very end of the seventeen pages. Nave’s collection of verses concerning faith is beautiful to read. Being part of God’s Word, these verses are valid and powerful. But what of *the*

faith? Nave's sub-title reads, "Sum total of religious belief and life." Consider that. *The faith* represents everything.

This treatment of the faith is the source of the problem. People have been taught that having faith is equitable to *the faith* when indeed it is not. Satan is subtle. He is well pleased when people know and follow only part of God's Word. Let people believe that the Bible speaks of faith only as the means of a soul's salvation. Satan is well pleased when we forget, through negligence, that *the faith* is addressed clearly with specific instructions on how to obey it, live it, and defend it.

Before someone objects that this article rejects or attempts to lessen the importance of faith in our lives, please let me disclaim that contention. Hebrews 11:6 tells us, "But without faith, it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." It is not the purpose of this article to diminish or deny that fact. It is the purpose of this article to elevate "the faith" to its proper state of reverence and devotion in our lives.

A Definition

As we have noticed, Nave sub-titles *the faith* as the "sum total of religious belief and life." Vine defines *the faith* as "what is believed, the contents of belief . . ." Without injustice, we can say *the faith* includes the gospel, the truth, the word, the doctrine and how we translate that collection of God's Will into our lives. These are bold statements unless God's Word, the Bible, will substantiate them. Let's investigate the verses of God's Word that refer to the faith to see what He tells us.

Obey the Faith

We can find that we must be obedient to the faith. In Acts 6:7, it is seen that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." Earlier in the verse, we were told "and the word of God increased . . ." In short, many were obedient

to the gospel of Christ, the word of God, the faith. Just what was the form of this obedience? Acts 2 holds the answer. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. . . . then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. . . . and the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:36-38, 41, 47).

They were, as the priests in Acts 6:7, "obedient to the faith." In Romans 6:17, Paul expresses thanks to God that "ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered to you." Any other form of obedience to any other form of doctrine is no cause for thanksgiving because it is foreign to the faith as expressed in God's Word.

Christ placed great importance in our being obedient to him. He gave specific instructions to his apostles in Matthew 28:19-20, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. . . ." The Acts of the apostles show us the fulfillment of that commandment. Whatsoever the apostles taught concerning the words of Jesus make up the faith that is to be the sum total of our lives. Whatever the apostles taught, the apostles' doctrine, are things Christ taught them, or things learned of the Holy Spirit (cf. John 16:12-13).

With this in mind, let's notice some direct statements from our Lord. "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" "If ye love me, keep my commandments." "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (Luke 6:46, John 14:15, 15:14). Is there any doubt that if we are

obedient to the faith, Christ expects us to obey his commandments that were diligently delivered to us by his apostles? For those who still contend that all one needs to do is “have faith,” please consider the following. “Hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1 John 2:3-4).

Continue in the Faith

In Acts 14:22, Paul returned to the cities of Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch to encourage previously established congregations. There he exhorted “them to continue in the faith.” Notice he did not say “continue to have faith” but “continue in the faith.” What was this faith? Verse 7 simply explains, “And there they preached the gospel.” Paul was encouraging them to continue in the gospel they had obeyed. In Acts, chapter 2, the obedient souls mentioned earlier “continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship...” Yes, we must continue in the faith.

Paul told Timothy, “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine: continue in them: for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). No one doubts that Timothy had faith in Christ. But he was instructed to continue in the doctrine, those principles and commands taught to him. We, as Timothy, must continue to obey the doctrine, continue in the faith. “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9). This doctrine, this gospel, this faith, is something we *abide* in. We must live it. We cannot pay lip service to it. We cannot simply believe it—*we must live it*.

God ordained that His people would walk in His ways. Ephesians 2:10 states, “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” After obedience to the

faith, we must continue in the faith if we wish to be counted as His workmanship. Our continued obedience to the faith is essential. "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

Examine Yourselves

Self-examination is important in all areas of life. Most people will periodically examine their performances on their secular jobs. It is considered a prudent and efficient thing to do in order to assure success in their lives. However, they are not so careful in dealing with success in eternal life. In 2 Corinthians 13:5, Paul gives a measuring stick for self-examination. "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith, proving your own selves..." We can examine ourselves spiritually by the faith. We can prove our performance by comparing our lives with the faith. James exhorts us to look to the Word of God for self-examination. "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

This searching the faith to examine our lives must be done in the Scriptures of God. The Holy Scriptures show us the correct way. Only in them can we find the faith by which we are to examine ourselves. Everything we need is there. "All scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We are to examine ourselves by the faith, and God's Word expresses that faith completely. Nothing else is needed. God's Word is "the perfect law of liberty." We cannot improve on perfection.

Notice that Paul tells us to examine ourselves to see if we are in the faith. He does not say to examine our faith. We do not

have the option of developing a faith of our own choosing as some would have us believe. We are to look into the Word of God, identify the faith, examine ourselves by it, make necessary corrections in our lives, and continue in the instructions given to us there. That will give us all we need to perform the good works that God has ordained that His people shall perform.

Stand Fast In the Faith

Returning to Nave's expression of the faith, we must recognize that it is the sum total of our lives. If it is not, we have not God (1 John 2:3). Paul exhorted the Corinthians to shake the bonds of indolence and neglect concerning the faith. "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). How can we allow any perversions of God's Word and be true to this exhortation? The Corinthians had allowed partyism, idolatry, adultery, jealousy, and gross mis-conduct in the public worship to seize their congregation. Paul gave correction and then demanded that they stand fast. We can do no less. Failure to stand in the ways of the faith is tantamount to the rejection of God's Holy Counsel. The Colossians were told to remain "stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught . . ." (Col. 2:7). We must be established in the faith taught to us by the apostles in God's Word just as they were.

Perhaps the most extensive exhortation to stand fast is found in Jude. The entire letter was a warning to uphold the faith as delivered by the apostles. In verse 3, the writer asserted the necessity for reminding the saints to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered . . ." This is the faith taught by the apostles, delivered by Christ from God as found in the New Testament. No innovations, no additions or deletions, no progressive interpretations, no modern revelations are to be allowed. The apostle Peter stated the same exhortation. "That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by

the holy prophets, and of the commandments of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour" (2 Pet. 3:2). We, if we seek God's way, if we wish to be in the faith, must look to the words spoken and delivered by the apostles.

A second point to be made is that we must "earnestly contend" for the faith. We cannot half-heartedly say a word or two in defense of truth when we find an appropriate time. The language used suggests a combatant in an aggressive battle. We must be aggressive combatants in defense of the faith.

Encouraging the Philippians, Paul stated, "Only let your conversation (manner of life, RSV) be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Phil. 1:27). From this we see our entire lives are to be dedicated to the defense and spreading of the faith of the gospel. We must, as Timothy instructed, "fight the good fight of faith" and "hold fast the form of sound words" (1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 1:13).

Finally, we must look to two simple verses found in Ephesians. It is imperative that we let them speak to us without prejudice on our part. Ephesians 4:4-6 states, "There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all..." Accepting the definition of *the faith* as "the sum total of religious belief and life," there must be ONE religious belief and ONE way of life that is correct. All else is false. It is Paul's prayer that "we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man..." (Eph. 4:13).

It is our plea that if you seek Christ, you will search the Word of God for the one faith that is undefiled by mankind. Then you can, in the end, say as Paul did, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept *the faith*: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the

righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

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The Church or Denominationalism?

by Larry Robertson

In Matt. 16:18 Jesus said, “And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build MY church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Notice the personal pronouns denoting ownership, “I will build MY church.” He did not promise to build a host of churches, or some churches; he promised to build *HIS* church.

Jesus announced his intentions at the early age of twelve to “be about his Father’s business.” He never veered from that purpose and mission. He repeated it again in the Garden of Gethsemane just a few hours before he was crucified when he prayed to the Father, “Not my will, but thine be done.” He was about to finish some thirty-three years upon this earth, having withstood all the temptations expected of human life, successfully defeating the devil in every fight, and he had one more left. He at last was led as a sheep to the slaughter and nailed to the cross. As he told his apostles, he lay in a borrowed tomb three days and nights, while he entered into the realm of Hades. I think we can safely say he was thoroughly tested and tried by both the powers of earth and the Hadean world. But thanks be to God, he came forth victorious the third day, leaving behind a bruised Satan, ready to make good that promise wherein he said, “Upon this rock I will build my church.”

There is only one church built on Jesus Christ. It is the only church that you can read about in the Bible, and do you know, every Christian on earth is a member of it? Should we not be content with this? Yea, only this! Remember this, there is no scripture, there is no authority (other than human authority) for

the existence of a single denomination!

The Chinese church is built upon Confucius; the church of Arabia is built upon Mohammed; the Hindu church is built upon Buddha. If there was a Campbellite church, it would be built upon a man named Campbell, and so on down the line, but the church of the Bible is built upon Jesus Christ. He is the tried and sure stone, absolutely sure to ride out safely the storms of life, triumph successfully over the forces of evil, and guide us safely to the shores of "over-yonder," presenting his people washed and cleansed, not having spot or wrinkle.

Is the Church Essential?

Denominations argue and debate on the method or mode of baptism, and yet most all of them claim baptism is not necessary. If that be the case, what difference does it make how it is performed, or whether it be performed at all? When Methodists and Presbyterians say sprinkling or pouring is baptism, they can appeal to no higher authority than the Pope of Rome, and what does that amount to? Nothing at all. The Baptists teach that one can be saved without being baptized, but one cannot be a Baptist without it. Therefore, by their own doctrine, it is easier to get into heaven than into the Baptist church. Then if one can get to heaven without being a Baptist, why be a Baptist? Most other religious organizations teach the same thing. Then why be a member of any denomination? Is there any advantage at all? Why should the sinner be required to go through the process of alien prayer, direct operation of the Holy Spirit, and joining the church system, if he can steer clear of all of them and make it to heaven? What more should one want than to be a Christian while he lives, and go to heaven when he dies?

In teaching that men can be saved out of the church, one is teaching that which is not only without God's authority, but, that which is opposed to the New Testament. The New Testament teaches that one is saved IN CHRIST; and to be IN

Christ is to be in his BODY, which is the CHURCH (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). If, as is argued, one can be saved out of the church, would it not follow, he can be saved out of Christ? One can be IN CHRIST and not be in any denomination at all. However—and think of this now—no one can be IN CHRIST and not be IN HIS CHURCH, HIS BODY. For, “we are members of his body,” and he is “the head of the body, the church,” and he is “head over all things to the church, which is his body.” Also, “there is one body,” and “there are many members, yet, BUT ONE BODY” (Eph. 5:30; Eph. 1:22-23; Eph. 4:4; 1 Cor. 12:20).

The word “church” is used in two senses in the New Testament. First, it is used to include all the saved of a given area. If you were to take the time to count the number of times it is used in the New Testament, I believe you would come up with the figure of one hundred ten. Ninety-two times it is used to designate the saved of a locality and eighteen times to include the saved of the earth in the aggregate. Since no denomination is large enough to include all the saved on earth, and too large to refer to the saved in a particular locality, no denomination can be the church of the New Testament.

The Establishment of the Church

The church of Jesus Christ had its beginning on the day of Pentecost, following the Lord’s resurrection. Prior to this day, the church was spoken of as future. It became a reality the very day the apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2).

The proof that the church Jesus promised to build was *in existence* in Acts 2 is found in the last verse (47), “Praising God, and having favour with all the people. *And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*” Jesus fulfilled his promise.

Denominations were not in existence then. Think of it, for hundreds of years after Jesus made his promise, there was not a sign of any denomination as we know them today. Does that

startle you? Does it seem strange to think of a world where there is not a single Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Assembly of God, Episcopalian, etc.? Do you know that denominations did not come into existence for some fifteen hundred years after Jesus promised to build his church? Think of it—FIFTEEN HUNDRED YEARS! Do you know that in all of the scriptures, beginning with the book of Genesis in the Old Testament, and closing with the book of Revelation in the New Testament, not even a single HINT was made by the God of Heavens nor any of His inspired writers about a single denominational church? Did you know that if I give you any historical background on a denomination (such as who built it, or where and when it was established), I will have to leave the Bible? I will have to go to some world book, or historical writing of man to give you that information. On the other hand, it is not difficult to find the church that Jesus built in the Bible. *But you cannot find one single denomination mentioned in all of God's book.* This being true, I want to be a member of the church you can read about in the New Testament, and at the same time not a member of any denomination under high heaven.

The people of Corinth thus stood. Paul had preached the gospel to these people and as a result, the church had been established there. Paul saw fit to write them after he had left that place, and he began his letter like this, 1 Cor. 1:1, "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes, our brother, unto the 'church of God' which is at Corinth, and members in particular." Was this a denomination? Absolutely not! He said in the same letter, 1 Cor. 12:27, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." The body is the church (Col. 1:18). Now add this all up and you will see he is simply telling them that they were individual members of the church of Christ (the body of Christ).

The Foundation of the Church

A good foundation is very important. This is known and

recognized by all good builders and construction workers. You may pay an enormous price for a house and it may be a beautiful structure from all outside appearances, but if the foundation is no good, you have made a bad bargain. The house can only stand proportionate to the stability of the foundation. This is even true in a man's character. If the real elements of manhood, honesty, uprightness and true character are not present and built into his nature, it may not show up for some time, but it will eventually, and that character will stumble and fall.

The church of Christ is not founded upon any single segment or section of the Word of God. Notice the inferred names of certain denominations as we list a number of foundations that they use to build on. Baptism (Baptists) is the initiatory rite into the church, but it does not serve as the foundation. The Bible teaches clearly that the ruling in the church is to be done by the presbytery (Presbyterians), but this was not to serve as its foundation. All things are to be done by scriptural methods (Methodists), but again, this was not to be the foundation. The mission of the church was to be universal or catholic (Catholic) in nature, but was this to be the foundation? Paul tells us clearly about the foundation in 1 Cor. 3:11, when he says, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." The church then is built upon Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

I am a member of the church of Christ. I am thankful that men are able to make that statement and ascribe to the benefits attached to that position. Frankly, I can't see myself being a member of an organization of which the Bible has nothing to say. It certainly would be a shock to me, if after carefully investigating God's Book, I found that the church that I was a member of, was never in God's plan to save man, and I couldn't find its name recorded on the Sacred Page. I wouldn't be interested in being a member of the Campbellite Church because I can't find it in the Bible. I would not be interested in

joining the Odd Fellows Lodge as a religious institution because the Bible makes not the slightest reference to that organization. This is an eternal question we are studying. It goes beyond the limits of time and takes us to the boundless beyond, the hereafter, and hence nothing human or of human origin is attractive. I wouldn't think of claiming membership of an organization of which the Bible has nothing to say.

Of course, I *could* have been a member of one of the hundreds of religious organizations that are around us today. I am sorry that such a statement can even be made. I think it is a shame and ridiculous that, with one Bible, under one Christ, living in a nation that claims to be a Christian nation, we are divided into parties and factions that number into the hundreds. No wonder people are confused.

I would think that in their lifetime almost every man and woman considers being a member of some church. Now, out of this great number of denominations, which one ought they to affiliate with?

There are many things that determine where a man casts his lot. It may be that he has married a woman who is a member of a certain denomination. Or his parents or grandparents were members of a particular church before him. Or, it could be a business proposition with him. It may be the most popular church with the largest membership and the nicest building. But friends, there should be only one thing that could settle a question of this kind for us. What church should you be a member of? The answer to that question is this; What does the Bible have to say in regard to religious organizations? If we are going to be right before God, we must respect His word first of all. Our feelings, secular matters, material considerations, must take a back seat. What the Bible has to say ought to be the prominent thing in our lives, or else admit publicly that we do not intend to be governed and directed by our Bible. What society says, or what the preacher says, should not sway us at all.

I would like to see the time come when people in the pews would not be satisfied with just anything the preacher tries to feed them, but would, like the noble Bereans, “search the scriptures daily to see whether or not these things be so.” When I make that statement, I do not reflect on any man who preaches the gospel, but friends, this thing is serious and sacred. We must compare what a man preaches with what the Good Book says and accept it only if the two agree. No man who is honest and earnest and cares for your soul will care one whit for you checking him out. Rather, he will extend an invitation for you to do so. This not only applies to his preaching, but to his manner of living.

Salvation Is In Christ

If I should ask the question, “who is the saviour of mankind?” most would reply, “Jesus, the Son of God.” If I should ask, “When does Jesus save?” again, we would be together in this answer: “when man will comply with his will.” It is a far different thing when I ask, “where does Jesus save?” We would get a variety of answers on that one. Let Paul answer it for us in Eph. 5:23. Concerning Christ he said, “. . . and he is the Saviour of the body (church).” This is where Jesus saves and there is no indication that any man was ever saved (we speak of this age which began at the cross) who was not a member of the church.

It is an impossibility for a man to be a saved man who is not a member of the Lord’s church. That is a bold statement, but you can see that it is rational and scriptural as we continue. We could turn that statement around. It is impossible for a man to be a member of the church that Jesus built who has not been saved from his past sins. The explanation for this is simple; the same that makes you a saved man, makes you a member of the Lord’s church.

Let us firmly establish this one point. To be “IN CHRIST” is the same as being “IN THE CHURCH.” The language of Paul

proves this in Col. 1:13-14. Speaking of God, he says, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the KINGDOM (CHURCH/BODY) of his dear Son: In whom (IN CHRIST) we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." To be in Christ is to be in his body or church. Paul refers to this many times in the Ephesian letter. Notice in chapter two, verse twelve, he speaks of the great changes that had been wrought for the Gentiles IN CHRIST. "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now IN CHRIST JESUS ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both (Jew and Gentile) unto God in ONE BODY (CHURCH) by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." In chapter three he mentions the one body again when talking about that mystery he had been called to preach (v. 6), "That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the SAME BODY, and partakers of his promise IN CHRIST (BODY) by the gospel." While we are studying what Paul said to the Ephesians, we must not overlook what he says in the following fourth chapter. "There is ONE BODY (CHURCH), and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4). He also gives us some insight as to how we get into that body in 1 Cor. 12:13. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into ONE BODY (CHURCH) . . ."

If God had intended for there to be a great number of churches wherein men could be saved, then he could have well started back yonder when there was so much difference between the Jew and the Gentile. To the Jew, the Gentile was a dog, a barbarian, an outcast. Jesus died to change all this,

and Paul declared in Gal. 3:28, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one IN CHRIST JESUS.” Jesus died that both might be reconciled to God IN ONE BODY (Eph. 2:16).

Creedbooks vs. the Bible

It would be a shock to know just how many man-made creed books exist. There are many more creed books than there are denominations simply because they multiply in the same ranks. The existence of numerous creed books denote the existence of different beliefs and doctrines. Had man been simply satisfied with God’s Word, there would not be a *single* creed in existence produced by man.

What does “creed” mean? It means “my belief.” Every true follower of Jesus Christ has brushed aside his own ideas; rejected the doctrines and commandments of men, and has taken for himself the Bible as his creed and discipline. God’s Word is his church guide and he will not subscribe to any other. There is a reason for this. He believes that the Bible is sufficient and furnishes him “unto every good work.” With one hand on Genesis and the other on Revelation he is glad to say, “I believe it all, from start to finish.” He may further state, “There are some things I may not fully understand, but I believe it—because God said it!” Now, people, that is the faith that we are to walk by.

Is there a reason for a creed other than the Bible? I surely can’t think of any. We have long used this rule in reference to man-made creeds: if a creed contains more than the Bible, it contains too much. Again, if a creed contains less than the Bible, it contains too little. It just might leave out the very thing that we need. And then, if the creed contains no more and no less than the Bible, it is exactly like the Bible. There would be no use for a thing like that. Why not lay aside every human creed and take the word of God, and that alone?

I am afraid we have forsaken some of the old restoration

pleas as too old fashioned and out-dated, when really they are as much needed now as when they were first used. When these old gospel preachers took the old Jerusalem Blade in hand and began to blaze the trails, one of their battle cries should still be ringing in our ears. Listen to it! "Lay down your creed books, confessions of faith, church manuals and rituals, and take up the word of God, and that alone, as your rule of faith and practice." Let every child of God on earth follow this instruction, and, under the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, he will know where to walk, and how to find his way to the eternal shore.

These scriptures should be enough to convince anyone that the Bible alone is sufficient. Paul says in 2 Tim. 3:16-17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Again, this language by Peter in 2 Pet. 1:3, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."

Steps Into Christ

The question now is, "How do I become a member of the church?" or, "What shall I do to be saved?" The answers that men would give you are varied and they differ widely. Some would even tell you that no instructions have been left for you to obey. Where shall we go for the answer? Where shall we go but to the Lord?

In 1 Tim. 2:5, Paul said, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." A mediator is a "third party" that has been called in to settle a dispute between two parties. In this instance, the two parties are God and man. Man could not supply a mediator to settle the problems but God could, and did. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). Jesus came

and “took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). He came from the Father to man. He was the only one that could qualify as a mediator. He could reach down with one hand and say “Humanity is my mother,” and with the other hand reach up and say, “God is my Father.” He was the only one that could supply the necessary link between God and man. Jesus supplied the means of salvation. He told us what we must do to “please the Father.” He gave man the “words of reconciliation.”

Jesus selected twelve men to be his apostles. He commissioned them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature (Mk. 16:15-16). Paul says he committed unto them the “ministry of reconciliation.” As the mediator, he had the right to lay down the laws of pardon, which is equal to providing us with the information of where we can be reconciled to his Father.

Here are the terms the mediator gives. *No. 1: Faith.* Jesus says, “Except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins. In Heb. 11:6, Paul says, “Without faith it is impossible to please him.” Faith is the underlying principle of the gospel of Christ and without it man would not be interested in doing anything that the mediator would ask of him. Faith is produced by the word of God. Paul says in Rom. 10:17, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” The same thought is suggested in Acts 18:8; “and many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.”

Just here let us note a very popular doctrine that the scripture does not justify. Many would teach you that we are saved by *faith alone*. In no place does the Bible say this. In fact, it teaches to the contrary. James teaches, “Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone” (Jas. 2:17). But, some would object, “The Bible says time and again that we are saved by faith.” This will not be denied by anyone who has studied his Bible. Just remember, however, that it does not teach we are saved by *faith alone*.

Step No. 2: Jesus, the mediator, gives us another step to salvation. In Luke 13:3 he says, "I tell you, nay; but, except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish." Repent means "to turn." It is often defined as being sorry for sin and so sorry that you turn from sin. In Acts 2:38, when the folks asked what to do to be saved, Peter replied, "*Repent*, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ *for the remission of sins* . . ."

Step No. 3: Jesus the mediator, tells us something else that we must be willing to do to be saved. Hear him as he says in Matt. 10:32, "Whosoever therefore shall *confess* me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven." Paul says in Rom. 10:10, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth *confession* is made unto salvation." We also have an example of that confession being made by a man in the process of coming to God in Acts 8:36-37. "And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, *I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*." We must be willing to confess him before men on earth so that he will confess us before the Father in heaven.

Step No. 4: This is the final step. It is the step that the Bible says puts you into Christ (body/church). When the mediator picked out his ambassadors (apostles) he told them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He promised, "He that believeth and is *baptized* shall be saved" (Mk. 16:15-16). Almost every one will agree that one must be IN CHRIST to be saved. The step of baptism is the only step that the Bible says puts you into Christ. We offer the following scriptures: Rom. 6:3, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were *baptized* into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" A similar passage is found in Gal. 3:27; "For as many of you as have been *baptized INTO* Christ have put on Christ." Baptism is the act by which we reach the cleansing blood of Christ. It is

that blood that removes the sin that keeps us from God. Note again in Rom. 6:3, Paul says we are “*baptized into his death.*” Where was his blood shed? Answer: in his death. Being baptized into his death, we reach the blood which removes the sin. This is in line with what the preacher told Saul (apostle Paul) when he told him what to do to be saved. Read the account in Acts 22:16, “*And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*”

Paul was discussing the subject of baptism in the sixth chapter of Romans. In verse 17 he speaks of what is accomplished in baptism. “*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart THAT FORM OF DOCTRINE (baptism; a form or likeness of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ) being THEN made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*” When were they made free from sin? When they were baptized and not until.

With all this in mind, it is not difficult to understand what Peter meant when he said in 1 Pet. 3:21, “*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.*” Who can deny the essentiality of baptism when such plain commands are given? Does baptism alone save you? NO! But when it is preceded by these other steps the Lord says are necessary, and is obeyed from the heart, you are then made free from sin and a member of the Lord’s church. “*For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body*” (1 Cor. 12:13).

Wearing the Name of Christ

Having obeyed the Lord in baptism, thus becoming a member of his body (the church), what name should we wear? Does it really matter? Denominationalists often say “there’s nothing in a name,” so, according to this idea, it doesn’t matter. But a man is not thinking very well who makes such a statement. He does not agree with Solomon who said, “A

good name is rather to be chosen than great riches." It is one of our greatest assets.

What is the name of the church as spoken of in the Bible? It is referred to in various ways. It is called the "church of God"; it is called "God's house"; it is called "God's building" and "God's temple." it is referred to as "the pillar and ground of the truth," and "the church of the first-born." These are Bible names, and although different names are attached to it, yet, they all refer to the same institution, and all glorify the builder, Jesus Christ. Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could walk down the street and see up over the doors of meeting houses a name that glorified God. Instead, you see names of men, of this, that and the other, and all of this causes division and confusion.

Let us look to the Bible to see what they were called in Paul's day. When their relationship to Christ was what the writer had in mind, they were properly called "Christians." With reference to the fact that they were learners and students, they were called "disciples." With reference to their relationship to one another they were called "brethren." With reference to their character and purity of life, they were called "saints." Together they made up the "body of Christ," or "church of Christ."

When Paul stood in the presence of King Agrippa and preached unto him, he was so impressive and persuasive that, at the last, King Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." Notice that Paul did not persuade him to be a Mormon, or democrat, or a member of the Odd Fellows. He persuaded him to be a *Christian*. Paul was in the persuading business. In 2 Cor. 5:11 Paul said, "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men." I have never asked a man to be anything else. I would not think of doing so. I, along with Paul, persuade you to simply be a Christian—a member of the church that you read about in the Bible. I encourage you to take the Bible as your creed and discipline, go about doing good as the Saviour has shown us how, walking in his footsteps, practicing pure and undefiled religion. If you do that,

all will be well with you in this life and the “life which is to come.”

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

What Is Bible Repentance?

by Melvin Garrison

After a careful study of the Scriptures, we find that one of the commands that must be obeyed in order to obtain forgiveness of sins and have life eternal is repentance. Like John the baptist, Christ preached repentance. In Matt. 4:17 we read, "From that time Jesus began to preach, *repent* for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Jews had so disrespected and violated the law of Moses that Jesus demanded a repenting, a change. In Luke 13:5 our Lord plainly states, "I tell you nay, except ye *repent*, ye shall all likewise perish." Repentance of evil has been required in every dispensation.

God *desires* repentance ("The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 Pet. 3:9), and *commands* repentance, ("And the time of this ignorance God winked at but now commandeth all men every where to repent," Acts 17:30).

The apostle Peter, preaching the first gospel sermon, says in Acts 2:38, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." Sin cannot be forgiven without repentance.

The question then arises, "What is repentance?" Webster defines repentance: "1. To feel sorry or self-reproachful for wrong doings, 2. To feel such regret over some past action as to change one's mind." Repentance is far more than just being sorry for wrong doings. Repentance comes from the Greek word *metanopo* and means a changed mind or to have another mind. Repentance then, is being so sorry for wrong

doing that it will bring about a changed mind and heart, thus a changed life. Our desire will be to quit the wrong doing (sin) and serve God.

Too often “I’m sorry” is equated with repentance. Although one cannot repent without sorrow for past sins, it is possible to be sorry without truly repenting. Judas was sorry for betraying the Master (Matt. 27:3), but did he truly repent? No, he didn’t change his life, rather verse 5 of the same chapter tells us he went out and hanged himself. The rich young ruler of Matt. 19 went away sorrowful but unrepentant because he would not meet the requirements of repentance, a changed mind, heart, and life. Sorrow for wrong doing is the beginning of repentance but unless this sorrow effects a change of life, it is not repentance.

A good example of repentance is found recorded in 1 Cor. 6:9-11. The apostle Paul says, “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but now ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” Paul lists several sins of the flesh and then comments, “*and such were some of you.*” The word “were” implies an action of the past, not of the present or future. The Corinthians had evidently engaged in sin, recognized it to be wrong, were sorry for it, and changed their lives by ceasing to engage in it. This is Bible repentance.

Bible repentance demands fruits, reformation, and restitution so far as is possible. The thief cannot say I’m sorry and keep his stolen goods—the drunkard cannot be sorry and continue drinking. The homosexual cannot repent and remain in that deplorable condition. The person or persons in an unlawful marriage cannot say, “I’m sorry,” and continue living

together.

Repentance involves a complete change of moral and spiritual attitudes. Genuine repentance is not an emotional state, but a complete turning from sin to God, and a forgiving Saviour.

“But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live” (Ezek. 18:21).

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
It's greatest friend is time and reason;
It's greatest enemy, prejudice.*

The Holy Spirit Movement

by David Fowler

Perhaps no subject has aroused as much emotion in the last 25 years throughout the religious world as the "Holy Spirit." Even many of the older, more traditional denominations have had many members who have been caught up in the Holy Spirit movement. Since many of these denominations have been very liberal in their interpretation of the scriptures, they have found it difficult to refute the false doctrine that has arisen concerning the Holy Spirit.

But the Lord's church has not escaped unscathed during this period. Christians in many congregations throughout the country have seen the great enthusiasm and excitement displayed by those who claim to experience the miraculous working of the Holy Spirit and have been drawn away after some of these movements.

It should be emphasized that the Holy Spirit is very important to each Christian. The Holy Spirit is a divine person; personal pronouns are used in reference to the Holy Spirit in John 14:17 and 16:13.¹ He works (1 Cor. 12:11), testifies (John 15:26), teaches (John 14:26), speaks (Acts 13:2), searches (1 Cor. 2:10), reproves (John 16:8-11), helps in prayer (Rom. 8:26), guides into truth (John 16:13), and glorifies Christ (John 16:14). Christ promised to send the Comforter, or Holy Spirit, to the apostles after his ascension (John 14:16-17).

On the day of Pentecost when the church was established, the Holy Spirit came in power as Christ had promised. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, the apostles performed miracles and taught by inspiration. Truly the church could not have been established without the Holy Spirit. And the Holy

Spirit is still active today, but not in a miraculous manner.

Holy Spirit and Personal Guidance

There must be a careful distinction made in what the Holy Spirit does *on behalf* of us and what he does *to* us. Christians should rejoice that the Holy Spirit continually assists us. Paul says in Rom. 8:26-27: "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." Guy N. Woods² points out several important truths in this passage. The Spirit (1) helps; (2) helps in our weaknesses; (3) helps us to pray when we do not know how as we should; (4) helps by making intercession for us. But it should be observed that the intercession of the Spirit is *for* us and not *on* us. *There is no evidence from the scriptures that the Holy Spirit operates separately and apart from the Word.*

Christ told his disciples that He would send the Holy Spirit and that "he shall bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26). In John 16:12-15, Jesus further assured the apostles that they would receive divine guidance; "he will guide you in all truth." There is no truth today not revealed in the New Testament. If the apostles gave us *all* truth, *then there is no other revelation that has been given to man since the days of the apostles.* The claims of divine revelations by people today reveal them to be fakes and imposters.

Holy Spirit in Conversion

Many, however, believe that conversion is by the direct personal guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit plays a very important role in conversion, but not in a direct operation. The apostle Paul declared that it is the gospel that saves us, not divine revelation. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the

gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I have preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-3).

The Holy Spirit gives life to the Word of God. In John 5:6, “It is the Spirit that beareth witness because the Spirit is truth.” Jesus said, “Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17), and “the seed is the Word of God” (Luke 8:11). The sum of these declarations is that the Spirit works through the truth which is the Word of God, or the seed of the kingdom. Those who were converted by the seed, or the Word, were converted by the Spirit through the Word.³

If souls can be converted today by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, it would make the plan of salvation unnecessary. However, there is no example in the New Testament of a conversion in which the Holy Spirit came *directly, immediately, and independently* into the heart of a sinner and converted him. There is no example in the New Testament of anyone who was converted who did not *hear* the truth, *believe in Christ, repent* of sins, and was *baptized* into Christ.^{4 5} The 3,000 who were saved on Pentecost heard the gospel preached, believed, and obeyed, (Acts 2). In Acts 8, Philip “went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed unto them Christ” (8:5), and the people “gave heed with one accord unto the things that were spoken by Philip, when they heard, and saw the signs which he did” (8:6). “When they believed Philip preaching good tidings. . . they were baptized. . .”(8:12).

In the case of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8), the Holy Spirit directed Philip to “go and join him.” Philip asked, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” and the eunuch answered, “How can I except some man should guide me?” Philip taught him, he believed, and was baptized. But note that the Holy Spirit did not miraculously, directly reveal truth to him. A

preacher using the Word of God was the source of truth. The Holy Spirit used the gospel in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, even though there were several miracles associated with his conversion. These miracles were not part of the conversion itself; they were for a different purpose. Saul heard the truth, believed, and was baptized. If ever God would have used the direct, miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit to save a man, surely it would have been Saul. But Saul was saved by the same plan of salvation by which men today are saved. We are baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3), not put into Christ miraculously by the Holy Spirit.

Those who persist in believing in the direct operation of the Holy Spirit in conversion should remember that God is no respecter of persons. How could God permit the miraculous intervention in some lives and not in all lives; millions upon millions of people are going into eternity having never heard of the gospel of Christ. Wood declares, "Are we to be told that only those who *yield* to the will of the Spirit are thus led; and, that those who are passed by are those who would reject the Spirit's direction? If so, is it not strange that *none* in benighted heathen lands are, by the Lord, regarded as 'worthy of eternal life,' since none of these are influenced by the Spirit until some preacher carries the gospel there?"⁶

Miracles

One of the most popular claims of those in the Holy Spirit movement today is the ability to perform miracles. A miracle may be defined as "an event or action that apparently contradicts known scientific laws and is hence thought to be due to supernatural causes, especially to an act of God."⁷ The creation of the first man and woman was a miracle. The birth of a baby today is not a miracle because it follows natural laws.

We are sometimes accused of not believing in the power of the Holy Spirit because we do not believe in miraculous healing. Christians should and do believe in the power of God to

heal the sick (Jas. 5:14-15), but these cures are not instantaneous or outside the natural healing process. Why is it that the so-called miracle healers never raise the dead to life or replace a withered or amputated limb? Nature simply does not perform those feats; neither do men, even though they claim the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit.

Purpose of Miracles

Those who claim to perform miracles today say that they are continuing in the paths of the apostles and others who had those powers in New Testament times. But let us examine the purpose of miracles as performed in those days. Hebrews 2:2-4 records: "For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?"

The purpose of miracles was (1) to confirm the Word of God, and (2) to cause men to believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God.⁸ In John 20:30-31, John tells us, "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

Miracles were essential to proving and establishing the authenticity of the gospel. There were false prophets before Christ, and there have been many since. But the difference was the ability of Jesus and his apostles to perform miracles to convince people that they were acting with the power of God. Miracles were proof of their authority. They would not have been believed by any significant number of people nor would that gospel have been passed down to us had not it been

confirmed by miracles.

Nicodemus, for example, believed that Jesus was the Son of God because of the miracles which he performed. His words are recorded in John 3:2: "We know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."

Types of Miracles

It has been noted that miracles performed by the Lord fell into several categories:⁹

(1.) Power over *nature*. Jesus demonstrated that power in Matt. 8:26 when He "rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm."

(2.) Power over *disease*. In Matt. 8:3, He healed a man's leprosy *immediately*.

(3.) Power over *demons*. Matt. 8:16 records that He "cast out the spirits with his word."

(4.) Power over *material things*. He fed 4,000 men plus women and children with seven loaves and a few fishes (Matt. 15:34-38).

(5.) Power over *monetary affairs*. At tribute time, Jesus produced the tax money from the mouth of a fish (Matt. 17:27).

Christ sent out the 12 disciples during his ministry with power to "heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils..." (Matt. 10:8). Later, just before His ascension, He gave another commission, (Mark 16:15, 17, 18): "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature... And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick and they shall recover."

In addition to these miracles, some in the early church were able to perform miracles including speaking in tongues (other

languages) and to interpret other languages.

But it is interesting and noteworthy that of all the miracles that Christ and His disciples performed, modern miracle workers concentrate on healing the sick and speaking in tongues. But why do modern “faith healers” not raise the dead? They have tried, but there is no case on record where they have been successful.

The purpose of all miracles, including healing the sick, was to confirm the Word of God and to convince people of Jesus’ divinity. When Jesus and His followers performed miracles, they did so at appropriate times. They did not, as is done by those who claim miraculous gifts today, rent a building and advertise far and wide to come and be healed. Word of mouth did bring many to Christ to be healed, but Jesus sometimes told the recipients of His miracles to tell no one. As McCown says, “The modern ‘miracle workers’ and ‘faith healers’ of today have the cart before the horse. Rather than confirming their preaching by their miracles, they endeavor to confirm their miracles by their preaching.”

To Whom Was the Power to Perform Miracles Given?

Many of those who claim power to perform miracles believe that every convert to Christianity could have the power to perform miracles. Or at least they believe that people today can receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit and receive the miraculous gifts.

A review of the promise made to the disciples concerning the power they would receive and the fulfillment of that promise is helpful in understanding who could perform miracles. Reference 9 contains an excellent summary.

The apostles were commanded by Christ to tarry in Jerusalem until they were endued with “power from on high” (Luke 24:46-49). John the Baptist by inspiration had promised them that they would be baptized with the Holy Ghost (Matt. 3:11).

Just before ascending to heaven, Jesus applied the promise of baptism of the Holy Spirit to the apostles (Acts 1:1-5). They were further promised that they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them (Acts 1:8). In verse 5, Christ had promised that it would “be not many days hence.” This was about 10 days before the promise was fulfilled on Pentecost.

There were several reasons for the Holy Spirit being given to them in baptismal measure:¹⁰

- (1.) Guide them unto all truth (John 16:7-13);
- (2.) Bring to their memory all things which Christ had taught them (John 14:26);
- (3.) Comfort them by the teaching and revelation of the Spirit (John 14:1-6, 26);
- (4.) Teach them all things (John 14:26);
- (5.) Show them things to come (John 16:13-14);
- (6.) Speak in other languages (Acts 2:1-11);
- (7.) Perform miracles to confirm their preaching (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4);
- (8.) Binding the conditions of remission of sins (John 20:20-23; Acts 2:38);
- (9.) Infallibly testifying as witnesses of the life and miracles of Christ and of his resurrection (Luke 24:48-49; Acts 1:5-8, 2:32, 10:39);
- (10.) Write the New Testament scriptures and confirm them by signs and wonders (John 20:30-31);
- (11.) Perform “greater works” than Christ did; and
- (12.) “Convict the world of sin” by preaching the gospel with divine power (John 16:7-13).

It should be reemphasized that the Holy Spirit baptism was a *promise* made to the *apostles* and not a *command* to *disciples* in general. The promise was fulfilled on Pentecost. The eleven remaining apostles waited in Jerusalem. In Acts 1:15, the Scriptures say that “the number of names together were about 120.” However, it was the 11 apostles plus Matthias, who was chosen to replace Judas, to whom the power was given. In

1:26, “the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.” In the next verse (2:1) “...they (the apostles) were all with one accord in one place.” In verses 2 to 4, “they” and “them” also refer to “apostles” (1:26).

This account is the fulfillment of the promise made by the Lord that they would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit.¹¹ They were then qualified to reveal, confirm, and preach the gospel “with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven” (1 Pet. 1:12). They quickly used their newly given power. Peter stood up with the other 11 apostles and preached the first gospel sermon to which 3,000 responded in obedience to the gospel.

The apostles began to perform miracles, the first being speaking in the languages of the many Jews from foreign lands who were present (Acts 2:6-12). Acts 2:43 says “many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.” In Acts 3, the story of the healing of the lame man by Peter and John is given. This caused a great interest of the people and gave the apostles credibility in preaching the gospel.

The only other possible recorded recipient of the baptism of the Holy Spirit was Cornelius, who was the first Gentile to be converted. The giving of the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit was God’s way of confirming that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as for Jews. It is noteworthy that Peter, as he related the account to those in Jerusalem, said “. . . the Holy Spirit fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that he said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost. Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:15-17). Most Bible scholars believe that Peter’s reference to the Lord’s promise of baptism of the Holy Spirit is proof that Cornelius and his house also were baptized with the Holy Spirit. However, V. E. Howard makes an interesting argument that Cornelius received only a miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit and not baptism of the Holy Spirit.

He cites several reasons: (1) Cornelius was not among those to whom the promise was given. (2) He was at the wrong place, Caesarea rather than Jerusalem. (3) He was not among those told to wait for the power that would come “not many days hence.” (4) Had he received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, he would have been able to speak by divine revelation and to impart the miraculous gifts by laying on of hands which, according to Acts 8, only the apostles had the power to perform. Howard concludes that Cornelius received the miraculous gift of speaking in tongues, one of the gifts that the apostles received on Pentecost, directly from heaven rather than by the laying on of hands.¹² Even if Cornelius was baptized with the Holy Spirit, it obviously was not a common occurrence. It caused Peter to recall the time years earlier that the apostles, also, had been recipients of the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Had baptism of the Holy Spirit been a common occurrence, as is claimed by many today, there would have been no need to have referred to an event that happened some 10 or 15 years before. There is no other indication of anyone else receiving the Holy Spirit baptism except possibly the apostle Paul, who said, “For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.”

Other disciples besides the apostles could perform miracles. How could they in view of the conclusion that they did not receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit? Acts 8 seems to reveal the answer. Philip, one of the seven chosen to assist the apostles in taking care of the widows in Jerusalem, was the recipient of laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 6:1-6). Philip later went down to the city of Samaria and preached the gospel (8:5). “And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did” (v.6). (Note the effect the miracles had in confirming the words that he spoke.) On the scene then came Simon, the first fake healer recorded after the church was established. But when he heard Philip, he was converted (vs.

9-13). Simon continued with Philip, amazed at the miracles that Philip could perform. Obviously, even though Simon had been baptized, he had not received any miraculous powers.

Although Philip worked miracles and preached the gospel causing them to believe and be baptized, *he could not lay hands on them to give them the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit*. It took the apostles to impart that gift. Acts 8:14-17 reads: "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

It seems clear that *only the apostles could impart the miraculous gift to others by laying on of hands*. After Simon saw that "through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money." So even though Philip could perform miracles after the apostles had laid hands on him, he could not pass this power on to anyone else by the laying on of his hands.

It should be observed that all Christians receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at baptism (Acts 2:38). It is obvious that this is not the miraculous gifts that we have been discussing since the new converts in Samaria only received those gifts with laying on of the apostles' hands after they had been baptized. Yet many today say that all new converts have the power to perform miracles!

1 Cor. 12:8-10 lists nine miraculous gifts that could be given by laying on of hands. As we shall see, these gifts are no longer available.

Miracles Have Ceased

Miracles have ceased. Paul wrote: "Whether there be prophecies they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall

cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:8-10). Paul lists several of the miraculous gifts given in 1 Cor. 12:8-10, and states that miraculous gifts will cease "when that which is perfect is come." Thayer defines the word "perfect": "brought to its end, finished: wanting nothing necessary to completeness; perfect." Different authors say that "perfect" refers to (1) Christ at His return at the end of time; (2) perfect state of Heaven; (3) the church; (4) love, the abiding gift; and (5) full revelation of God's Word.¹³

The interpretation favored by many of those who believe in miracles today that "perfect" refers to the second coming of Christ has two problems: (1) faith, hope, and love are to continue after "the perfect" has come. When Christ returns faith will be made sight and hope will be fulfilled. (2) The fact that "perfect" is the neuter gender makes it impossible to refer to Christ, for it would have to be masculine in gender.¹⁴

The other interpretations also present difficulties. The most probable meaning of "perfect" is "the full revelation of God's Word."^{15 16 17} This means that when the scriptures were complete, all miracles would cease. The role of miracles in confirming the gospel can be thought of as similar to scaffolding used in constructing a building. The scaffolding is essential while the building is being built, but once it is completed, the scaffolding can be removed. Miracles were necessary to confirm the word, but once the revelation of God's word was complete, miracles were no longer needed.

Heb. 2:2-4 indicates that the word had been confirmed. There is no reason to keep confirming the word over and over again. When the Supreme Court confirms a ruling of a lower court, it is confirmed once and for all time. It doesn't come back every month or every year to reconfirm it. It is foolish of man to presume to aid God by continuing to try to confirm His teachings that have already been confirmed by the apostles who

were guided by the Holy Spirit.¹⁸

But miracles have ceased because the means of securing the miraculous power has ceased. Since the scriptures reveal only two methods for receiving this power—Holy Spirit baptism and laying on of hands by the apostles—there is no way that men today could receive it. Holy Spirit baptism was not promised to men today.

Howard¹⁹ suggests that the cessation of miracles was foretold in Micah 7:15: “According to the coming out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things.” He says the time from when Christ began performing miracles to the destruction of Jerusalem was 40 years, the same period of time as “the coming out of the land of Egypt.” No miracles were reported in the New Testament after about AD 70.

What About the “Miracles” of Today?

Many sincere Christians do not believe in miracles today, but they are confused by the claims that many people make concerning miracles. Several comments can be made.

Many so-called miraculous cures have been exposed as frauds. An AP news report dated August 4, 1951, stated: “The Corpse Escaped. It all happened in suburban Fairmount Heights, MD. A coffin was lowered into a grave after a tent meeting revivalist told how the ‘doomed’ man would be raised from the dead. As the earth was shoveled onto the coffin, someone said the ‘corpse’ crawled out of a tunnel just outside the tent. The ‘corpse’ escaped during the ensuing riot.” It is pathetic that men would lower themselves to fake a miracle. There is *no documented* proof of anyone having been raised from the dead since New Testament times. If men have miraculous powers, it should be as easy to raise the dead as to heal the sick. Let them prove it!

Oral Roberts has claimed miraculous healing for years. Bales gives the six steps Roberts claims are necessary for healing.²⁰ One of the key steps is faith that God will heal. However, if the

person is not healed, Roberts can blame it on the failure to follow the six steps, particularly a lack of faith on the one requesting healing. However, Lazarus was raised from the dead without faith. There is no indication that the centurion's servant had faith before he was healed (Luke 7). Several years ago Roberts was conducting a healing service in Amarillo. A wind storm blew down the large tent one night with an audience of 7,000 present. At least 50 people were injured. Ambulances and doctors rushed to the scene to aid the victims. The man who claimed to perform miracles was not able to perform even "little" miracles. No broken arms, no cuts, nor any abrasions were healed.²¹ I think we know the reason.

But what about those who claim to have been healed? A lady who claimed to have been healed of cancer in an Oral Roberts "healing" service in Cincinnati stopped off in Indiana to visit relatives en route to her home in California. She told them she had been healed. However, the day the televised "healing" program was aired, the lady died. Physicians confirmed the cause of death was cancer.²²

Another "healer" claimed to have healed a child of polio. He ordered the braces off the boy, after which the lad fell down. The "healer" ordered the parents to leave the braces off and make him walk. A doctor later ordered the braces replaced. The preacher landed in jail after the family successfully sued him. But the "healer" himself died of polio before he was brought to trial. His associates tried unsuccessfully to raise him from the dead.²³

Bales cites several reasons why some sincere people testify that they have been miraculously healed: (1) They may be so emotionally stimulated they may temporarily ignore the illness. (2) If the illness is internal, they may think they are healed because they feel better at the moment. (3) They ignore the distinction between a slow natural recovery and a miraculous recovery. If they gradually are recovering anyway, they think they are miraculously healed. (4) Mental attitude does have an

important role in getting well, even though physicians do not fully understand it. (5) Some healers deceive the person into believing that they should claim the healing in faith in order to be healed. If you claim it, you have it. If you still have the symptoms, it's because the devil put them there to shake your faith!²⁴

We should never deny divine healing. But miraculous healings as were done in the early days of the church are no more. They served their purpose well. And just because God does not choose to authorize miracles, let us not ever doubt His power. He's the same God today as then. But He does not give man miraculous gifts or direct revelations in our time.

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
It's greatest friend is time and reason;
It's greatest enemy, prejudice.*

The Eldership

by Raymond Stiner

Of all the subjects that are the least taught and discussed, probably the eldership comes in pretty close to first place. There are many congregations that do not have elders and it seems that they are not trying to encourage their young to desire this office. This is sad, because we are dealing with a very important aspect of the church. The eldership concerns itself with the government of the church and certainly the church, as the kingdom, has a government. This government of course is a type of “monarchy” which is headed supremely by Jesus Christ. He is King of kings, and Lord of lords. When Jesus was here on earth, it was possible for him to direct and rule over his followers, he being their leader. After he ascended to heaven he was not able to do this in the very personal way that he had before, yet his followers needed someone to instruct and guide them. So, he sent forth his apostles as ambassadors for him (2 Cor. 5:20).

Now, an ambassador is one who acts in the stead of another. They are not usurping authority for themselves, but simply using the authority that has been delegated them. In this case, the apostles did as Jesus the King had instructed. But after the apostles had all died, who would take over this leadership position? I believe it is then the responsibility of the elders to engage in this work as the ambassadors of Christ also.

The apostles and the early evangelists went forth establishing congregations. When they were established they would ordain elders in these congregations (Tit. 1:5). Thus, the church should not be without some form of leadership. This is what the eldership was intended for. In fact, to substitute anything else in

the place of the eldership is to fail to meet God's plan. God's plan is always best. In fact, we probably would not have the divisions and differences in congregations which we now have, if qualified men would have been in the position of elders, guiding the church in the paths of righteousness.

Who Are the Elders?

Throughout the New Testament we find there have been several titles given to men in the eldership. Perhaps it would be good at this time to view the different titles in order to understand more fully their work.

Elders— Acts 14:23, 1 Tim. 5:1,17,19, Titus 1:5, 1 Pet. 5:1-4.

Bishops— Tim. 3:1-2, Titus 1:7.

Overseers— Acts 20:28.

Pastors— Eph. 4:11.

Here is a description of the above terms:

Elders: The word elder, as it is ordinarily used, is an adjective in the comparative degree, and its meaning is older; and when used as a substantive, it means an older person. An elder in this sense becomes such with the passing of years, but an elder in the church becomes such through appointment (Acts 14:23, "And when they had ordained elders in every city. . ."). This is enough to show that the term "elder" as it occurs in the New Testament, is used in two different senses.

McGarvey calls attention to the fact that many words have both a primary and a technical, or official meaning. He goes on to say, "When the context indicates that a comparison as to age is intended by the writer, we must give the term its primary sense. But when the context shows that the persons spoken of sustain an official relation to the church, it must be understood in its official sense" (*The Eldership*, p. 14).

Robert Milligan points out the fact that the age of eligibility to the eldership is nowhere defined in the New Testament. This is no doubt true because there are a lot of other things involved in

the eldership besides age. If the elder person has only age, but does not have these other qualities, he cannot be an elder in an official sense. Milligan says, "They must have wisdom, and prudence, and moderation, without which age is really of no value. . . . That man is old enough who has the wisdom that is profitable to direct in all things," providing he meets the other qualifications (*Scheme of Redemption*, pp. 322f.).

Bishops: This word is exactly the same as the word elder so far as their position is concerned. A bishop is one who is an overseer or one who watches or looks. The difference between the words elder and bishop is that "elder" indicates the mature, spiritual experience and understanding of those so described. The term "bishop" or "overseer" indicates the character of the work undertaken. In 1 Pet. 5:1-2, an elder is one who acts as an overseer or bishop in taking the oversight of the church or God's people.

Overseer: same as that described above.

Presbyters: These are men who are a part of the presbytery. The presbytery is described as an assembly of aged men, denoting the elders or bishops in a local congregation as a group.

Pastors: A pastor is the same thing as a shepherd. He is one who tends herds or flocks (not merely one who feeds them). Pastors guide as well as feed the flock, and this involves tender care and vigilant superintendence.

The religious world has misapplied the term pastor by giving it to the minister of a congregation. It does not apply to him, but simply refers to an elder in that congregation.

These men of which we speak, having these different "titles," are to be in the leadership of the church. We will find out later what qualifications they must meet to become elders. For now, let me just say to those who contend that it is impossible for there to be any elders today, they are really expressing a bad commentary on their own life. If the requirements which the Lord has made of the elders seem to be too

exacting, let the objector take the time to study them carefully, especially those pertaining to the moral life, and see if there is a single one which any Christian can, in the fear of God, leave out of his own character.

The Eldership in the Early Church

The only way we can know what the eldership in the early church was like is to look into the Scriptures and see what some of their duties were. We can only assume that the early "elder" was aided by the instruction of the apostles.

In the book of Acts, we learn in the eleventh chapter that funds were gathered together in the area of Antioch and sent by the hands of Paul and Barnabas to give unto the brethren who were in Judea. The money was given unto the elders, who in turn no doubt gave to the brethren as they had need. So, one of the things the elders did was to take care of funds that would accumulate in the church. Also, in Acts 15:4-6, and 23, we find the elders in discussion with the apostles who were still at Jerusalem, over various matters. In verse 4, they were the listening body as Paul and Barnabas explained their work in the gospel. In verse 6 they were the ones again who took up the issue as to whether the Gentile converts needed to be circumcised. And then again, in verse 23, we find the elders involved in writing letters to send with several who were going back to Antioch.

In James 5:14 we also learn of another duty of the elders in the early church. If one was sick, he was to call for the elders of the church, and these elders were to come and pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. This suggests some of them had at least some of the spiritual gifts.

From these Scriptures and others found in the New Testament, we find that there are basically three duties the elders need to perform. They are namely: 1.) to oversee, 2.) to shepherd, and 3.) to teach. Let us observe the instructions and guidance given to the elders in these areas.

1. *Overseers*: In Acts 20:28, Paul told the elders of Ephesus that the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, and then in 1 Pet. 5:2 Peter told the elders to exercise the oversight. The essential idea of overseership is that of directing or ruling, and it is therefore the duty of the elders to rule over and direct the affairs of the congregation.

2. *Shepherds*: As we have already noticed, the word pastor and shepherd are the same. This is one of the most tender, most beautiful, and most intimate relationships which exists between the leaders and the congregation. Several of the activities of the shepherds over the church are pointed out in the New Testament.

A. They are to watch: (Acts 20:31, Heb. 13:17). As shepherds, they watch for those who would prey upon God's people. They also watch over the souls of Christians to see that they are growing, and not becoming weak. They watch so as to give them the things they need for growth.

B. The discipline of the church is their responsibility as a shepherd (1 Thess. 5:12-15, 1 Tim. 3:5).

C. They are to be examples, leading the flock by their good life as well as by the instruction that they give them (1 Pet. 5:3, Acts 20:28).

D. They are to help the weak (Acts 20:35, 1 Thess. 5:12-15).

3. *Teachers*: The apostle Paul makes it plain that all of the elders are expected to be teachers of the Word of God (1 Tim. 3:2, Tit. 1:9). There are two things which are necessary for one to be a successful teacher, namely:

A. He must have a comprehensive understanding of the Bible.

B. He must know and understand the needs of those who are to be taught.

These then, were the duties of the elders in the early church. Because of what was written of them, I am convinced they are also the duties of elders today.

Did the Eldership Belong Only To the Age of Gifts?

It has been suggested that the eldership was a part of the special “gifts of the Spirit” that were given unto the apostles, and further transmitted to others by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. If this be the case, then when the age of the “gifts” ceased, the eldership would also cease. We know that the special miraculous gifts did cease because of the writing of 1 Cor. 13:8, but to say the eldership was a part of those gifts is stretching it a bit too far. Let us notice a few reasons why the eldership was not limited.

1. In 1 Cor. 12:1-11, the gifts of the Spirit are mentioned. In this list there is not a reference made that the Spirit gave some the position to be rulers over the flock of God. There were gifts given, of course, that would help in this area, such as the gift of wisdom, or the gift of knowledge. But no direct gift was given which made one an elder, or was given to the eldership *per se*.

2. In order for it to have been a gift of the Spirit, it would have had to have been administered by the apostles and the apostles only. It is my understanding that after the apostles died there was no one who had the power to lay hands on another so that they would receive the gifts. The apostles alone had that power (Acts 8:18, 19:1-7). And yet, when it came time to ordain elders in Crete, Titus was sent to do this job and he did not have the power to administer the gifts of the Spirit (Titus 1).

3. The third reason why the eldership could not have been limited to the age of gifts is the fact that the apostle Paul, on two different occasions, gives qualifications for a man to meet if he desires the office of a bishop. Where in the New Testament do we read that anyone had to meet certain qualifications to receive the spiritual gifts? Nowhere. The eldership was separate and apart from these gifts. It would continue on through all the age of the church, thus Inspiration has given us the qualifications for each generation to attain to.

Training Our Young Men To Be Elders

Man very seldom is able to advance unless he reaches out. It is a known fact that one of the essential elements of the Christian life is that of growth. We certainly expect our people to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. But the question I'm asking now is, are we setting the right goals for our people? We need to be teaching on this very subject to enlighten our young people on the necessity of a scriptural eldership, so that they may work toward that end. It is often argued that our people are not ready for elders today, or that we don't have men who meet the requirements. Well, if this is the case, then let's be educating our young boys to live in such a way that they can be elders, and let's also educate the congregations to be willing to submit themselves unto the elders.

It is often argued that the requirements are too hard to meet, and that the elder is to be so much better than the average Christian. But there are only two reasons why the elders' character is any different than that of other Christians. An elder cannot be a novice (cf. Heb. 5:11-14), and they have desired, or "sought" the eldership. The word desire in 1 Tim. 3:1 is the same as the word covet in 1 Tim. 6:10, coming from the same Greek word *orego*. The word, according to *Thayer*, *Strongs*, *Vines*, etc. means: "to stretch oneself out in order to reach that for which he longs; to reach forward to; to aspire to; long for; to desire earnestly." This is enough to show that the Lord expects the elders to be chosen from among those men of the congregation who are making an honest effort to prepare themselves for the work; or, to state it another way, the elders should be selected from among those who are already doing the best they can to do the work which is required of the overseers of the flock. *There is no scriptural authority for training men for the eldership after their appointment.* They must be qualified for the work *before* their appointment and

then simply grow in wisdom and knowledge afterward. It is the task of every congregation to train their young men for this great and noble office of a bishop.

Any normal young man in the church may have the potential of being a great leader. Of course, some have potential to a greater degree than others. Many who would be leaders are not willing to pay the price of leadership. It takes a lot of self-denial to be a leader, and not everyone is willing to deny himself. Many would rather engage in trivial things than in hard study. They would rather amuse themselves than engage in serious, hard work. They would rather keep certain bad habits instead of so disciplining themselves as to be good examples to others. Being an elder or leader of a congregation means he will have to work when he doesn't feel like working. It means passing up pleasure when it conflicts with duty. It calls for giving up association with some, in order to spend time with others. It costs to be an elder, but there is a rewarding feeling when an elder has fed and led the flock well, or when he has strengthened some weak brother along the way.

Young men, it is a worthwhile endeavor. Even if you are not appointed as an official elder, by living up to the qualifications you will at least be a much better individual.

The Qualifications for Elders

It will be much easier for people to grasp the significance of the type of men needed in the eldership after they have learned something of that which God expects of them. The nature of the work which God expects the elders to perform makes certain qualifications essential. Although it is easy to see that there is a need for qualifications which are commensurate with the position which the elders occupy, and the work which they are obligated to do, we must remember that the Lord has not left it to us to name the traits of character which are essential. The required qualifications are given in detail in the New Testament, basically found in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1

Pet. 5:1-4. Let us look at these qualifications and observe the good and noble character that an elder is to have. Let us also remember though, that when dealing with the *moral character* of the elder, we are not talking about anything different than any Christian should be. Because there is a duplication in these accounts in the Bible, we are going to simply list them once and try to cover each specific trait that the elders should have. Let us notice now the qualifications.

Desire the office—This sometimes is overlooked as a qualification, but it is included here and I think justly so. It would be improper to place a man in this position that didn't want to be there. He certainly would not discharge his duty willingly which he is to do according to 1 Pet. 5:2. Although the word "desire" means to "reach out for or stretch for," it should be apparent that it would be wrong for a man to desire this office for his own gain, or because of pride, or because he wants to be powerful. He should desire this office because it will be to the Lord's advantage, and he will be helping the Cause.

Blameless—This does not mean that an elder is in such a position that he does not sin at all. But whatever mistakes are found in his life were not purposely made, nor habitually continued in. He is one which no one can charge with intentional evil. He is one who is honest, morally fit and dependable.

Husband of one wife—This is pretty well self-explanatory. First of all, we know that elders must be men, for they must be husbands—so a woman cannot be an elder. Secondly, only a married man will have a wife, so a bachelor cannot qualify for this office. There is a general reason why this stipulation is put here. Being a married man, he has already proven his ability to rule his own house and to be the head over his wife. And thirdly, an elder must have only one wife, so a polygamist cannot qualify.

I suppose the biggest arguments or differences on the qualifications of elders are over these domestic traits they must have.

I feel like brethren have scrutinized and stretched the meaning of the Scriptures many times too far, so that they almost make it impossible for one to be an elder. For instance, it has been brought up about the brother who was married and his wife died, so now he marries again. Does this disqualify him from being an elder, even though he meets all the other requirements? As far as I am concerned, he is still the husband of one wife.

Vigilant—Alert to danger, watchfulness. Having the ability to determine the end of a course being followed. To watch over the souls of the church (Heb. 13:17). Some men do not have time to look out for the church because of business or other interests. A vigilant man is one who is awake to the fact that the fields are white with harvest.

Sober—To be cool, collected, grave. *Barnes*: “A man of sound mind, one who follows sound reasons, and is not under the influence of passions.” This eliminates one who can’t make up his own mind or is overly influenced by others (or changes his mind on the question after he talks with his wife).

Of good behavior—*Barnes*: “Modest, mannerly, not sloven in his appearance, or rough in his manner.” In other words, an elder who is of good behavior is one who is clean in life, careful in person, presents himself before an audience becomingly—not flashy—and presents a dignity befitting a servant of the Lord.

Given to hospitality—His interest in his fellow man, as shown by his genuine and generous hospitality, should be such as to make his brethren feel they would be welcome in his home whenever they desire to go there for guidance or counsel. He also should be a lover of strangers which is the true meaning of the word hospitality.

Apt to teach—An elder must have the ability to teach. He must be well read, and able to convey the message to the congregation. Perhaps this quality has more to do with his understanding of the Scriptures and his ability to convey them

to the congregation than it does implying he must be an eloquent speaker.

Not given to wine—This again is self-explanatory. Wine leads to a loss of self-control. Men under the influence of wine often become rowdy, and disturbers of the peace.

No striker—To strike means to smite with a blow or stroke of the hand; a reviler; one who treats with abusive language in a disorderly manner. An elder must not be quarrelsome.

Not greedy of filthy lucre—He must not have a love of money which is the root of all evil (1 Tim. 6:10). One who is not covetous, one who does not love money more than the Lord. He must be willing to spend the Lord's money in the furtherance of the Cause instead of hoarding it up.

Patient—Not easily provoked, not hasty, not over eager. An elder must be meek, gentle, and kind. There is nothing more unlike God than an impatient man.

Not a brawler—A brawler is one who makes a loud noise or disturbance. One who wrangles, one who quarrels, or disagrees with great emotion. God wants elders who are quiet and peaceable and yet those who are strong and firm in the faith.

Not covetous—Covetous means to be excessively eager to obtain and possess. Elders are not to be avaricious or greedy.

Ruleth well his own house—An elder must have complete charge of his household. His wife and children must respect him as the head of the house (Eph. 5:22-24, 1 Tim. 2:11-12). The man who is not the head of his house is not living the Christian life, much less good enough to be an elder.

Having children in subjection—Titus 1:6 says, "Having faithful children, not accused of riot or unruly." Thus, we learn that an elder must have children who are faithful and who are not known to engage in unruly activities. The reason for this being, that if he does not know how to rule his own house how shall he be able to rule the house of God. If he has not been able to teach his own children in such a way that they would become believers, how could he teach others to become believers?

The question arises concerning the man who only has one child. Is he excluded from the eldership because he does not have a plurality of children? Let me turn your attention to Eph. 6:4: "And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath..." Does this mean that a father who has only one child is not included in this command? We know that he is included and the word children was used to refer also to the singular child. If there was a man who met all the other qualifications and ruled his house well, although that house consisted only of one wife and one child, I would hate to be so narrow as to oppose this man being appointed an elder. We often lose the importance of this qualification. It is not how many children the man has that is under consideration, but whether or not the man had trained those children that they were believers and obedient children—whether there is one or twelve. I believe this refers to those children who are under his jurisdiction; those children for which he is accountable. If the children leave home and start a home of their own, he is no longer over them. They can no longer disqualify him as an elder, but they must have been believing and obedient while at home.

Not a novice—Not a beginner. A novice or beginner would not be capable to do the work assigned to him. The term elder carries with it the idea of one who is older and more experienced.

Good report of them that are without—He must so conduct himself as to have the respect and commendation of those outside the church.

Not self-willed—One who is self-willed is one who thinks of himself, and desires personal satisfaction. The elders' interest is in the flock.

Not soon angry—We can easily see the necessity for this qualification. A man who will flare up when crossed does not qualify for the eldership. He must be able to control his reactions when provoked.

A lover of good men—This means to love the good charac-

ter of men who are following Christ, and encourage them to do greater works. Many young men who would become elders or preachers, do not because they have not been encouraged along this line.

Just—He must be proper and exact in his dealings with men. A just elder is one who does not render decisions in favor of a few members, or to put a feather in his own hat.

Holy—One who is pure in spirit and in actions. An elder is one who will not let sin reign in his body, becoming corrupt (Rom. 6:12).

Temperate—One who controls his appetites, tongue, and temper. If he cannot control himself, how can he control the church. He must have complete control of every passion and appetite.

Holding fast the faithful word—One who does not hold or cleave to the faithful Word is not qualified to instruct others. Some would run the church to suit themselves and forget about the Inspired Word.

The Responsibility of the Church to the Elders

In order for an elder to be able to do his work properly, he must have the congregation behind him. Perhaps this would be the hardest thing to change in our time—to get the congregation to fall in line under the elders. But if we are following God's plan, that is exactly what we must do. In Heb. 13:17 we read, "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves; for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

In 1 Tim. 5:17 the apostle Paul wrote that the elder who rules well is worthy of financial support. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they that labor in the word and doctrine." And so we can see that the church also has some guidelines to follow in view of the eldership.

In 1 Thess. 5:12-13 we read, “And we beseech you brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work’s sake. And be at peace among yourselves.” Any member therefore who proceeds with the affairs of the church, without consulting the elders, shows disrespect for them and their ruling; and that of course, is in direct disobedience to God who ordained them as elders and specified their work.

Thus, any thinking person should realize that the same inspired teaching that makes it necessary to have elders to oversee the church and direct the work, also makes it the obligation of the congregation to submit to these appointed leaders and follow their direction.

The Selection and Appointment of Elders

It is often argued that the Bible does not give us instruction as to who is to select and appoint the elders over a congregation. But I believe we do have some guidelines in several examples found in the New Testament. If God would have put every regulation and rule in the Bible covering every activity that man would come in contact with, the world could not contain the Books.

The Selection of Elders—Though there is little said on this, the case of the deacons of Acts 6 expressly states that the church was to do the selecting, while the apostles were to do the appointing. In fact, logic would tell us that the congregation is best fitted for this job because they know the men very personally. Of course, no one has the right to propose a man for office who cannot meet the apostolic requirements, and neither does anyone have the right to object to one who does measure up to them. Any member therefore has the God-given privilege of recommending and endorsing men whom they feel meet the requirements, and opposing those who don’t.

The Appointment of Elders—After the ones who are to serve the congregation as elders have been properly selected by the brethren, they should be ordained, appointed, installed, or set apart for the work for which they were chosen. This should be done in such a manner as to make the action which is taken impressive to all who are concerned with it. In searching the Scriptures for the appointment of the elders, read and study Acts 6:5-6, 13:1-3, 14-23. If we take all that is said in these passages we find that there were three things done in these appointments. They are namely: prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands. We can easily understand the prayer and the fasting, but the laying on of hands is often misunderstood. Some think that we are transmitting some special gift when we do this. But this was not always the case as we see in such passages as Num. 8:5-13, 27:15-23, Exo. 29:10, Lev. 1:1-4. In these references it is implied that to lay hands on someone is to identify yourself with that individual, and you are designating him to act on your behalf. And that is exactly what takes place in the case of elders. You are simply acknowledging their authority to act on the congregation's behalf. The word "ordain" is what scares a lot of people, because they think that there is something involved beyond the natural course of appointing. But that is exactly what the word means in its simplest sense. So, to ordain an elder is simply to appoint that elder to that position.

In discussing the question of who should perform the installation ceremony, *Milligan* points out that the conclusion appears to be inevitable that it is the business of the church to ordain, that is, set apart, as well as to select its own officers. Of course there is no question if the congregation has been set in order before and there are already elders in the congregation. They would be responsible for this task, with the aid perhaps of an evangelist if they so desire. In the case of a congregation that has not been set in order, the congregation could install them or perhaps an evangelist that is familiar with this particular

congregation. I believe this view is in complete harmony with the principle of congregational autonomy.

Conclusion

We hope the things whereof we have written will enlighten you as to what the Scriptures say about the eldership. Certainly we are lacking in the area of not working toward having elders as we should. This is God's plan for the leadership of the church. May you study these things with an open mind and an open Bible.

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The Weapons of Our Warfare

by J. B. Lasater

The apostle Paul said, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringeth into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:3).

Paul is very specific in his statement, and this alone should suffice to forever sheath the carnal sword of every Christian. Even as we today walk in the flesh (as did Paul), our mission is not the destruction of cities or nations, nor even an individual man. But with our invincible weapon of God, our spiritual warfare is rather directed against the kingdom of darkness, against *everything* that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.

Christian soldiers today must be prepared to do battle according to the marching orders of our great Commander. In Eph. 6:13-18 Paul said to the soldiers, “Take unto you the *whole armor of God.*” If we do this, our armor will be full and complete to accomplish our mission. We do not need man’s carnal weapons to fight our warfare. If we take up carnal weapons, we as Christians will be as David when he was given King Saul’s weaponry—there was nothing faulty nor defective with the king’s armor, but David had not proved them. Instead, with God’s help and strength, David slew Goliath with the simple, God-approved weapons he knew as a boy. Our armor and weapon is described in the foregoing Eph. 6:13-18. Our God-approved weapon is the Word of God, NOT guns, tanks

and nuclear devices. The weapons used in life destroying carnal warfare are emblems of human carnage and are NOT intended for the Christian, rather, they are intended for the armies of the world. In these armies the Christian has no place.

Man's attitude today toward carnal war varies with the beholder, and this will affect the sounds we hear in the battle cries around the world. Some of the younger set who are seeking adventure and excitement may cry for war—since they have never experienced it. Those who have, and have seen its horrors and devastation, want no more of it. Those who were wounded want no more. Those who have lost loved ones, or had loved ones wounded or maimed want no more.

We can also see those who desire to profit financially by war; those who would not likely be personally engaged in the conflict and can see nothing but monetary gain—they cry out in favor of war. Sometimes the older set fancy they can see in war a way of building a reputation and a favorable place in politics or society, thus, they favor war.

But there is another class set aside from all of these whose consciences are educated by God's Word. They, who would strive to be true to God and His Word, can see on the battlefield the loss of souls sent unprepared into eternity in rebellion to God's Word. Their attitude toward their own participation is strictly negative because God's Word forbids it.

The Christian's Attitude Toward War

Let us now look at the Christian's attitude toward war in light of the Scriptures. Among the most quoted verses of the religious and even non-religious is Matt. 7:12 which plainly tells us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Jesus said this basic principle was even contained in the law of Moses. It is also found in principle in such passages as Rom 12:17-21 and thus serves as a high-light in plain Christian living as well as in viewing our participation in carnal warfare. It is obvious that a Christian cannot give heed to such principles of

scripture and at the same time serve in the military. Can we see ourselves in military service treating our enemies like we would choose to be treated when we shoot to kill them? Can we see ourselves in military service allowing the enemy to escape a well planned trap which would take his life and the lives of many of his associates? No. We would be treated as traitors in such circumstances. Jesus tells us to love one another (John 13:34-35). This love should also be strong enough to serve as an identification of our Christianity. Our love for one another should be “as Christ loved us” (John 15:12). How much did he love us? (John 15:13, Rom. 5:10). How much should we love the brethren—to give our life for him or to take his life? “By this”—our love for one another—“shall all men know ye are my disciples” (John 13:35).

Were Cain and Abel known to be sons of God by their love for each other shown in their strife? In pangs of fear Cain pretended to know nothing about Abel’s death, but it was revealed before God. Our striving (warring) today, whether with brethren in the church or brethren in the human race, is open before God who says to us, “Where is thy brother? The blood of thy brother crieth unto me from the ground.” The Christian therefore should be of a peaceful and loving nature. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers”—not the warring soldier.

Paul tells us that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (2 Cor. 10:4). Their function is “the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God.” When our thoughts are not in submission to Christ, when our functions are the destruction of physical life, when our allegiance is to others instead of Christ, then we can draw but one conclusion: something is wrong with our choice of weapons and our use of them.

Jesus said, “Blessed are the *peacemakers*, for they shall be called the sons of God” (Matt. 5:9), “Blessed are the *merciful*,

for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). This is not a very good description of the modern soldier. Can we imagine him, after being taught to hate and kill the enemy on sight, holding out an olive branch (symbol of peace) and sparing his enemy’s life and possessions rather than making him fully and completely submissive?

Can we, as a “*military/Christian soldier*,” love our enemies and do good to them who hate us? “Love worketh no ill to his neighbor” (Rom. 13:10). If we love only those who love us (Matt. 5:46), how do we differ from anyone in the world? In showing our love for our enemies we show ourselves as children of God (Matt. 5:44-45). If it were possible to find a “*military/Christian*,” we would surely see a person with a dual personality like Dr. Jekyll/Mr. Hyde. As a military person, our allegiance is with the government. As a Christian, our allegiance is with God.

Forming Convictions

With the war clouds gathering, with wars and rumors of wars, our young people especially should form firm convictions concerning their participation in carnal warfare. Our older people should resolve to instill in our younger, facts taught in the Scriptures that would help them make and strengthen those right decisions. I do not doubt that both our young men and young ladies will face severe trials of their professed faith in the future, even more than in the past. I have seen a number of our young men sent to prison because of their faith, and it can happen again. Because of the women’s liberation movement, I expect our young ladies will face similar trials; it has happened in foreign lands. So, it is important for all to prepare to face them.

The Scriptures teach that love is the basic factor of Christianity—the very nature of God is love. It was this nature of love that prompted God to give His Son to make possible a way of salvation for man. It was this same kind of love that

prompted Jesus to suffer the agonies of the cross to redeem man. By his blood the price was paid for the church. By his loving words the church (his bride) is led and guided through this life, being taught to avoid the pitfalls of sin.

Many times it is really easy to stand for the Scriptures when we don't have to face opposition, or when it will bring respect, admiration, and even envy of the world. It may be a different matter when it brings persecution, ridicule, and misrepresentation from the world who cares nothing for Christianity. It takes much courage for Christians, being led by the Scriptures, to stand firm in their convictions. If a certain thing is right, it should be a part of our lives, even in face of opposition. If it is wrong, it should be shunned (1 Thess. 5:22).

When a person becomes a Christian he leaves the world and becomes a new creature (2 Cor. 5:17). He has a new way of life before him, beginning as a new born baby (1 Pet. 2:2). He then develops spiritually in the same manner as a physical baby, taking simple foods first and stronger foods as he grows, always becoming more and more like Jesus and having the same mind as he (Phil. 2:2,5). This would suggest we are guided by his mind (his words are the expression of his mind and he, being the Word of God (John 1), is the expression of God's mind). Peter tells us to arm ourselves with the mind of Christ (1 Pet. 4:1).

Can we not imagine Christ as a military soldier when he forbade Peter's defensive action with a sword—even when his capture and ultimate death was involved? As has been so aptly stated, when Christ sheathed Peter's sword, he also sheathed the sword of every Christian. Christ said he could have called a great army (twelve legions) of angels so that he should not be taken. But he would not let even one sword be used lest his enemies be killed or hurt. In this he showed how to love our enemies. How then, can Christians bear arms and perhaps take the life of fellow-Christians numbered among the enemy? To the world, it may seem hard to understand why a person

cannot bear arms to protect life, home, possessions, or country. That is because they do not have the mind of Christ.

One serving in the military, especially in time of war, is not expected to have the mind of Christ. Instead, he is expected to violate the basic principles of Godliness which God gave His people even in the *Ten Commandment Law*, the most of which are applicable today in the *Law of Grace*. There is not room in the heart of the man in combat for the holy things of God. In fact, from the beginning he is taught to hate, kill, steal, lie or anything else he deems necessary or appropriate for self-preservation and gratification.

Proverbs 6:16-19

We are told in Prov. 6:16-19 there are seven things which God hates, yea, they are abomination in His sight: a proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, the heart that devises wicked imaginations, feet swift in running to mischief, a false witness speaking lies, and one sowing discord among brethren.

Do we have to look very far to see the military stamp of approval on any one of these? Sincerely consider this. A look of humility and mercy is not a trait of a seasoned military man in time of war. In fact, from the beginning of his training he is taught to be ready to kill the enemy or he himself will be killed.

Where is the military man, with remorse of conscience, telling a lie to escape punishment at the enemy's hands, or to escape punishment at the hands of his superiors because of his own mis-deeds or disobedience?

Killing, even in time of war, is murder! And why? Is this killing used as punishment to an individual for his personal mis-deeds? No, so far as this is concerned he is innocent! This warfare is between nations, and not because of acts of aggression of the individual. (However, individual actions cannot be passed off to the nation, rather the individual will answer to God.)

War itself, along with its plans and schemes, rewards and results (can there be any *good* rewards from war?) are the products of wicked imaginations. Military men cannot have holy and righteous minds like God; and true men of God cannot be military men, because their minds cannot devise the wicked imaginations required of the military.

The feet of the military are swift in running to mischief. Consider the destruction, murder and havoc against innocent civilians (which of course cannot be avoided in war). War cannot be anything but mischief of evil minds.

False witness is very obvious in cases where blame is being shifted from one to another to spare punitive action to self.

Examples of discord is often seen when preference is shown among certain subordinates such as advancements, unusual privileges, and other gratuities. More than this, war itself is *national* discord.

Now I hope we can see that a Christian has no place in the military, since so many things God hates and abhors are there.

Objections to Pacifism

A person facing induction into the military service must be knowledgeable in the Scriptures on which he bases his objections to such service. Be it known that the people interviewing such objectors *are not* Christians. They are prepared to try to answer every argument set forth, whether by misinterpretation of Scriptures, or by trying to shame, intimidate or ridicule.

One question they might ask is, "What if everyone had your attitude? Our nation would be lost, our homes would be molested, robbed, etc." NO! This is *only* a hypothetical case and can never be! In the first place, if everyone had this attitude, the total need (?) for war would be erased, because everyone would have a peace loving nature.

"Well, what if everyone *in our country* had your attitude?" Still this is an impossible hypothesis. But, suppose all

Americans had this attitude; do you think God could not intervene and direct the course of things for the Christian cause of two hundred million servants??

Don't you remember how Abraham besought God to spare Sodom and Gomorrah . . . for fifty righteous souls, and lesser numbers down to only ten? If one person can pray to God and obtain the sparing of two metropolises as Sodom and Gomorrah, what about the power of the total populace of America (over 200,000,000) praying to spare our nation—of causing the war to cease, or anything else not contrary to His Holy Will?

“Well, what would you do if the enemy invaded and began to molest and abuse your wife and family?” This is a highly emotional question and designed to prey upon the emotions of the objectors. If the objector is not posted in the Scriptures, he may be swept away (as the interviewer hopes) in the state of emotional confusion.

It is very possible our nation may be invaded. It is very possible we may be faced with such circumstances as this. What ever action we may take in the emotional excitement does not change the way the Bible reads, nor does it alter God's commands to His people. If it is wrong to destroy life in peace time (and it is), then it is equally wrong in time of war.

Someone might raise the objection that the Christian should join the military and fight or he would be a bad influence and a stumbling block to those who do. Christians should always use their influences for good, and never be a stumbling block to anyone in or outside the church if at all possible without compromising their own conscience. But should a Christian partake of strong drink in order to be inoffensive to another? Should he become immoral in order to be inoffensive? Among those of the world it is possible for purity and good principles to go unappreciated, and the Christian should not sacrifice them in return for people of the world to speak well of him (Luke 6:26).

A Christian may be told that God would not hold him responsible for killing while he is in the military because he is acting as an agent of the government which is a higher power. The Bible teaches us to be subject to the higher powers (Rom. 13, 1 Pet. 2). These verses plainly teach that the Christian is to be obedient to all the laws of the land whether of federal, state, county, or city level. It matters not how simple or complex the laws. It may be laws for driving, for fishing, hunting, taxing, murder, drunkenness, immorality—we are still to be obedient to the *higher powers*. What would happen should the state pass a law which would directly conflict with federal law? Should we obey that? We could not obey that without violating the federal. What shall we do in this case? Of course, we must obey the higher power. One making an argument like this suggests that a Christian is not living in accordance with the Bible laws because he is not obedient to the laws of the land. It is said, by refusing to enter the service, the Christian violates the law. Such an argument as this is based on ignorance of the law or is not offered in sincerity. The truth of the matter is, a Christian conscientiously refusing to serve in the military does not violate federal law. Provision has been made for those who sincerely, and for religious reasons, object to such service.

Consider the record of the three Hebrew children in Daniel 3, and consider Daniel in chapter 6. Consider John and Peter (Acts 4:19, 5:29) as they said, "Judge ye, should we listen to you more than to God? We ought to obey God rather than men." We today ought to obey God—fully and completely, regardless of the consequences. It may again be that the church will be persecuted as she was in her early years. Our lives may be placed in jeopardy as were early Christians'. So, in these years when we worship freely, we should build up within us and our children a strong and mighty faith that will stand in adversity.

What should we do then? We must be good, law abiding

citizens at every echelon of governmental authority; the kingdom of God, federal, state, county, city, and the home.

Registration for the Military

Our national government requires that our young men register under the Universal Military Training and Service Act of 1967. Although our young ladies are not (at this writing of January, 1984) required to register, there is a good possibility that they will have to because of pressures of the "Equal Rights Amendment" and its supporters. We can do this without violating God's laws. In the past, many who refused to enter the military services (obviously *not* for religious reasons), burned draft cards and flags, made various types of demonstrations, fled to Canada, and in general, showed great disdain and disrespect for their nation. All of these types of actions are in violation to our national laws, and, I believe, a violation of God's laws. We should love our country! It is a very good place to live! I would not trade my national citizenship for any other in the world that I know of, even though I feel our law makers often make errors, betraying trusts given to them, and enacting laws that are not good and wholesome for the nation. In spite of this, I believe our country is the best place on earth to live, especially for the Christian!

In 1962, a survey was made of all the nations of the world concerning laws governing military service. Eighty-four nations responded to the survey. Thirty-two were found to have *no laws* requiring military service. Of the remaining fifty-two who did have laws requiring military service, only eleven made special provisions for those subjects who could not serve because of religious beliefs. Among these eleven was our own nation. This same Universal Military Training and Service Act, as amended by the Selective Service Act of 1967, made special provisions for the individuals who, because of religious beliefs, could not conscientiously serve in the military. Section 6(j) is quoted: Conscientious Objectors. Nothing contained in this

title shall be construed to require any person to be subject to combatant training and service in the armed forces of the United States who, by reason of religious training and belief, is conscientiously opposed to participation in war in any form.

This is an exemption by law, for those objectors who are *conscientiously* opposed to military service. There are many who would take shelter under this law who are not Christians, who are not sincere in their objections, and whose lives do not reflect true Christianity. People like this cause the officials to frown upon true objectors as a whole, and many times carry their investigations into their lives further than they ordinarily would. It therefore behooves Christian young men and women to be *sincere* and *exemplary* in living a Christian life because your life may well be investigated. Sincerity cannot be overemphasized, not only for exemption from military service, but also for our sakes in that day when we stand to be judged by the Supreme Judge.

I remember well when an FBI man came to interview me in the early 1940's. Some of the questions he asked were: "Do you attend church regularly? Do you smoke? Do you attend the movies? Do you take active part in church services? When did you first begin to formulate this position as an objector? Have you ever stated publicly or written your objections to military service?" I also well remember when I reported for physical examination. I was routed to a waiting room with some others. The bench where I waited was (so innocently) well supplied with pornographic reading material, comic books, and only one or two books like *Time*, or *Reader's Digest*. There was a sergeant at the desk supposedly filling out forms, but he could watch the actions of each of us in the room to know our reading interests. In addition to these questions, I was asked many questions from the Scriptures. They asked questions concerning places where I worked and places I previously worked. They went to neighbors asking about my life, my talk, and my companions. This vividly reminds me of

Paul's words in 1 Tim. 4:16, "Take heed unto *thyself* and unto the *doctrine, continue in them*: for in doing this thou shalt both save *thyself* and them that hear thee." Heb. 2:1 says, "Therefore we ought to give the more *earnest heed* to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip."

The world observes us as we give heed to self and doctrine. They know when we become careless and let that doctrine which we have heard and obeyed, slip. It is at times like these that the world renders its harsh judgment against Christians and decides we are not sincere. It seems that the world is ready, especially at times like this, to point a finger of scorn and accusation at Christians with an "I told you so...there's nothing to it" attitude, and thereby the church and the individual Christian be evil spoken of.

1 Timothy 4:12

Paul said in 1 Tim. 4:12, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." Here Paul sets forth, in brief, a picture of the Christian's life. Firstly, we should so live (within the scope of God's Word) as to make no enemies if possible, thereby giving no real reason for man to despise us (Rom. 12:18). Secondly, our lives should be continuous examples, an undeniable asset in pointing out the way for those who are not Christians and a source of strength and encouragement for those who are. Remember—we *will not* go to heaven or hell alone. Someone will follow in our steps, whether we are young or old. We are never without influence; be sure it is always for good. Paul here points to several areas in which our lives are to be examples of believers:

(1.) *In word*: We are told in Matt. 12:37 that we shall be justified or condemned by our words. How important it is that the words of our mouth be pure! It reveals what is in our heart. "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh"

(Matt. 12:34), and our words will condemn or justify us in judgment.

2. *In conversation*: One might think this is a repetition of the first item mentioned. It might well include word of mouth, but it goes further and includes manner of life. As previously stated, our life should be an example of the believer in word and deed. With these first two items in our lives, our sincerity, when claiming conscientious objection to war, will not be doubted.

3. *In charity*: This is a broad term. It includes an *active* love. A Christian's love should also be by priority: God first, others second, self last. Our love for God and His Word should be an impelling and compelling force leading to obedience. Our love for others restrains our working them harm (as carnal warfare would require). The "golden rule" applied, requires us to do him good.

(4.) *In spirit*: If we are to be an example in spirit, we should be like him who is a Spirit. Christ learned obedience by the things he suffered (Heb. 5:8). In this he set for us a worthy example, and we are told in 1 Pet. 4:1 *to arm ourselves with the same mind* that Christ had. In 1 John 1, and John 1, Jesus is pictured as the expression of God's mind (the Word). This should be an illustration of our life, as we arm ourselves with the mind of Christ. Jesus portrays this in John 5:30 when he said he could *do nothing of himself*; but the things (God's Words) which he heard, he did. He did not his own will, but God's. In view of our study, the spirit of Jesus was certainly non-violent. He was rather a peace-lover and a peace-maker.

5. *In faith*: Jude wrote to us to *earnestly* contend for the faith. We must be earnest and sincere in the profession and example of our faith. This is especially important to our young men and women in this time when they will be facing the world, declaring their conscientious objection to warfare. This is important for the older ones, also, who strengthen and bolster the faith of the younger. True faith is so important in the Christian's life, but alone, it is worthless, or dead (James 2:17).

There must be activity along with our faith or it is a dead, worthless, unsaving faith. Faith in the non-violent nature of the church/kingdom (John 18:36) becomes active in our objection to carnal warfare.

6. *In purity*: Finally, Paul tells us to be an example in purity. This is so important in the Christian's life. It must be applied to all of the foregoing characteristics; and if not, then they become pseudo attributes.

Our purity is apparent! We are pictured as trees, planted and nourished by God's Word (Psa. 1). If our fruit is evil, then obviously, the tree is evil. If our life or Christian character is not pure, the world will know. If our conversation among the world is not good, they will surely know. Above all this, God knows. These points are made to impress upon us the necessity of *convictions*—SINCERE objection to warfare.

In addition to our needing this teaching for our youth for exemption from military service, each of us needs it for plain, simple, every day Christian living. It was not given in God's Word for the special occasion of military exemption but for the Christian's life from start to finish.

In Paul's "farewell speech," he looked backward and forward in his life (2 Tim. 4); "The time of my departure is at hand, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing." All of this was preceded by his statement, "*I am ready to be offered.*" Should any one of us today be accused of being a true Christian, would there be enough evidence to obtain a conviction? What would the more secret (?) things of our lives reveal?

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The Hair Question

by *Raymond Stiner*

We are probably addressing in this essay one of the most neglected subjects of the Bible. It seems that the church has drifted into thinking that the subject of the hair is not really worthy of too much attention. It is shown in the fact that many of our sisters have lost their appreciation for the teaching of 1 Cor. 11:3-16 by cutting their hair, which is forbidden in these passages. The man is also addressed in these passages, so we will deal with both parties with respect to their hair.

That By Which We Are Known

There are many things in our Christian life that distinguish us from the world, and as far as that goes, from denominationalism. In Rom. 12:1-2 we read, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." We are not to be conformed to this world, and yet it seems that the world has had a powerful influence upon the style of our hairdos. Have we forgotten that we are to be different, not to be odd, but different so that we are known when we are seen. When you see certain people in the common marketplaces of today, you get the feeling that they must have some religious principles about them because they are different. I'm sure that is the way others view our sisters when they are seen with their long hair.

There are many things that have become a symbol of true

Christianity. For instance, baptism is something that sets us apart from others. We do not overemphasize baptism, but we do place the significance upon it that the Bible does, and we believe that man cannot be saved without it (Mark 16:16). Thus the church of Christ is known because we believe in water immersion for the remission of sins. The communion service is also a very significant thing by which we are known. The church of Christ believes that it is essential that we assemble every first day of the week and commune of our Lord's body and his blood. This follows the example left by the apostles (Acts 20:7). There are many more things in our religious views that we are known by, but here is one that I feel we have overlooked too long.

Brothers and sisters, do you realize that one of the things that distinguishes you from others is the hair upon your head? Yes, it is true. You show, brother, by cutting your hair, your submissiveness to your head which is Christ. And you, sister, show by letting your hair grow, your submissiveness to your head which is man (1 Cor. 11:3-5). Thus, one of the things that sets us apart from the world, and that by which we are known, is for women to have long hair and for men to have short hair.

The Covering

One of the biggest questions of this issue is to define what the covering is in 1 Cor. 11:4-6. "Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven. For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered." If we could never know what this covering is, our conclusion from these three verses still must be that the man could not pray or prophesy (teach) with the covering. Likewise the women could not pray or prophesy

(teach) without the covering.

Since this word “covering” is sometimes translated as “veil” in some translations, it is thought by many that Paul was referring to an artificial covering such as a scarf, hat, etc. But the term covered in the original text is *katakalupto*. Please note that this word in the Greek is a *verb*. The verb *katakalupto* signifies to be covered, *but it does not specify or define the covering itself!* The term is actually a compound word, made up of two words: *kata* (a preposition meaning basically “down”), and a verb, *Kalupto* which simply signifies to cover.

Paul plainly shows in the fifth verse that if the woman prays to God with her head uncovered, she dishonours her head. The term “uncovered” is from the Greek *akatakaluptos*, which is a verb signifying the opposite of the verb *katakalupto* or “covered.” It also does not specify or define the covering. There is no noun given in the Greek text at this point to define the covering. This is the same word that we have in verse 13: “Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered? (This again is a verb signifying action and not the type of covering.)

The next time you read of a covering in 1 Cor. 11:13-16 is in verse 15: “But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.” This is the only time in this entire context that a noun is used for the word covering. This noun is *peribolaion* and it is rendered “a veil or covering” by all scholars. W. E. Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 252 says of *peribolaion*: lit. denotes something thrown around (*peri* around, *Ballo* to throw); hence, a veil or covering. There is no question about this word. It is a noun which describes a veil or artificial covering. But notice where and how it was used. Paul plainly says that the woman’s hair was given her for, or in the place of, a veil (covering).

Paul uses such simple language here however, that we do not even need the Greek to understand it. He simply says that

“her hair is given her for a covering.” But for those who need the Greek, let us look at the important words of this passage.

First, the word “for” which comes from the Greek word *anti*, which means anti, instead of, or to take the place of. And then the word “covering” which comes from the word *peribolaion*, which means veil. So, putting all of these together, what we have is this: That the woman is given a natural ornament of the body in the place of an artificial veil. That is real simple to me. It doesn’t sound like a woman, then, is to have long hair AND an artificial veil, both at the same time.

Bro. H. C. Harper used to illustrate the point like this. “If a farmer tells his employee: ‘Today I’m going to give you a spade instead of a hoe’; would the employee suppose that he was to utilize both the spade and the hoe? Of course not. He would know that when a spade was given him instead of a hoe, he would not be given the hoe at all! By the same token, then, a woman should understand that God has given her ‘hair’ *instead of* a veil or covering. The veil is negated by the God-ordained hair. She does not have the artificial veil, but she does have her hair. Thus, the covering that the woman is to have is her long hair. And the covering that the man is not to have would be the long hair which would and should be a shame to him.”

How Long Is Long?

In 1 Cor. 11:14-15 we read, “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him? But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.” The phrase “have long hair” signifies that men and women’s hair lengths are to be different. In fact, I believe it shows us that the woman’s hair is to be long and the man’s hair is to be short. It seems, by the standard of the world, that mankind has completely switched God’s plan in this area, because we see women who cut their hair so short they look like men, and men who let their hair grow to look like women.

Paul said in verse 5 that if the woman did not have this covering (named in verse 15) it would be as if she were completely shaven. But then he reasoned, since it would be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, then let her be covered.

The phrase “have long hair” comes from the Greek word *komao* which again, is a verb. Thayer in his *Greek/English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. 354 says of the verb *komao*, “To let the hair grow, have long hair.” W. E. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, says of the verb *kamao* on page 189: “Signifies to let the hair grow long, to wear long hair.” Many other Lexicographers point out the same, that this phrase, “have long hair,” simply means that the woman is to let her hair grow, without cutting it, since it would be impossible to cut it and let it grow at the same time. The man, on the contrary, is not to let his hair grow its natural length, thus, he must cut his.

God does not intend for his Word to be impossible to understand. The point is that the term “long” in verse 15 does not necessarily denote a given figure in feet or inches. It is a matter of either letting it grow to its natural length, or not letting it grow to its natural length. Every man and woman belong in one of the two categories. Their hair is either natural length or it is not natural length. We either cut our hair or we don't cut it. Every woman and man knows whether or not their hair is natural length. Some may argue that as long as I leave a *part* of my hair on my head, I still have a covering. But Paul did not say that a part of your hair was a glory to you, and was given you in the place of a veil. But he said “*HER HAIR*” and that means ALL of the woman's God-given hair. Some sisters' hair is going to be longer than others because of the hereditary traits of each human, but every woman can meet God's approval by not cutting her hair, thus letting it grow. I plead with you sister, to consider the simplicity of this command. “Let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth.”

How Short Must Men's Hair Be?

It is often argued then, that a man could have his hair down to his shoulders and as long as he cut it a little he would be fulfilling the requirement of 1 Cor. 11:14, for verse 14 signifies that a man must not have long hair, that is, he must not let his hair grow to its natural length. But when the hair is to be cut like it is on the man I think we should use a little wisdom and consider the influence that his particular hair style has. For instance, when boys or men would wear their hair down to their shoulders like a girl, they are displaying an influence of the hippy movement which represents revolt and disrespect. I have known of young men who would not cut their hair for the church and the Lord, thus, wielding an improper influence, but when offered a job that paid good money on the condition that they would cut their hair, they were in the barber shop that day. Why is it that people will do for themselves what they won't do for the Lord?

The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 10:23, "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." The word "expedient" simply means: "advantage, profitable, good." Thus, there may be many things that we could do to just meet the requirements of God. But are they profitable? Is it good for the church? We must watch our influence here and in many other things.

A Woman's Glory

In 1 Cor. 11:15 we are told that a woman's hair is her glory. "But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her . . ." The long hair then, upon the woman, is an ornament, and an adorning. If women only knew the charm and beauty of long hair and the reverence it inspires for Godly women, they would never cut their hair. One of the most touching stories in the Bible is given in Luke 7:37-38. "And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment. And

stood at his feet weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.” Dear sister friend of mine, could you wipe the Saviour’s feet with the length of hair you now have? Oh, what a shame if you have cut off that which is a glory to you.

The women of the East took great pride in their hair. Barnes records the writings of Chardin who says that this teaching of verse 15 is in very much agreement with the customs of the East. “The men are shaved; the women nourish their hair with great fondness, which they lengthen by tresses, and tufts of silk, down to the heels. The young men who wear their hair long in the East are looked upon as effeminate and infamous” (*Barnes Notes on the New Testament*, p. 756). Barnes also quotes Harmer as saying, “The Eastern ladies are remarkable for the length and great number of the tresses of their hair. The men there, on the contrary, have very little hair on their heads.”

Sisters, it adds to your beauty to have your natural length hair. Paul reasoned in verse 13 by saying, “Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?” That is to say, Is it becoming for you sister, to pray or teach in your capacity with your hair cut off? Nature itself teaches us that there is nothing glorious about this.

Because of the Angels

Verse 10 reads, “For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.” This has been viewed as one of the most difficult passages to understand, and probably if I were to give you all the different explanations by commentators, you would still be confused.

From a study of this verse and the ones surrounding it, I have come to the conclusion that the power on the woman’s head is her hair. It is a sign of submissiveness. The woman then should have this power (hair) upon her head because of the

angels. The only reasonable conclusion I can come to is that when I understand the nature of angels, I see them in subordination and subjection to the Father. The woman is also in subordination and subjection to man. The woman, as well as the man needs the help of these ministering spirits (Heb. 1:13-14) and thus to offend them would be a very dangerous thing. For a woman to cut off that which is a sign of subjection to her head (man), would make the angels very displeased.

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown, in their *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, declares on page 1212 the conclusion left by Bengel: "As the angels are in relation to God, so the woman is in relation to man. God's face is uncovered; angels in His presence are veiled (Isa. 6:2). Man's face is uncovered; woman in his presence is to be veiled. For her not to be so would, by its indecorousness, offend the angels (Matt. 18:10, 31). She, by her weakness, especially needs their ministry; she ought therefore, to be the more careful, not to offend them." We have found out what that veil is. It is her hair that she is to have on her head. But even if we do not know the full meaning of this verse it is still certain that she is not to cut her hair.

If Any Man Seem To Be Contentious

In verse 16 we read, "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God." There are those who would like us to believe that the apostle was saying that if someone wants to argue about it, or does not wish to accept this teaching, then just forget what I have said. It is unreasonable to think that Paul took so many verses to explain something that he really didn't mean. What was the custom that Paul was speaking about? It was the custom of women being uncovered and men being covered. He declares that neither we, the apostles, nor all the churches of God have the custom of women being without their God-given covering. Neither did they have the custom of men having long hair. He was simply stating what the position of the

church was then and now, and that nobody should argue against it.

“Trimming” and “Little Girls”

It is often argued that “I have not cut my hair, I have just trimmed it to remove all the split ends.” Webster says of trim: “to make neat by cutting, as to trim a hedge.” Thus to trim is to cut. It seems that women think that they can make themselves neater than what God could do. Do you realize what you are saying when you declare that you have to trim your hair to make yourself look better? You are saying you can do a better job than what God has already done. This is not to say we are to not take care of our body; see that it has a good appearance, but that we are to leave things as God would have them. I suppose we could add a bit just here concerning dying the hair. Do you brothers and sisters think you can improve your looks by dying your hair, and going against the natural process that God has put within each of us?

Some mothers think that it is cute to cut their daughters’ hair until she is a teenager, or until she obeys the gospel. They then intend to teach her successfully that she is not to cut her hair anymore. If you wait till then, sisters, you are waiting too long to train your child (Prov. 22:6). That is like telling our children to go ahead and steal until you become a Christian, then after that it is wrong. How foolish can some parents be. From the diaper age is the time to begin this training.

Others think that because they are not married they are not under the subjection taught in this verse. But notice, he does not say wife, but rather, woman. He does not say husband, but rather, man. So these principles apply to all men and all women.

Excuses

There are a lot of excuses offered in behalf of cut hair. “It’s much cooler,” they say, and yet you will see these women

wearing types of clothes—furs, and such—in warm weather and they never complain. “Long hair makes my head ache,” they say. But isn’t it a strange thing that when long hair was the style, we heard no such excuses? There is no doubt in my mind that if a woman wants to please her Lord, she will find a way to fix her long hair so that it will be comfortable. “It takes too long to comb long hair,” but the same women will spend hours in beauty shops, etc. having their short hair fixed. “But my husband wants me to cut my hair, and I must be in subjection to my husband.” Yes, the Bible tells you to obey your husbands, but not at the expense of denying the Lord. Peter said that if a woman have an unbelieving husband, she may win him by her chaste conversation. The only way that you are going to win that husband to the Lord is to obey the Lord yourself. After all is said and done, these are only excuses, and not justifiable reasons for disobeying God’s plain command.

A Final Plea

Brethren, many are drifting in the wrong direction on this subject as well as many others. But we have not drifted so far that we cannot return. Let us reestablish in our people the principles and virtues that distinguish us as God’s people. As preachers and teachers, let us make this subject a regular part of our teaching program. Let us as parents be teaching our children God’s Will on the “hair question.” Let us as men and women have our hair as God would have it. This is my plea and prayer for us all.

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The Greatest Kingdom

by Fred Kirbo

(Inserting a transcribed oral discourse in this volume may deviate somewhat from our format, but we offer no apologies for it. It is our pleasure to share bro. Kirbo's sermon with our readers. It was preached December 11, 1962 at the North Campbell Street congregation in Springfield, Missouri. It was transcribed by brother Elwin Robinson and has been slightly condensed for this work.)

You know, when we all put our hearts right into the song service, and begin to think about those beautiful words—the sentiments of the song—there's nothing that digs deeper into the human heart than to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to the Lord. I'm afraid sometimes, we just pick up our songbooks and sing the songs about like "Mary Had a Little Lamb," or something like that. If you will start noticing those words and get your heart attune with them and begin to sing as Paul says, "with the spirit and with the understanding," you'll get something out of the song service and you'll leave this house saying, "It was good to be here."

My sermon tonight will be, "The Greatest Kingdom." I love this sermon. This is an old sermon I heard brother Homer Gay preach many, many years ago. Of course, it will not be like his, but I have some of his points in my sermon. I particularly remember his title: "The Greatest Kingdom." Brother Gay did much for me in life. I look to him as one who has guided me in many things.

Well, tonight, we'll talk about "The Greatest Kingdom." That's something, isn't it? I read in Heb. 12:28-29, "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have

grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: For our God is a consuming fire.” Paul sets forth to us the kingdom of Christ; a kingdom that will never be moved. This institution will be able to stand against all the storms and commotions of time. Jesus said, if a man build upon this foundation, when the rains descend, and the floods come, and the winds blow, he will not be affected (Matt. 7:27). Why? He’s built upon the rock! Built upon the solid teachings of Jesus Christ; the greatest kingdom in all the world.

I often think about the tribute that Napoleon Bonaparte paid to Christ. He said, “When I think of him, he crushes me. Charlemagne and I have built our kingdoms by the shedding of other men’s blood. But he, by the shedding of his own blood, built his kingdom, and today thousands would die for him.” That’s what Napoleon had to say about Jesus, the Saviour. Napoleon recognized the greatness of Jesus Christ, and I want us all to recognize the greatness of his kingdom. When he came to earth, he came to establish this institution and, of course, it is the only institution through which men can be saved. I’d like to magnify it’s greatness, and why you should be a citizen of this institution.

First, the kingdom of Christ is the greatest kingdom in all the world because it has the greatest king. I remember the great apostle Paul said, near the close of his first letter to Timothy, “Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15).

It’s a thrilling thought when we think of King Jesus, and know that some of these days, the mightiest of the mighty and the greatest of the great will all have to humble themselves in his presence. Some day they will confess to God that Jesus is the Christ and the greatest of all kings that have ever reigned.

He is so great friends, that I don’t have words, phrases, or figures of speech to adequately put before you the greatness of this lovable character. Isaiah said so many wonderful things about him. He said that he would be called “Wonderful,

Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). We just don’t have words to magnify how great the Saviour is.

Wouldn’t it be something friends, to see Jesus Christ? Wouldn’t it thrill your heart to see him? Old brother Alfred E. Elmore one time said, “When I get to heaven, one glimpse of Jesus will repay me for all the trials and tribulations of this life.” One look at the Lord Jesus Christ! Another man, when asked, “When you get to heaven, what are you going to do?” said, “I think I’ll sit down and look at Christ for about a thousand years.” I’ll tell you, he’s such an admirable character that I’m thinking if he were to come in here and take his seat right over here, there would hardly be a one looking at me. I imagine that everyone of you would have your eyes on him. One look at Jesus Christ will repay me for the ills and disappointments of this old life, won’t it? Yes sir; just to see him!

I’ve often times thought about that immortal song, “Face to Face.” The thought of seeing Jesus Christ, face to face... to look at him... I’ll tell you, it is going to be a thrill never to be surpassed, when we see the King. There’s another song; “Hallelujah, We Shall See the King Some Day.” We’re going to see him in his beauty; going to see him in his power.

John got to see him one time, on the island of Patmos in a beautiful vision. When he saw Jesus, he triumphantly pictured him to us in the symbol as riding victoriously over the last battle. John saw him riding a white horse (in the symbol, of course), and what he saw in the symbol and what the symbol represents is something else. Well, this is one way of letting us know that Jesus will triumph over the devil and all the wicked at the end of time, in the final battle.

John saw him riding on a horse, and saw that he also had a white garment on. That garment, John said, was sprinkled with blood. Some commentators think that this blood was symbolic of his own blood; that it was through the shedding of his blood that he became the victor. And it showed him wearing a crown

upon his head, and upon that were many diadems. And so this, evidently, means that he'll be the victor over all armies and all kings at the end of time. And then, as John saw him, he said out of his mouth proceeded a sharp, two-edged sword. That sword, of course, was symbolic of his Word, for God's Word is the "sword of the Spirit," as we are taught in the sixth chapter of the Ephesian letter. That's the way he's going to slay the enemy; with the breath of his mouth, as Paul puts it. There were others riding behind. They were on white horses, too. But they had no weapons. No weapons—they didn't need them. They were not there to fight. They were only there as witnesses because the great leader was in front of them. He was going to fight the battle, slay the wicked by the very breath of his mouth (by the sword that proceeded from his mouth; his words). Then John says that he looked at the Saviour. He saw upon his vesture and upon his thigh, a name written. (Oh, just imagine this, as John saw him riding by.) "And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:16). Isn't that something? And that's what he is to us, folks—"King of kings, and Lord of lords."

You know, if we could just build up an appreciation for Jesus, and a love for him, we wouldn't have to worry about people keeping his commandments. You know that? We have lost an appreciation for Christ. The whole world, religiously speaking, has lost (if they ever had) an appreciation for the Son of God. If we could just learn to realize his beauty and his power and his greatness to humanity, we'd love him. If all would love the Son of God, you wouldn't have to worry about people keeping his commandments. Jesus says, "If a man love me, he WILL keep my commandments" (John 14:23). I wish we preachers could just picture him as he is. I try to magnify Christ. I try to put him on a pinnacle. I want everyone to look at him and see him in his beauty, but it seems that I fail. It seems that my sermons are so flat sometimes. I don't want them to be

that way. I wonder in my heart sometimes, why they don't come out of my mouth better. I don't like the way it sounds. It doesn't sound good enough to me. I just want to make him as great as he really is.

Well, he's great! And he's established himself a kingdom, and that kingdom is superior to all kingdoms because of its foundation. This kingdom wasn't built upon fallible man, but upon the infallible Jesus, the Christ. And he's as much alive this minute as when he trod the hills of old Palestine, healing maladies of men and speaking words of comfort to sad and burdened hearts. He's alive today! I'm glad that the church wasn't built upon Peter, because men are always subject to death. They have their moments of weakness. But here we have it built upon a live foundation. And, you know, Paul, in his letter to the Corinthian brethren, said this; "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11). The foundation has a lot to do with this institution. The reason why the Roman Empire is not standing today is that it was built on and by man. The reason why Charlemagne's or Napoleon's or the Medo-Persian kingdom or the Grecian kingdom—the reason they're not standing is—they weren't built on the right foundation.

You know, a foundation determines the strength of anything. If the foundation gives way, the whole thing totters to its downfall. You see two houses out there. They are pretty houses; they're made alike. To look at them you'd think that one was as good as the other. But, I tell you, when a man begins to buy one of those houses, or contemplates buying one of them, he will go under that house and look at that foundation. He may come out and say, "I'll give you a thousand, or fifteen hundred more for this house than I would for the other." "Why? Isn't one just as pretty as the other, exteriorly speaking?" "Yes, it looks about as good on the outside as the other." "Well, what's the difference?" "Foundation!!" "What is the matter with the foundation?" "This house

here is resting on the ground back up yonder—the termites are already beginning to work on it. The other one, over here, is built upon a good solid cement foundation. No termites in it. It should stand for years and years.”

Now, that’s the hardest thing to get before religious people today. You talk to them about “their church” and ask them what kind of foundation it is resting upon. They seem to think it makes no difference what foundation it’s resting upon. Friends, Jesus one time said this about a foundation, “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock (what a foundation!): and the rains descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matt. 7:24-27). Now, there’s the difference in foundations. You and I might go out here and build us a church. We might give it a man-made doctrine to govern it. You may write us a creed, and we may formulate its laws and its items of worship. But if they’re not founded upon God’s Word, that house won’t stand. Why? Jesus is not its foundation. He is not the originator of it. I read in Psalms 127:1, “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” So if you build, you’d better build on the Rock! You’d better build upon the infallible Christ. There are other churches, and they have foundations, but they’re not Jesus. He’s not the foundation of it, and it won’t stand—it can’t stand, for he said, “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13). It can’t stand!

Speaking of the duration of this kingdom, I think it’s so prominently brought out there in Daniel 2:28, when Nebuchadnezzar had his dream. No one could interpret it; the

soothsayers, astrologers, and magicians, and all—they couldn't even venture a supposition. But Daniel was finally called in. He stood before the king, and told him that it was by no power of his own, but "There's a God in heaven that can give me strength and interpretation of this thing." And so, he told the old king, "Thou, O King, sawest (when thou layest upon thy bed, at night), and behold a great image." When he said image, I imagine old Nebuchadnezzar said, "That's it! That's exactly what I dreamed. If he can tell me what I dreamed, he can give the interpretation." And Daniel went ahead and said it had a head of gold. That, Daniel explained, was the Babylonian Kingdom, and represented Nebuchadnezzar. He was the head of this great image. And he says, after this shall arise a second kingdom. This second kingdom was the arms and breasts of silver. This was the Medes and Persians. And Daniel said this kingdom was to subdue the head of gold—the Medes and Persians were to subdue the Babylonians. And they did. But then he says, after this shall arise a third kingdom—the belly and thighs of brass. This represented the Grecians. The Grecians came, under the mighty leadership of Alexander the Great, and subdued the Medo-Persian Kingdom. And then after this, he said shall arise a fourth kingdom. Now, here is your "iron" kingdom. The legs were iron and the feet were part of iron and part of clay. And he says, then came the fourth kingdom and it subdued the belly and thighs of brass. So, the Romans conquered the Grecians. That's the way it is in history: the Babylonians, the Medo-Persians, the Grecians, the Romans.

Now listen to what he says: "That represents four world wide empires, Nebuchadnezzar." And he says, "And in the days of these kings" (while the Roman kings were reigning, of course), "shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, and it shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and (listen), it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). "This institution that the Lord's going to build,

Nebuchadnezzar, it will stand forever!!” Now the Roman Empire stood a long time. I think the Roman Empire stood for almost 1,250 years before it finally fell, but here’s one thing that is not going to fall! Jesus built his institution during the reign of the Romans. (He was put to death under Roman authority, you know.) But it was then that Christ built his institution; the church—the kingdom.

“Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands.” It wasn’t cut out with force, you see. It was cut out with love; cut out “without hands.” And that stone was, at first, a very small stone; about twelve apostles. And he says that this stone rolled and it hit this image in the feet. Well, of course, we have already explained to you that the legs and feet were the Roman Empire. And when the stone hit the image in the feet, what did it do to the image? Why, it ground it to powder, and it became as “the chaff of the summer thrashing floor and the wind carried them away.”

Then he said, this stone began to grow. It “became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth” (Dan. 2:34-35). Now, this was the everlasting kingdom that the Lord Jesus was going to build. There it is! And did you know, it’s in existence right now? It was brought into existence back yonder about A.D. 33, and that would make this institution now almost 1,929 years old. Alright, that institution, since the time it was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, it has never become extinct. It has had members, I think, on the face of this earth, ever since the time that the church of Christ came into existence. You know, I believe, even during its wilderness journey of about 1,260 years that you read of in the Revelation letter, and though the church of Christ disappeared there you might say, as a congregational body, I believe, as I said, during this wilderness journey, there were members of the church of Christ upon this earth. And brother, let me tell you this: as long as there are as many as four or five members of the church of Christ upon this earth, it has never

been done away with.

Here is a verse of scripture that I used to misunderstand, but I think I understand it now. Jesus says, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). I used to think he meant this: "I will build my church and the gates of Hades is not going to stop me. I'm going to build it." But that's not the meaning of it. Even though the gates of Hades didn't stop him from building it (as we all admit), I think that's not what he had reference to right there. "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail *against it*." they say "it" is from a Greek word that's used in the feminine. One translation puts it like this: "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against her." See? Now, as I said a while ago, I believe as long as there are five members of the church of Christ on the face of this earth, death has not exterminated her. And death never will completely destroy the church of Christ from off the face of this earth. Evidently the Lord established the church. I believe that.

And then too, here's another thought you can put in there. You know, the gates of Hades are not going to prevail against the church after all, even if we're slain and put in the grave. Don't think Hades is going to prevail against us, even though we have had our bodies killed and beheaded or what have you. No, some of these days the Saviour is going to call us from our dusty bed. And so, the gates of Hades is not even going to prevail against the church. It is an everlasting kingdom, of everlasting duration, and it will stand when the world is on fire. So, it's a great institution, isn't it? All other institutions will go out of business. All other institutions will fall, except for the great church of our Lord.

This institution affords me and all others who want to be a citizen of it, the greatest protection I know of. There's no insurance policy that comes up to this. I was riding down the road one time and saw a sign advertising an insurance

company. It said, "We insure everything but the hereafter." That's the difference! This one insures the hereafter. This one insures the soul. It gives you the greatest protection of all. And, so far as this protection is concerned, listen to this: Jesus said, "There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or fathers, or mothers, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life" (Mark 10:29-30). You can't beat that for protection, can you? I really do have some protection, and you do too if you're a Christian. Now, of course, in this particular instance, I think he particularly had reference to people who would go out and spread the gospel. Now, I may leave my house, but I'll find other houses. I may leave the comforts of home: but I find the comforts of home in your house. We may leave fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, but I find them wherever I go. And the Lord said, "If you will do this for my sake, I will be with you in all of that, and in the world to come, I'll give you eternal life." I'll tell you, the Lord couldn't make me a better proposition than that could he? He just couldn't beat that! It affords the greatest protection of anything you can think of. I'll tell you, if you're not in the church of Christ, you need this protection! You need this protection right here!

Then, I think about its blessings; how it surpasses all other institutions in blessings. I would just like to call your attention to some of the blessings that you church of Christ members have. You just ought to stop and count your blessings, folks. It pays us to do that. Stop and think about these things. "Oh," someone says, "I imagine I've heard about what you're going to put on the board." I know, but you may have lost an appreciation for it. That is the reason, as Peter says, I want to "stir you up by putting you in remembrance" of them, though you already know them (2 Pet. 1:13).

Now then, here are some of the blessings you have in this

great institution, the kingdom of Christ. Listen! I read in 2 Tim. 2:10, "I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory." *Now, that's what's in there.*" No other "church," no other institution, can give you that blessing. I'm telling you, the kingdom of Christ is the only institution under the heavens that will give salvation. Now there are other people who think there is salvation in some man-made church, but it's not there. It's not there! It's in Christ! And it's not in a lodge, either. People will tell you, "Why, you ought to be a member of the Masonic Lodge." What's in the Masonic Lodge? "Oh," they say, "It will make you a better man." No it won't! No, it can't do that, because here's what Paul says: "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Col. 2:10). He says, "Ye are *complete* in him." Now, you can't make a man any more complete than a Christian. If I'm a Christian, don't tell me that a lodge will make me better than something complete, because if I'm a Christian, I'm complete in him and I don't need to be a member of any lodge. A lodge won't help you be any better. Won't help you a bit. I'll tell you what I can do: All the good deeds that are done in a lodge, I can do every one in the church, can't I? And if I'll do every one in the church, the Lord will get the glory for it. Paul says, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end" (Eph. 3:21). So he wants the glory in the church. Why? This is the kingdom he died for, which he is the head of, the foundation of, door of, and Saviour of—this is the only institution that he wants you to be a member of. It's the *only* soul-saving institution, so you're complete in him. Now, these are blessings that you have in the church, that you don't have anywhere else.

Here's another good thought. I read in Col. 1:14, "In whom we have redemption (think of that!!—redemption!) through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." Now, you don't have that outside of Christ. You can't get it! It's not obtainable outside! It's

all on the inside! And here's another one: I read in 2 Cor. 1:20, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." You see, there's not one promise to the man that dies outside of Christ, outside of his church, outside of his kingdom. Suppose I'm called upon to preach your funeral. Suppose you're not a Christian; you've never been baptized into the church. Now, what comfort can I give the bereaved? None! Because they know there is none. If they know anything about the Bible, they know you've died without one single promise. And if God saves you, you'll be saved outside of His promises, because He has promised to save those who are in Christ. He says, "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen." So you died without a promise. Died without a promise! Isn't that awful! To die outside the Lord, when the Good Book says, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord" (Rev. 14:13). These are blessings.

Here's some more. I believe it's in 1 John 5:11 where he says, "And this is the record that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." "Life is in his Son!" If you die outside of the church, the kingdom of Christ, you die without eternal life. Jesus says, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40). And he says, "For if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins . . . that whither I go ye cannot come" (John 8:24, 21). And in another place he says, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

Here's the assurance that he gives you too: Paul says in Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." And then again, in Eph. 1:3, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." So, you can see what you're going to miss if you die outside of Christ. Oh, if I was a sinner here tonight and unprepared to

meet God, I'll tell you, before I went home, somebody would have to baptize me. I wouldn't wait until the sun rose in the morning. I might die before that time. I would want to get into Christ, where I have that salvation; where I have that completeness, and that redemption, and that forgiveness of sins; where I can have those promises; where that life, and that safety, and those blessing are. That's where I'd want to be. And I wouldn't want to go to sleep tonight, knowing that if I died, I'd die without God and without hope in this world. Friends, there's a warning right there! Why don't you heed it, if you've never done so? Why don't you think about this seriously? Well, these are the blessings.

Here's the last one: the reward. There's a reward awaiting you. Listen to this. It's found in John 14:1-3. One writer one time said some of the sweetest things about these verses. He said, "Here are some verses that have been thumbed by beggars, by little children, by kings, by white-souled mothers, and sin-sick harlots (as he put it). They have clung to it as their only hope." And I'll tell you, this is my hope. Listen to it: "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." That's the reward laid up for those who love the Lord. And I'll tell you concerning that reward, Paul looked to it with burning anticipation, and he said this, "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). You just stop and think what he said. "Not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." Just think what Paul went through. While he was here on earth, I think five times he was scourged. That's thirty-nine lashes each time. That makes one hundred ninety-five licks. He says, "Thrice was I beaten with rods" (2 Cor. 11:25). I don't know the nature of that whipping.

It was, possibly, terrible. And he was stoned at Lystra and left for dead. He was so abused here in this life that he one time said, "For I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17). He had the marks (whelps, lashes, cuts, bruises, etc). I imagine that if you would have looked at Paul, you would have seen maybe a slash here, or one on his neck, or his hand here, and maybe all over him. And you would say, "Paul, where did you get this" "Oh, that happened to me at Iconium, when I was down there. You know that I said one time, what persecutions I'd endured at Iconium and Lystra. Yes, I got this mark right here, when I was there." "What happened to your arm, right here?" He could possibly tell you a little story about that, and he could tell you a story about this. "What happened here?" "That is where I was hit by a stone, one time. Like to have got me!" I imagine he could just talk to you like you could talk about, maybe, a wreck that you'd been in. And he could say, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus." "Well, Paul, don't you think you're enduring too much for Christ just to get to heaven?" Here's what he would say: Oh, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." Nothing to be compared with it! And you know, if it's going to be that beautiful, and you miss it—you've just missed it all, haven't you? So, I'm thankful tonight that I can magnify the greatness of the Lord's kingdom.

Are you here tonight and want to be a member of the church? While truth pleads and while mercy still lingers, and, as brother Gay used to say, while life's little day is yours; won't you come tonight? Wrench that precious soul of yours from Satan's grasp; come down the way, confess Jesus, be a member of his church, and a citizen of the kingdom tonight. Get in it, work in it, enjoy the blessings of it, and then go home and obtain the reward of all those who die in the Lord.

Wearing the Name of Christ

by Raymond Stiner

I need not spend much time in establishing the importance of names in our every day life. We all realize they are important in the business field; they are also important in identifying objects, persons, places, and things, but they are equally important in religion. It seems that some people do not think it very important to call Bible things by Bible names, especially when we consider the varied names that professed religious people wear. We hope in this writing there is a name we can all wear and be united upon. Acts 4:12 tells us, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." From this passage we learn that salvation is not only found in the name of Christ, but we also learn that it is found **ONLY** there. The apostle Paul wrote in Col. 3:17, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." The same writer declared in Phil. 2:9-10, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Then again, we read in the book of Hebrews how that his name is greater than the angels. "Being made so much better than the angels as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb. 1:4). Thus, the Scriptures are many that declare the wonderful name of Jesus, exalting it in the eyes of mankind. So it behooves us to study why we should wear the name of

Christ, and wear no other name.

The New Name Prophesied

Like many other subjects, God had spoken aforetime concerning the new name that His people would wear. The Old Testament speaks of that new name in Isa. 56:5, "Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off." Again, "the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name" (Isa. 62:2). Isaiah also said, "Ye shall leave your name for a curse unto my chosen; for the Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name" (Isa. 65:15).

As we look into these verses that reveal the fact that God's people would be known by a new name, let us notice some interesting points concerning them.

1. It would be a NEW NAME. Thus, it would be another, a different name, from what His people had been called. We know that in the New Testament the followers of Christ have been referred to by different titles which signified a certain work that they were doing. For instance: *disciple* means a learner. There have been many disciples and even yet today we are disciples if we learn from Jesus' words. *Saints* (1 Cor. 1:2) is a term Paul used in describing the Corinthian brethren because of their steadfastness in the face of opposition. The term *brethren* was used in 1 Cor. 15:56 and elsewhere because it referred to those in mind as being of the same family. There is nothing wrong with using these descriptive titles to refer to the followers of Christ. But this is not the name God would give. These were not new names. The word "brethren" was used in Psa. 133:1; "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." The term "saints" is used also in Psa. 116:15, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the

death of his saints.” And the term “disciples” was also used in the Old Testament in Isa. 8:16, “Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples.” So for the new name of the prophecy we will have to look elsewhere. In Acts 11:26 we find that those who were the followers of Christ were given a name. “. . . And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the church, and taught much people, and the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.” Now, this was a new name. It had never been used before, thus this must be the new name of Isaiah 62:2.

2. In Isa. 56:5 we learn that it would be given in the Lord’s house. The Lord’s house is the church (1 Tim. 3:15). And it was after the church was established that this name was given.

3. Also in Isa. 56:5 we are told that the Lord would give this new name. As we look back to Acts 11:26 we are told that the “disciples *were called* Christians first at Antioch.” Adam Clarke says, concerning the phrase “were called,” that it is taken from the Greek word *chreematisai*, which signifies in the New Testament: to appoint, warn or nominate by Divine direction. This is the way the word is used in Matt. 2:12 and Luke 2:26. Thus, used as it is in Acts 11:26, we can conclude that God divinely gave that name unto His people and that it was not given in derision by the enemies of the Christians.

4. In Isa. 62:2 we learn that it was to be given after the Gentiles had seen the righteousness of God. It is ironic but true, that this name of “Christian” was not given until the Gentiles were received into the kingdom of God in Acts 10. Thus it was after Gentiles began to obey the gospel and see the righteousness of God that this new name was given unto them.

The Meaning of the Name “Christian”

The Biblical meaning of Christian is “the adherent of Christ.” The disciples were formally called Christians first at Antioch. King Agrippa recognized that to believe and obey the things that Paul had taught him would make him a Christian (Acts

26:28). Peter accepted the name as in itself, the only basis for one to be persecuted (1 Pet. 4:16).

Each time it is spoken, Christ is mentioned. The “ian” at the end was a Latin ending (*ianos*) widely used throughout the Roman empire at that time to designate the slaves of the one with whose name it was compounded. And it is a common fact that we are the slaves (servants) of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:1, James 1:1, Rom. 6:22). Thus, the ending “ian,” when put to the name of Christ, simply means, “I belong to Christ.” We are Christ’s men in view of the fact that he purchased us with his own blood (Acts 20:28).

Christian is a name of great honor. In James 2:7 we read, “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?” It is a name that magnifies Christ every time it is mentioned. It is the most honorable name that can be given to mortal man. It suggests at once to the Christian, the name of his great Redeemer; the idea of our intimate relation to him; and the thought that we receive him as our chosen leader, the source of our blessings, the author of our salvation, the fount of all our joys. It is the distinguishing name of all the redeemed. It is not that we belong to this or to that denomination; it is not that our names are connected with some great and illustrious ancestor; it is not that they are recorded in the books of heralds; it is not that they stand high in courts, and among the fashionable, and the rich. True honor is not so conferred on men. These are not the things that give distinction and peculiarity to the followers of the Redeemer. It is that they are CHRISTIANS; that this is their peculiar name and by this they are known. This at once suggests their character, their feeling, their doctrine, their hopes, their joys.

Unity Found in the Name of Christ

In all of the Scriptures we do not find where there was an adjective placed in front of the title “Christian.” And yet, in our world today, because of the religious division that exists,

“Christians” are classified into different categories such as Baptist Christian, Methodist Christian, Presbyterian Christian, Lutheran Christian, etc. Friends, I plead with you for the sake of unity, throw away all of those descriptive titles that the Bible did not give you, and take the name Christian *only*. In Acts 26:28, when Paul preached unto King Agrippa, he realized there was only one thing that he would be if he obeyed the words he had heard; that was a Christian. The name “Baptist,” when added, *exalts baptism* and takes some of the glory from Christ. The name “Lutheran” exalts Martin Luther and also takes away from Christ. The name “Presbyterian” exalts the eldership. The name “Methodist” exalts a method rather than Christ. Such was never intended by the Lord.

Many denominational names have arisen out of blind devotion to preachers and religious leaders by exalting them and their teachings. This practice is definitely condemned in the Bible.. “Now I beseech you brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:10-13). Perhaps if these questions Paul asked were answered by every religious person wearing a name other than that of Christian, we would be able to have unity. Certainly they would have to cease using the names of mere men.

The name Christian binds all men together. It is a name which unites in one the inhabitants of distant nations and tribes of men. It is a name which connects the extremes of society, and places them in the most important respects, on a common level. It is a name which is a bond to unite in one family all

those who love the Lord Jesus Christ, though dwelling in different climes, speaking different languages, engaged in different pursuits in life, and occupying different graves in death. He who lives according to the import of this name is the most blessed and eminent of mortals. This name shall be had in remembrance when the names of royalty shall be remembered no more, and when the appellations of nobility shall cease to amuse and dazzle the world.

The name Christian is the only name then, that the religious world can ever accept as a basis for unity. Party names mean division, and division is a work of the flesh, and Paul declared that they who would be guilty of the works of the flesh could not enter into the kingdom of heaven (Gal. 5:19-21).

The Name of Christ Is Important to the Church

The church belongs to Christ, and he sustains such close relationship to it that it is proper, fitting, and scriptural to just call the church, the church of Christ. For an examination of why it could and should be termed such, let us investigate;

1. It belongs to Christ (Matt. 16:18).
2. He built it (Matt. 16:18).
3. He is the head of it (Col. 1:18).
4. He is the foundation of it (1 Cor. 3:11).
5. He purchased it with his blood (Acts 20:18).
6. It is his body (Eph. 1:22-23).
7. He is the Saviour of it (Eph. 5:23).
8. He is the bridegroom to the bride (Eph. 5:32).

As you look at all of these observations and compare them with something that belongs to you, would you want it to be said that it belongs to another? For instance, would you want your wife to wear another man's name? Would you want your home, which you bought and paid for, to be under some other man's name? If you built something, would you want another man to take the credit for it and get all the glory? You would

answer “No” to all of these questions. Then let me ask you, why would we want the name of the church to go to another and take the glory away from Christ? The words of the apostle Paul in Rom. 16:16 certainly shows possession and a pattern for us—“The churches of Christ salute you.”

Let us remember that God calls His children *saints*, because of their character; *disciples*, because they are learners; *believers*, because of their faith; *brethren*, because of their relationship; but most importantly, *CHRISTIANS*, because of their birth in Christ.

—Box 4

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

When the Church Assembles

by Jerry Johnson

I assume all who read this material believe in the church, thus we will use only minimum space to actually describe that blessed institution. It is also assumed that readers believe this body must, at some time and in some manner, assemble for public worship. Primarily, these observations are offered in discussion of the purpose and value of assembly, a few points of what is to transpire in such assemblies, and the necessity of church assemblies.

What Is / Who Are the Church?

The church is God's *ekklesia*, His called out ones. Although the word is used to describe secular gatherings (as the word *assembly* in Acts 19:32, 39, 41), it has special meaning when applied to God's people. In her wilderness wanderings, even Israel was privileged to bear this distinction (Acts 7:38). It is not only significant that these Israelites were called forth from Egypt, but also that they were called out for the purpose of ultimately gaining Canaan. It is not good for Christians to recognize only that they are not of the world. All need the encouraging impetus that heaven is before us; we are truly seeking a country, called out of the world.

The church has not only been called out of the world, but out of sin itself. It is in a moral and spiritual sense that Jesus speaks the words of John 15:19, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

The word *kingdom*, often used in our New Testament, is

metaphorically used to emphasize the governmental aspect of the church. The church is also the *body* (Eph. 1:22-23), with this word suggesting the unity of Christians in the church. Again, the word *household* (1 Tim. 3:15) is descriptive, suggesting our close family relationship in the church, with God as our Father. There are other metaphorical descriptions used, and all are intended to elevate the church of our Lord.

It is unfortunate that the word *church* has taken on a kind of ecclesiastical meaning in our modern day, and even so among members of the church. The church has come to be understood as a physical structure where Christians assemble, and is not widely understood to be Christians themselves. This is especially the thinking of denominationalists. The church can be *at* a certain place (1 Cor. 1:2), howbeit, Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is WITHIN you" (Luke 17:20-21). And again, understanding the body of Rom. 12:4-5 to be referring to the church (cf. Eph. 1:22-23), Paul plainly refers to Christians in the aggregate as this body, yet all the while singular and individual members of it. There is no clearer passage illustrating the concept that the church exists in the called-out individual even apart from an assembly of such individuals.

There are quite obviously, however, many references to the church as assembled. One very illustrative such passage is 1 Cor. 14:34-35, where the sisters are required to remain silent. Clearly, this is exclusively in the public assembly. No thinking person would claim that once the gospel was obeyed, the sisters could never thereafter speak. Even of teaching (which is that forbidden in these verses), the forbidding can only refer to the public assembly, for there is adequate proof that sisters of the early church taught even men *outside the assembly* (see Acts 18:24-26). Bro. Alexander Campbell in his *Living Oracles* translation changes the King James Version usage of *church* in the 1 Cor. 14:34-35 passages to the more accurate *assembly*. There are, therefore, references to the church intended to regulate the public assemblies.

Another consideration is that the church scattered throughout the world is never assembled in a single capacity, yet who would deny that these multitudes constitute God's called out notwithstanding. This is the church in the all-inclusive world, or universal sense.

There are, then, at least four distinctions made in the usage of the word *church*. (1.) The individual member, wherever he is (Rom. 12:4-5). (2.) The congregation existing in a given locality (1 Cor. 1:2). (3.) The congregation assembled for worship (1 Cor. 14:34-35). (4.) The church universal, i.e., the entire and complete number of Christians throughout the world (Matt. 16:18, Heb. 12:23).

Our attention in this material is primarily in consideration of the public assembly. It was the practice of the early church to gather publickly. Thus, in restoring the New Testament church in the twentieth century, such gatherings illustrated in God's Word are exceptionally important.

Examples of the New Testament Assemblies

Under the Old Covenant, Moses was directed to "gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and observe to do all the words of this law. And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it" (Deut. 31:12-13). In Joshua 8:34-35 it is said that he "read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them." These illustrate typical Old Testament assemblies.

In the new era, we have several accounts of the early church

assembling. There are implied assemblies (as 1 Cor. 16:1-2), definite references to assemblies, and in addition, we also read of the command to assemble. There are some ten or so references to the assembling of the church *together* in our New Testament. Some of the accounts are recorded (if you care to pursue further) in Acts 20:7-8, 1 Corinthians 5:4, 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34, 14:23, 26, Heb. 10:25. Notice, in each passage, the church came *together*. Probably two of the most important of these passages are Acts 20:7, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them . . .” and 1 Cor. 14:23 where “the whole church be come together into one place . . .” Notice the triple emphasis in this latter passage, “the *whole* church,” “be come *together*,” and, “into *one* place.” The oneness of God’s people even in worship is hereby illustrated. The assembling—*together*—is important. This is the sort of assembly of which we are writing.

Purpose of the Assembly

The intended purpose or use of something is usually clarified somewhat if it can be determined what is NOT its purpose or use. So here of the church.

Although the church exists in a society, and is “social” inasmuch as it is a community of believers, the primary intent of the public assembly is not the gratification of social appetites. There is uplifting value in being together (the early church practiced such, Acts 2:41-47), but the assembly was never intended to provide entertainment. It must never be permitted to develop such a social atmosphere that worship becomes secondary.

Primarily, the assembly is a gathering of saints—worshippers—to render service to the Almighty. We gather before God (see Acts 10:33), with Him as the very object of our assembly. A consideration of several words identified either as or with worship, leads us to conclude that worship is service, obedi-

ence, adoration and magnification of the Father. This involves more than our motives and intentions of the hour. Although the proper spirit is manifestly demanded (John 4:24), it is equally necessary to render devotions properly, or in harmony with any rules of worship recorded in the Sacred Text. Jesus called it worshipping *in truth* in John 4.

Empty forms—that which is insincere, indifferent, or a matter of formality—have never pleased God. Jesus quoted Isaiah as saying “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:8-9). The Psalmist penned, “Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant” (Psa. 78:36-37). It is entirely possible to engage in the physical exercises of worship and do so vainly.

It is not within the scope of this writing to touch extensively on “true” worship—that is covered elsewhere in this volume—but suffice it to say, the most noble of intentions will not compensate for service offered in error. Nadab and Abihu died as a result of a seemingly minor infraction (Lev. 10:1-2). Uzzah lost his life through a simple violation of God’s Law (1 Chron. 13:10). Even Moses himself was hindered from entering the land of promise because of a rather innocent appearing error (Num. 20:7-12). Today, the assembly of the church is a gathering for worship, but that worship *must* be offered properly.

The gathering itself, social concourse that it is, is invaluable. It is important that we cherish fellow Christians; that we cultivate our appreciation for fellow pilgrims. God is pleased with the mutual blending of many into one united voice of worship. There is incalculable worth in simply being together.

Another very important purpose of the worship assembly is the edification of the worshipers. There is an emotional/spiri-

tual upbuilding which is inherent in the proper worship environment. Most likely, every facet of the worship hour has (or at least *should* have) a lasting impression upon us—singing, praying, etc.—but probably most outstanding is the mutual edification obtained through the teaching of the Word. If Israel was destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6), surely a building up must follow where spiritual knowledge is increased.

Faith grows through hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17). It is no small responsibility of those teaching, to see that their hearers are edified. This requires diligence in sermon preparation, whether teaching by chapter or subject. Although there are no New Testament examples of the primitive church using what we call the “chapter method,” it is simply because they had not the written Word as we. It is an excellent way to teach, and is used extensively among us. However, there are passages which state or imply that preaching in that early era was, in some cases, similar to our “subject” teaching. The teaching of Acts 8:4 doubtless resulted from the general knowledge of those dispersed. Teaching the unconverted (whether publicly or privately), they would wisely use discourses suited to their hearers. Philip preached a sermon centered around Jesus, beginning with prophecy and ending with baptism (Acts 8:35). Apollos taught “the things of the Lord,” directing the brunt of his discourse to proving by various scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:25-28). Subject teaching, like chapter study, can be good or bad, depending on the diligence in preparation. It has at least one distinct advantage over our chapter study. Particular and immediate needs can be addressed from the pulpit by the overseers, with a wide variety of Bible illustrations and scriptures used to enforce a particular truth. Such an approach is precisely the way the apostles often wrote, addressing specific needs (cf. 1 Cor. 7:1). It is both reasonable and scriptural that we address the needs of a given assembly. The alien can be taught all that is required of him. The acts of worship can be expounded. Specific false doctrines can be

refuted. In contrast, I know of no single chapter covering the complete plan of salvation, the acts of worship, etc. All of this can certainly be done over a period of time through chapter study also, with points at times even more solidly made. But oftentimes the demands or the opportunities of the hour prove it wise to address a subject. The major advantage of chapter study is the continuity and the thoroughness of this very profitable approach. Both methods can be excellent.

When speaking of the purpose of the assembly, it is sometimes suggested the most important part of the Lord's Day gathering is the Lord's Supper. While I hesitate to say it is the most important part, I hesitate not at all to say it was apparently the primary purpose for the early church gathering. Acts 20:7 clearly states "upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread..." Although this was not the only act of worship engaged in, the church at Troas had gathered to BREAK BREAD. Again, in 1 Cor. 11:33 Paul was referring directly to the Lord's Supper when he wrote "Wherefore, my brethren, when ye COME TOGETHER TO EAT..." In both passages it is obvious the Supper was the primary reason for their gathering. There is a direct relationship of the Supper to the Supreme Sacrifice. Thus, it serves as a reminder of the most basic and fundamental reason for the assembly itself, illustrating the very purpose for it. However, after all, there are many intended benefits derived from the other vital and essential acts of the Lord's Day worship hour. To omit or corrupt any is a sin.

Value of the Assembly

Several points relating to this aspect were introduced under the previous segment. There are a few more however, that deserve our attention.

First, the assembly should be an humbling experience. It should remind us of our frailty. We gather before the very God that "inhabiteth eternity." We are vividly reminded of His

guileless Son. All of this should prostrate us before the eye of Him who knows our most secret actions, our innermost thoughts (Psa. 139:1-12). In the worship assembly, we have no thought of how much better we may be than others. We see instead how vile we are compared to the Spotless Lamb. "False and full of sin I am, thou art full of grace and truth." In worship, we truly see our righteousnesses as *filthy rags* (Isa. 64:6).

Second, the assembly "spiritualizes" our thinking. That is, the materialistic world we have been daily a part of is now more clearly seen as a shabby, synthetic of pleasure and happiness. In worship, our minds are drawn afresh to the eternal world and things eternally meaningful. Perspectives are learned or renewed. We are reminded that "all that is in the world . . . is not of the Father" (1 John 2:16). Worship causes us to see anew the good life, and how truly important spiritual things are to us.

Third, and related to the foregoing, we are reminded of the awesomeness of God, how worthy He is of our devotions. "Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture" (Psa. 100:3). It becomes easy to see the need of prevailing reverence. David said, "God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him" (Psa. 89:7). Although we cannot evade the presence of God (Psa. 139:7-10), in worship, we certainly draw closer to him; "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you . . ." (James 4:8). "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God," (1 John 3:1).

Fourth, our gathering is an encouragement to perseverance. In the assembly we can more easily see the futility of material prosperity. We are overwhelmed with the value of spiritual things; of right living. We see more clearly our families, and the importance of continuing their training. We see our brothers and sisters in Christ—others who are pleased to honor the King. We are often encouraged to continue faithful simply

because others are. But above all, we see God, and Christ, and heaven itself. God, the very object of our devotion; Jesus Christ, our guileless and self-less Saviour; and heaven—the abode of God, the supreme goal, the coveted estate of honored bliss. The value of the assembly cannot be overly emphasized.

The Command to Assemble

It seems inordinate that it should be necessary to write of a *command* to assemble. It would be more in order to write of a benefactor *demanding* that one receive a gift of several million dollars. Or *demanding* that a dying man receive a life giving potion. Or that one drowning allow another to save him. So great are the benefits of the worship hour, it seems unreasonable that we need consider the *command* to assemble. But we do.

Elsewhere, I noted Bible examples of the primitive church assembling. Both sacred and profane history attest to the regularity of these gatherings. Doubtless, this common knowledge and practice of the New Testament church regarding the assembly was the underlying reason for the Hebrew writer to encourage “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,” yet not designating any particular assembly. For the injunction to make any sense at all, we must conclude that the assembly under consideration was so well known it was unnecessary to explain which. After all, there could be no assembly without some time for an assembling.

We learned previously that the disciples came together to eat (1 Cor. 11:33). Since eating a common meal was to be done at home (v. 22), the eating of verse 33 undoubtedly refers to the Lord’s Supper. This would fulfill Jesus’ command that the disciples eat of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:24-25). If it can be determined when the Supper was eaten, it can be determined when the assembly was, for it was eaten in the assembly, a “coming together” (v. 33). In determining when their regular

assembly was, it is simultaneously learned of which assembly the Hebrew writer most likely speaks in 10:25.

The Record reveals such an assembly for eating the Lord's Supper in Acts 20:7, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread..." Notice that this assembly is referred to in such a way as to indicate that they regularly assembled on *that* day for *that* purpose. 1 Cor. 16:1-2 also illustrates a regular gathering on Lord's Day. It seems clear then, that the "first day of the week" assembly is that which is under study in Heb. 10:25.

Not only does Hebrews plainly forbid forsaking the assembly, the writer further identifies it as sin (v. 26). (Of course, sin being a transgression of the law, 1 John 3:4, we could conclude it to be sin apart from verse 26.) Notice first the command NOT to forsake the assembly. Then note verse 26. It begins "For if we sin..." "For" is from the Greek *gar*, and means "prop. assigning a reason (used in argument, explanation...)," *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, No. 1063. This word "for" following the command not to forsake "assigns a reason... an explanation." It is sin that shall be rewarded with the measures named and implied in the verses following. It is entirely pointless that the writer pens "for if we sin..." if forsaking the assembly is not a sin. No doubt "for" reaches back to include earlier verses used also, and even introduces a general principle applying to all sin, but it seems quite clear the writer is including verse 25.

It is sometimes reasoned, to *forsake* is to *abandon*, and that the Hebrew writer speaks only of those actually abandoning the church. We do not necessarily object that forsake refers to abandoning. But notice, he writes not of forsaking the church, *but the assembly*. Using the suggested wording, the writer says simply, "Do not abandon the assembly." When an assembly—any assembly—is forsaken, **THAT** assembly is *abandoned*!!

("For if we sin **WILLFULLY**..." etc., is not actually a part of this study, but in explanation, we must assure those who have

forsaken the assembly, that they have not committed an unpardonable sin. The thrust of these words is this: the blood of animal sacrifices made atonement for sin under the Law, rolling sin ahead. The sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ makes atonement for sins under the New Covenant, even abolishing the sin rolled ahead under the Law. The era of animal sacrifices is past. The blood of Jesus is now all that will avail. He who rejects this blood by refusing to obey, can expect no other sacrifice. None will be offered. The sin spoken of is rebellion; that habitually engaged in; an ongoing thing. Verses 28 and 29 show the writer to be speaking of such. After speaking of forsaking, he introduces the hopeless apostate. This perhaps serves as a double warning; the sin of forsaking the assembly often immediately precedes complete apostasy. This seems to be the correlation between verses 25 and 26. This does not change our foregoing reasoning that forsaking the assembly is sin, even though only occasionally done. No one can deny that the same condemnation passed upon habitual sin, falls equally upon sin unrepented of (cf. Luke 13:3, Acts 2:38, 17:30). It is possible to *habitually* OR *occasionally* forsake the assembly. Both are sin. Complete apostasy does not necessarily follow forsaking an assembly, but it may well be the first step. At the first it may be a sin of carelessness, but habitual or regular forsaking is reason enough to conclude that one has openly rejected the last sacrifice for sin humanity will ever know.)

Convenience “Assemblies”

Some, while strongly objecting to forsaking the assembly *per se*, see nothing amiss in forsaking a regular, called assembly of the church, and for their convenience or pleasure simply have the communion in a motel room, on the lake, in the mountains, or wherever. Is this in harmony with plain Bible passages and Christian influence? Is this a violation of the tenor of Heb. 10:25?

First, let us look at this through the eyes of reason and

common sense. If it is lawful (not sinful) for one member to engage in such, it is lawful for *every* member. It would be entirely possible on a pleasant spring Lord's Day to see no one at the meeting house. The same reasoning fits our farmers with crops to plant, cultivate, or harvest, or brethren who simply see Lord's Day as a profitable business day. If one can have his own personal communion service, all can.

Second, what one can do relative to the assembly a particular Lord's Day, can be done *every* Lord's Day. If all practiced this concept, it is conceivable that the church in a given community may never assemble.

Third, while some brethren would not even think of neglecting the regular assembly of the church while at home, somehow, driving a few miles (or a few hundred) changes the issue. But this is unreasonable. What can be done a thousand miles from home, can be done *at home*.

Fourth, if such "assemblies" are lawful for pleasure or convenience, they are certainly lawful for things more necessary (a job, or business for instance). It would thus be pointless to advise brethren against accepting employment on Lord's Day. They would only need arise at 6:30 or 7:00; they and the "missus" could have a little "church" service, and no one has forsaken the assembly. *And the church would literally die in the community.*

Fifth, Matt. 18:20 does not justify convenience church "assemblies." In the first place, many scholars deny that this passage even refers to a church assembly. But if it does, and if "in my name" was intended to convey "by my authority" as is so in Acts 8:16, 16:18, et al., there is NO authorization to forsake the church assembly for our convenience, and have a little personal "church service." Whatever Matt. 18:20 teaches, it could never teach or allow that which is detrimental to the local congregation or one's personal influence, or relegates God to second place in our lives, after pleasure or business.

Sixth, what of the contribution taken at these convenience

“assemblies”? (However, some such assemblies observe only the communion—no other acts of worship.) Most understand the contribution must be attended to *every* Lord’s Day. If it is gathered, where is its destination? Are there plans for its scriptural use? Is it possible to have given to the Lord, into a “church treasury” which we must admit is not a treasury at all, and of which there is not the slightest intention of putting it to scriptural use? Are not the actual intentions to carry it back home to deposit it in a *real* treasury??

Seventh, I fail to see that such “assemblies” even meet a description of what the local church is. If we can establish a few marks of identity found in the local church, we can then compare convenience church “assemblies” to the assembly of the local church and observe the vivid difference. Let us see.

1. The church should never be established in a locale *solely* for personal convenience. It is to offer the world tangible, physical evidence of a group of God-fearing, God-worshipping individuals. The local church is not transient or temporary. Meeting locations may necessarily change, but regular assembly is guaranteed. Not so of convenience “assemblies.” There is not the slightest intention of regular, on-going assemblies.

2. The local church exists to teach or evangelize the area in which it exists. Individuals are invited to attend. The group extends opportunities to the area to hear the gospel by various means. There is a spiritual interest shown in the people of the area. None of this is found in the convenience “assemblies.”

3. The local church has both short and long range plans, vis., developing the abilities of the young men; exercising disciplinary actions when necessary; developing and/or appointing elders or shepherds for the congregation; having gospel meetings, radio programs, or some type of spiritually influential teaching for the community. The local church will plan regular hours for assembly—perhaps including mid-

week services. It provides tracts or vocal information relating to salvation. The convenience “assembly” has no apparent interest outside of meeting the letter-of-the-law regarding communion, etc. —It plans nothing, but is rather the result of business or vacation plans.

4. The local church is *known to exist* in the community. It has identity. It can have no influence at all if the community knows not that it even exists. The churches in Corinth, Galatia, and Ephesus were known, recognized and even written to by the inspired apostle. A convenience “assembly” is totally unrecognizable—unseen and unheard in the community.

It is impossible to parallel the convenience “assembly” with the identifiable local church. The phrase “the work of the church” becomes nonsense when considered in light of them. There is no work in such.

Eighth, the family who practices the “communion at home” (or on the river) concept, and goes picnicking on Lord’s Day, has simply “missed church” in the eyes of the world (and most brethren). Had you earlier invited your neighbors to services, and they attend while you are picnicking, where is your influence? You doubtless have told them of the seriousness and the sacredness of the worship. Can you imagine the confusion of the sinner, attempting to reconcile what you say with what you do (Col. 4:5, Phil. 1:27)?

Ninth, a group of Christians endeavoring to establish a congregation in a given area must not be confused with the convenience “assemblies” under study. Even a group consisting of only two or three, and meeting in a motel room, can have every goal and ambition, certainly every practice of the functioning congregation we have noted. No one objects to a small number—even a single family—nor is there objection to given locations (as the motel room, tent, etc.). The objection is to brethren neglecting to assemble with a loyal congregation for Lord’s Day worship, arranging in its stead an “assembly”

convenient for where *they CHOOSE to be on that day*. If God cannot have *first place* in our lives, *He will have no place*.

Tenth, one of the strongest proofs the convenience “assembly” is not the church of our Lord gathered, was introduced partially under point seven. There is not the slightest plan or intention to perform the work of the church in any fashion except meet for the communion and things related. A church, wherever it meets, whose interests and actions toward the lost is absolutely nil, who has no intentions of influencing those about them to be saved, *cannot* be the church of the New Testament. This describes the convenience “assembly” *exactly*.

Conclusion

King David said, “I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord” (Psa. 122:1). These are the words of pleasure. Every born-again Christian has the inherent responsibility—*from the water’s edge*—to cultivate a love for the assembly. Service and devotion can be offered daily; privately, publickly, wherever. But this is not enough. We must needs gather with our people for praise and worship. Let us encourage each other to gather “when the church assembles.” “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works” (Heb. 10:24).

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

Instrumental Music In Worship

by Malcolm Kniffen

The worship service of the church of Christ is of utmost importance. Believers are commanded to regularly assemble (Heb. 10:25). Many are the examples of the New Testament church doing so (Acts 20:7, 2:42-46, 1 Cor. 14:23). The Scriptures reveal the various items of worship characteristic of the early disciples. God equipped man with a voice, hence during worship, prayers can be uttered, sermons can be preached and songs can be sung. A worship service would not be complete without songs of praise being offered to the Father.

Unlike denominational organizations, the worship services of the church of Christ are not geared toward individual tastes and personal preferences. Each service is conducted “decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). The “ordinances are kept as they were delivered” (1 Cor. 11:2). The church of Christ endorses only those items that are expressly mentioned in the New Testament. We have long contended that no religious matter can be rightly observed if directed by human wisdom alone. In “walking by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7), the church has resolved to observe only those things revealed in Scriptures—to do otherwise would be walking by sight, and consequently be displeasing to God.

Due to this fact, the worship hour of the church of Christ appears to many investigators as a somewhat drab, cut and dried, occasion. When actually those who worship according to “spirit and truth” view the service as something very meaningful and viable.

It is rather obvious to any onlooker that the musical part of

the Lord's church is quite different from the "other churches" of the community. The "shock" comes when the investigator is informed that the piano was purposely omitted from the service.

By reverently and humbly searching the Scriptures, the church has found that instrumental music is not authorized for the worship of the church. Please read the following Scriptures with care, and notice the total silence of mechanical instruments as well as the repeated mention of vocal singing.

"And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30).

"And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God..." (Acts 16:25).

"...For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name. And again he saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with his people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles: and laud him all ye people" (Rom. 15:9-11).

"...I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Cor. 14:15).

"...When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm..." (1 Cor. 14:26).

"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19).

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16).

"...In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee" (Heb. 2:12).

"By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15).

"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray. Is any merry? Let

him sing psalms" (James 5:13).

From these verses it is evident that there is neither command, precept or example for the worship of God by the use of instrumental music during the New Testament dispensation. The God we serve no longer calls for animal sacrifices, incense in worship, human priesthoods, musical instruments, etc. He is well pleased by those who worship Him "in spirit and in truth" by offering up the "Sacrifice of . . . the fruit of their lips."

Singing is a golden language; an emotional way to express our deep feelings to God. Musical instruments can also express feelings of the inner man, as well as have a dramatic effect on the mind of the listener.

It is very obvious when studying this subject that there is a tremendous contrast between the Old and New Testament as far as musical instruments are concerned. There is reference after reference to both vocal and instrumental music in the Old Testament, but the New Testament makes strikingly few mentions of instruments of music. We believe there is reason for the silence on this subject.

Having mentioned both vocal and instrumental music, let us assure each reader that singing is the only music commanded in the New Testament (Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19). "Singing with the piano and the guitar also" is contradictory to the plain statement made by Paul in 1 Cor. 14:15, "I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the understanding also."

Our singing is to consist of: 1. Psalms—A sacred song. 2. Hymns—Songs of adoration aimed toward God. 3. Spiritual songs—Songs with divine meanings. Hence we select a wide variety of songs, i.e. songs of thanksgiving, songs of devotion, as well as prayerful songs.

In placing music in the church we must recognize that it has been divinely inserted by God Himself. We must also realize that a command for one type of music excludes the use of another type. There has never been a law so flagrantly violated

and disregarded as the law of exclusion. A precept from God always includes what is said and excludes what isn't said. Illustrations for this point are replete, such as: (A) Baptism is to be administered in water. We don't have the right to use milk just because the Lord didn't say, "Thou shalt not be baptized in milk." (B) Noah was told to build an ark of gopher wood. We are not sure why this type was commanded, nevertheless, all can see that it did not include pine, mulberry, or any other type tree. When God specified "singing and making melody in the heart," He included the melody of the heart and excluded the melody of anything else.

Historical Information

Not only is there a lack of any references in Scripture to the use of instruments in the New Testament church, but there is ample evidence from history indicating the early church practiced only acappella music. The only references made to instrumental music by historians are the denunciations written against it by some very prominent religious leaders.

The first appearance of instrumental music in a church worship service was around the sixth century when Pope Vitalian I introduced it to the Catholic church. It fractured the unity of this organization, and to this day the Greek Orthodox (Eastern Catholic) still reject the innovation of mechanical instruments to the worship. Not only do the Greek Catholics oppose instruments in worship, but also, German Baptists, Primitive Baptists, The Way, Reformed Presbyterians, Mennonites, at least one group of Jews, and most churches of Christ.

The following quotations represent the best of scholarship on the subject of music in its relationship to ecclesiastical history.

McClintock and Strong: "The Greek word *psallo* is applied among Greeks of modern times exclusively to sacred music, which in Eastern churches has never been any other than vocal, instrumental music being unknown in that church, as it was in the primitive church."

Hugo Leichtentritt, Music, History and Ideas: “Only singing, however, and no playing of instruments, was permitted in the early Christian Church.”

Emil Nauman, The History of Music: “There can be no doubt that originally the music of the divine service was everywhere entirely of a vocal nature.”

Edward Dickinson, History of Music: “The church chant was exclusively vocal.”

John Kurtz, Church History: “At first church music was simple, artless, recitative. But the rivalry of heretics forced the orthodox church to pay greater attention to the requirements of art. Chrysostom had to declaim against the secularization of church music. More lasting was the opposition to the introduction of instrumental accompaniment.”

This is a sample of the evidence which proves beyond doubt that the music of the early church was purely vocal. In the face of New Testament commandments to sing in worship, and viewing historical facts that support this view for many centuries, the church of Christ believes in singing only during the worship services.

Opposed By Religious Leaders

John Calvin (founder of Presbyterianism): “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law.”

Adam Clarke (Methodist commentator): “I am an old man and a minister; and I declare that I never knew them productive of any good in the worship of God; and I have reason to believe that they were productive of much evil. Music, as a science, I esteem and admire; but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music and I here register my protest against all such corruption in worship of the Infinite Spirit who requires his followers to worship him in spirit and in truth.”

John Wesley (founder of the Methodist Church): “I have no opposition to the organ in our chapel provided it is neither seen nor heard.”

Charles Spurgeon (Baptist Minister): “I would as soon to pray to God with machinery as to sing to God with machinery.”

Psallo and Psalms

The only real serious attempt to justify instruments in worship is the argument based on the word *psallo*. The Roman Catholic and Episcopalian churches are the main propagators of this claim. Realizing New Testament authority was needed to uphold their practice, they proffered the “psallo” argument, i.e. “The New Testament says to sing psalms; a psalm means a song sung with accompaniment of musical instruments.” However the premise upon which this doctrine is based is false, therefore its conclusion is false.

1. If psallo means to sing with instrumental accompaniment, then Eph. 5:19 is *demanding* the use of such. There would be no choice in the matter and we could not praise God without them. Most instrumental music advocates are honest enough to admit that one could worship acceptably without instruments. The psallo conclusion is apparently false.

2. At times the word psallo does mean to pluck, pull, twang, etc., such as plucking the strings of an instrument. If we are to know the meaning of the word psallo in the New Testament, we need to also understand the use of the word as it relates to the thing that is plucked. We must study the context. For instance, baptism means immersion or plunging under. Without studying the context we might well conclude to use olive oil instead of water. The context however, proves the latter is intended.

By studying the context where psallo is used, it is obvious that the plucking is not to be accomplished on an instrument but rather upon the chords of our hearts. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms...making melody in your heart...”

When singing, the Christian is making melody (*psallontes*) in his heart to God. Christians are to worship God in spirit, with the instrument of the heart.

God created man in His own image. He accepts the worship of man and not material instruments made by men's hands. Paul told the Athenians that "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands, neither is he worshipped by men's hands, as though he needed anything" (Acts 17:24-25). To attempt to worship God with instruments made and played by men's hands is to attempt to substitute "hands" for the "heart."

3. The word (*psallo*) occurs five times in the New Testament; Rom. 15:9, 1 Cor. 14:15 (used twice here), Eph. 5:19, and James 5:13. Without exception, all standard translations (King James, American Standard, Douay) render *psallo* as "sing, sing psalms, sing praise, make melody." The leading modern versions (Goodspeed, Moffatt, Weymouth) all translate *psallo* the same as the standard translations. The men who gave us these versions are among the world's most competent Greek scholars. If playing on instruments is meant in the word *psallo*, is it not exceedingly strange that they failed to so render it?

Objections

Following are some objections offered to justify instruments.

1. *They were used in the Old Testament.* Answer: Yes, but the New Testament church is not governed by the Old Testament. The Old has been removed that the New might be established (Heb. 10:9). Let those who appeal to the Old Testament to justify any religious matter, be aware of the fact that this would obligate us to accept everything else under the law; polygamy, animal sacrifices, etc. "Tell me ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?" (Gal. 4:21).

2. *The Bible doesn't say not to have instrumental music in the church.* Answer: One comes to this conclusion when failing to realize that the silence of God's Word is just as powerful as its

positive affirmation. Notice: Bread and fruit of the vine are specified for the communion. The command for these two elements excludes everything else. Thus, we automatically understand not to use carrots and papaya juice, even though we are not commanded not to. The religious world has long been divided over what the Bible DOESN'T say. We shall never have unity until we unite on what the Bible DOES say.

3. *There will be music in heaven—why not in the church?*
Answer: The Revelation letter consists of symbolic language. Not only are harps mentioned, but also horses, golden vials, trees, rivers, a sea of glass, etc. In most instances these are to be taken symbolically rather than literally. Do any of our music advocates also contend for horses in the church because of the various horses John saw in heaven? Regardless of what may be in heaven, the message from “heaven” that regulates the church on “earth” specifically commands singing and not playing.

4. *There are no commands for church buildings or songbooks. Isn't instrumental music on par with all of these things?*
Answer: The error here is in failing to understand the difference between an aid and an addition. To have an assembly, a specific place must be designated. In Scripture we see meetings at synagogues, riversides, jails, upper rooms, homes, the temple of God, etc. A meeting place does not violate having an assembly (Heb. 10:25); if anything, it would assist in such. A songbook does not change the command, “sing and make melody in your heart.” It simply aids the singer in having a greater choice of words to use while praising God in song. An instrument offers a different melody than what is commanded. Like the strange fire that Nadab and Abihu offered to the Lord. They were commanded when they dressed the lamps to burn sweet incense of spices on the fire (Exo. 30:7). These two men took incense of their own choosing and then made a further blunder; instead of taking the fire from the altar, which was to be used in offering incense, they took common fire, probably

that with which the flesh of the peace offerings was boiled, and this they made use of in burning incense. Not being holy fire, it was called "strange fire." Nadab and Abihu were killed for this act (Num. 3:4).

5. *Are we not wasting our talent in refusing to play for God?* Answer: If God had asked us to play for him, yes. Most offer this argument without clearly thinking. If we justify instrumental music because of talent being wasted, there would be no end to what could be justified. Mechanics could overhaul cars during the services, cooks could bake pies, artists could draw pictures, etc. Worship is not for the purpose of exploiting one's talent. Our talent should be used only in carrying out what is commanded.

6. *Many of your brethren have instruments in their homes. Why be so opposed to the same in the church?* Answer: This writer has never taken an official stand pro or con concerning instruments away from church gatherings. Some of our brethren seem to think they are perniciously wicked and damnably unholy. I suppose this is their right. The explanation "if it can't be in the church, then it certainly can't be in our homes" is absurd. Notice: It is primarily the law of exclusion that eliminates music from the church, i.e. sing means sing, not play. However, it is expressly commanded for the women to keep silent in the church. Therefore, if they can't speak in the church, they surely couldn't speak in the home. Again, we cannot drink orange juice in the communion service, so we cannot drink it at home. Surely we can see where this line of reasoning would lead.

Others contend that instruments are wrong only when they accompany spiritual songs. This position is far more consistent than the former one. The real issue here is—things morally right can be religiously wrong. There are many activities which we engage in in the home that should not be practiced in the church. Shaving, bathing, exercising, to name a few. These things, though morally right, would become evil if introduced

to the worship. When mechanical instruments are introduced into the worship of the church, it becomes wrong, for the New Testament only authorizes singing.

Conclusion

1. *We have no scriptural authority to do so.* The law of faith (2 Cor. 5:7) governs our Christian walk. In all matters peculiarly religious, we must walk by faith. When one employs something in worship that is not authorized by Christ, he is not walking by faith, for “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God” (Rom. 10:17). In the New Testament there is not a single reference authorizing instrumental music in the worship.

2. *Instrumental music violates the law of worship.* The principle of worship is set forth in John 4:24, “God is a Spirit; and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.” All worship must be according to truth: “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Since God’s Word (truth) gives no commandments or examples for music in worship, we must conclude that it is a violation of law of worship as expressed in John 4:24.

3. *It violates the law of unity.* The introduction of music to the church has caused division in nearly all religious bodies. Most are agreed as to the rightness of singing. There will never be a division over this, we hope! When things foreign to Scripture are forced upon faithful Christians, it becomes a bone of contention and a wedge of division. It violates the law of unity as expressed in 1 Cor. 1:10.

4. *Historical information indicates it was never used in the early church, nor in any religious service for centuries after the death of Christ.*

5. *It is not inherent in the words psalms and psalms, all leading translators and lexicographers agreeing.* The apostles knew Greek, spoke Greek, wrote Greek, and were guided into all truth by the Holy Spirit. When they established churches

they taught them to sing . . . not play.

We trust each student will carefully consider our thoughts and follow the suggestion of the apostle Peter: "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God." This would be the only way to eliminate the division that now reigns in Christendom. Every inspired New Testament writer failed to mention the use of instruments in the church worship, and repeatedly emphasized singing in worship. Can we not safely conclude that singing is the safe and scriptural way? We must be religiously right in the name we wear, the doctrine we preach, and the worship we offer if we expect the God of heaven to be pleased. We must serve Him as "it is written."

Of all the items of worship delivered to the church, only singing is retained in heaven. Not only do we teach and admonish one another in singing, but there is the overflowing and outgoing of the soul to God in homage and love, in admiration and praise. There is no worship in the mere sounding of brass and tinkling of cymbals, insofar as the spiritual man is concerned. Hence, "*Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.*"

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

A Study of the Sunday School Issue

by Darrell Cline

If there is any one issue the church should have never had to face, Sunday School is that issue. I say that because the roots of Sunday School or Bible classes (whichever you prefer to call them) had their beginnings in the denominational world in the middle of the 18th century. For a church whose plea is for a return to New Testament Christianity, this issue should not be one that the church needs to debate.

Sunday School began as a benevolent work of an evangelical businessman in Gloucester, England. Superficially, it appears to be a good work, but in reality it has become a monster that has swallowed the church. What started out said to be a work of the church, has come to be equated with church worship. How many times have you heard the question, "Did you go to Sunday School today?" Instead of, "Did you go to church today?" With many, the worship service has been replaced by Sunday School.

The plea of the early restorers and ourselves is, "Let's speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." To a very large extent, this plea has fallen on deaf ears in this century. With dismay, we have seen the introduction of one innovation after another, of which Sunday School is one.

The Origin of Sunday School

Since Sunday School cannot be found in the entire Bible, we must go to historical sources among secular records to find its origin.

Sunday School, and its observances, usually connected with the protestant churches, may have originated as early as the

1500's. Most give credit to Robert Raikes (1735-1811), of Gloucester, England for founding the modern Sunday School movement.¹ His was the first systematic effort to reach the poor and unschooled with Christian teaching.² Although Sunday School is now a world wide ecumenical phenomenon, it still reflects its protestant, Anglo-American origin.³

All sources agree that the movement in America was devoted solely to religious instruction. Some of the New England colonies had classes for the children between the church services, often in the mid-afternoon. There were no regular Sunday Schools, however, until after the Revolution. In 1786, Francis Asbury, the first Methodist Bishop in America, founded a Sunday School in Hanover county Virginia. Four years later the Methodist church adopted the promotion of Sunday School as a general policy.⁴

Sunday School in the Church of Christ

It was not until the 1850's that Sunday School gained any kind of a hold in the churches of Christ and these were patterned after those of the Methodist . . . with certain modifications.⁵

I want to emphasize again, we are talking about the worship of the church which Sunday School has so often become a part of. There are examples of small groups being taught the Scriptures in the New Testament, but they never involve the public assembling of the church as Sunday School does.

Let's look at what Mr. William Banowsky, president of Oklahoma University has to say: "While long granting that one of the most vital sources of edification was through the systematic study of the Bible, churches of Christ were very slow to organize Sunday Schools in their local congregations. In 1786, just three years after Great Britain declared the thirteen colonies to be free and independent, the first Sunday School was started this side of the Atlantic."⁶

"The Sunday School got off to a belated start among the

disciples. In the first years, the Restoration movement was nurtured almost exclusively by evangelistic preaching. No need for Sunday School was felt.⁷

“Because of the close ties between the Sunday School movement and denominationalism, the disciples assumed an early posture of belligerent opposition. ‘I have for some time,’ wrote Alexander Campbell in 1824, ‘viewed both Bible societies and Sunday School as a sort of recruiting establishment to fill up the ranks of those sects which take the lead in them.’⁸

“By 1850 however, the Sunday School movement had gained a strong foothold among the more progressive congregations. And while refusing to align themselves with the Sunday School Union, the conservatives also slowly followed suit.”⁹

One thing is for certain; Sunday School was not a part of the early church. Rarely can one find such unanimous agreement among secular writers as is found on this subject. Without exception, all attribute its beginnings to Mr. Raikes in 1780.

Many try to disassociate their present day Sunday School from the afore-mentioned beginnings. Since Sunday School did not have its foundation in the Bible, and was not a part of the early church, it is clear where it came from. A few years ago brethren knew. Within the last twenty-five years the *Gospel Advocate* advertised in their Sunday School and church supplies a certificate of attendance which has a picture of Robert Raikes in the upper left corner, with the inscription below, “Robert Raikes, founder of Sunday School, 1780.” The brethren who introduced Sunday School into the church of Christ were at least honest with themselves about its beginning, even though it was an error to introduce it into the church.

In the November, 1983 issue of the *Firm Foundation* (a “Sunday School” publication) there was an appeal to return to the “old Jerusalem gospel.”¹⁰ How can we possibly do that when brethren insist that we must accept that which began

1750 years after the Jerusalem gospel?

A Modern Ox Cart

During the Mosaical era, one of the most important items in the tabernacle was the “ark of the covenant” (cf. Exo. 25:10-22). This rectangular box, with the mercy seat and cherubims atop, contained, among other things, Aaron’s rod that budded and the tables of stone (the ten commandments). It was extremely important and sacred, housed in the Holiest of Holies in the tabernacle. In Num. 3:30, we learn that it was the charge of the Kohathites (a particular line of Levites, Num. 3:17) to care for and transport the ark. The ark was constructed with rings at the top corners so that staves could be placed in them to carry it. Keep in mind the manner in which God desired the ark to be carried.

On one occasion when Israel was locked in conflict with the Philistines, it seemed they would suffer defeat if something didn’t happen to turn the battle around. It was decided that the ark should be brought to the scene of the battle. “Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the Lord out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hands of our enemies” (1 Sam. 4:3). Israel thought the ark might be what was needed to turn the tide, and it did seem to help for a time, but eventually Israel was defeated and lost the ark to the Philistines, whose god was Dagon.

The Philistines took the ark to the city of Ashdod and placed it in the house of Dagon. The next morning when they came to worship, they found Dagon fallen to the ground on his face before the ark of the Lord. They set their idol upright only to find him in worse shape the next morning, with his head and hands severed from the body. All sorts of other problems began to befall the Philistines and it soon became apparent that the ark was causing them far more harm than good. So, they decided to send it back home to Israel (1 Sam. 5).

They made a *new cart* and hooked two milk cows to it. The

ark was then stored at Gibeah in the house of Abinadab for some twenty years, until King David determined to bring it to its rightful place. He also had a *new cart* built, just as the Philistines had done, and sent Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab to fetch the ark home. But when they came to a rough spot in the road, they were afraid the ark would fall and be broken to pieces, so Uzzah reached forth his hand to steady it and God's anger was kindled against Uzzah and "God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God" (2 Sam. 6:7). "David was afraid of the Lord that day, and said, How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" Later he realized God had a method for transporting the ark (1 Chron. 15:2, 13); that it was to be *carried on the shoulders of the sons of Kohath* rather than on an ox cart. "None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the Lord chosen to carry the ark of God . . ."

By traditional standards, Uzzah didn't do anything wicked or sinful. I said, by *traditional standards*, but according to God's standards, Uzzah committed a sin worthy of death. By God's standards, when one sins, it is no small matter. Even though Uzzah was following the king's request, he was to suffer the consequences of his own disobedience. Did the punishment fit the sin? If you believe that God is a just God, as I do, then you know it did.

What was the sin? It goes back to the method of transporting the ark. It was to be carried on the shoulders of Kohath's sons, not on an ox cart. David even had a new cart constructed just for this purpose. But did Uzzah die simply because they used the wrong method of transporting the ark? That's exactly why Uzzah died, that and his sin in touching it, for they "sought him not after the due order" (1 Chron. 15:13).

But, the Philistines had used the ox cart and it worked fine for them. *It sure did!* Friend, just because something may work for the denominational world, and appears even to enhance their work and worship, does not mean that we can follow

them. If denominations practice unauthorized methods of worship, they have only added one more error to what they have already been practicing. The church cannot practice anything unless authorized by the scriptures and I can assure you that Sunday School is not authorized.

As David was to learn that it was NOT a little thing to change God's mode of transporting the ark, we need to learn that *it is no small thing to change the method of assembly in our worship of Him*. There was nothing inherently wrong or wicked with ox carts, but when implemented in place of God's Will they became wrong, enough so to evoke God's wrath and cause a man to lose his life.

So it is with the church and the Sunday School movement. Man observed the ways of the Philistines (denominations) and saw that which appeared to be working for them. It looks good—nothing evil or wicked about studying the Bible—so let's change the worship to include this ox cart that looks so innocent. The worship was changed, the assembly divided into smaller groups; thus, Sunday School was born. Over 1750 years after the church was established, this innovation was introduced with neither command nor example from God's Holy Writ.

We contend that people can, as they did in the seventeen centuries preceding the Sunday School, learn God's Word just as well in one assembly as they can divided into classes. Surely God's wisdom in this matter is more acceptable than modern man's.

One Assembly in the Old Testament

As we carefully examine the Old Testament, we learn that the class method of arranging the assembly was not practiced. When God gave instructions to His people concerning the teaching of the Law, He said, "Gather the people *together*, men, women, and children and thy stranger that is within thy gates, that they may learn, and fear the Lord your God, and

observe to do all the words of this law. And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the Lord your God” (Deut. 31:12-13). When they were gathered TOGETHER all could learn, and *did* learn, including the children. I realize that these people were not living in the 20th century, but they did seem to have more respect for God’s Word than we do. It was God, our God, who knew that they could learn together, even the children assembled with adults. The writer even points out, “. . . that their children, *which have not known anything*, may hear and learn . . .”

Notice how Joshua read the Law to ALL the congregation of Israel, as Moses had done before him. In Joshua 8:35 we read, “there was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before ALL the congregation of Israel, with the women and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them.” Again we notice that the little ones and men and women learned *together*. It seems to be only the wisdom (?) of modern men that has determined that people must be divided into groups in order to learn God’s Word.

Nehemiah 8:1 says, “And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel.” Apparently, it was yet believed that people could learn together as one during the days of Ezra the scribe. We *still* believe that people can learn together today in the assembly of the church. There has never been evidence to the contrary!

One Assembly in the New Testament

Those who were devout Jews had kept the worship as it had originally been given, and were used to going to the synagogue and assembling together for worship.¹¹ When the church was established, those who obeyed the gospel and began to worship, were familiar with only one way of assembly. The assembling *together* was the only method they were acquaint-

ted with. If a divided assembly were to be used, it would be necessary to have some instruction from inspiration. None can be found in the entire New Testament.

When Paul spoke of teaching, he mentioned the two areas where it is engaged in—public and private. They are all-inclusive. “I kept back nothing...and have taught you publicly, and from house to house” (Acts 20:20). We are, for the purpose of this study, only concerned with the “public” teaching.

In Hebrews 10:25, we are commanded not to forsake the “assembling of ourselves *together*.” How can people so carelessly deny this plain truth and divide into classes? In Acts 20:7, we read where the disciples came *together* to break bread. You will remember that Paul preached to them on this occasion, while they were assembled together in public assembly. In 1 Cor. 14:23 we have instruction along the same lines. When the “whole church be come *together*” we are to have order and speak one at a time, etc. Again we find instructions for assembling *together*, but *never* instruction for a class arrangement. In Acts 11:26 we find where Barnabas and others “assembled themselves with the church” for a year and taught the people.

In fairness to the Scriptures, all would have to agree that the New Testament is completely silent when it comes to giving instructions for classes. Secular history bears out the fact that classes are a recent innovation, and as such should not interest the church at all. Our concern is with the worship service that God ordained which was used for centuries. People were able to learn and were converted by the multitudes with this form of assembly.

Private Home Teaching

There has always been parental responsibility to teach God’s Will to our children in our homes. Deut. 6:6-8 says, “And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine

heart and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house and when thou walkest by the way and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” Can we see the wisdom of this command to Israel? Our children are able to see what is really important to us by what we talk about. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). If we love God, and want our children to do the same, then we are going to have to spend much time with them in the privacy of the home, teaching them. Realizing that many parents have and are failing in this area does not give the church the right to change the worship to fill the void, no more than the sisters have the right to fill the pulpit in the main assembly if the brethren are deficient in teaching.

We do not live under the Old Testament in this age and do not intend to leave that impression. We have taken you to Moses’ Law for two reasons. (1.) To show God’s displeasure with those who disregard His will, as in the case of Uzzah and (2.) to show that the class arrangement of the assembly was never authorized by God; not in the Old Testament nor, as we shall see, in the New.

New Testament Pattern

The Jewish synagogue simply means an “assembly or congregation.”¹² The word synagogue is of Greek origin, but we are aware that the Jewish people met in one assembly as we have noted the commands of God earlier in this study. When the New Testament church was established in Jerusalem (A.D. 33), the Christians were familiar with this arrangement of gathering. We are able to find both command and example for the one undivided assembly as the early disciples practiced (Heb. 10:25, 1 Cor. 14:23).

You notice that the RESTORERS who took the Bible as their only guide, desiring to restore New Testament Christianity, did not have classes in their assembly (see ref. note 8). They fought

it as an innovation, not as a part of the original plan.

Command to Assemble Together

Hebrews 10:25 says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves TOGETHER as the manner of some is . . .” and verse 26, “For if we sin willfully . . .” Now, if you couple this with 1 Cor. 14:23, it is clear that we are to assemble ourselves *together* as the *whole* church, coming *together* in one place. Paul (if he be the writer of Hebrews) gives as clear a command as we can ever hope to find that we forsake not the assembling TOGETHER. This is a command, and for this reason we are grieved when our brethren, in open disregard for God’s Word, divide the “gathering” into unauthorized classes.

Example

Of course it goes without saying, that when the Bible uses the word “together,” it does not mean divided into classes. The Bible teaches by example that people can learn together, without needing to separate into classes.

In Acts 14:27, of Paul and Barnabas we read, “And when they were come, and had gathered the church *together*, they rehearsed all that God had done with them . . .” We conclude that people were able to learn together, because we have examples where they did.

Another example is found in 1 Cor. 11:18; “First of all, when ye come *together* in the church . . .” Again, the church came together. Paul, inspired of the Holy Spirit, saw no need for classes in the assembly arrangement. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came *together* to break bread, Paul preached unto them . . .” (Acts 20:7).

Now, in the whole Bible, there is only one example of the communion service being observed (Acts 20:7). This example shows the church assembly *together*. Yet, even though it is a simple example and recorded only once, almost without exception, churches of Christ assemble *together* to partake of

the communion. This is the scriptural way, but our point is that if we can agree on this item of worship being taken TOGETHER, why can we not agree on the Sunday School issue when there are many more scriptures to sustain our contention that we not divide the teaching assembly into classes.

The entire chapter of 1 Cor. 14 deals with the church as a whole coming together, and how the teaching is to be done. For Sunday School we have no example or command, yet we have both for the whole church coming together into one assembly where the men, women and children learn together.

Problems Resulting from Class Segregation

It's important that we understand that Sunday School has caused far more problems than it has solved. Isn't error always like that? Honest proponents of the class method of dividing the assembly will tell you that they (classes) have been the source of problems for many years. Following, we will attempt to list just a few.

(1.) Women have been chosen as teachers in many cases; this is an undeniable fact. Now brethren know enough Bible to know that women are commanded to remain silent in the teaching of the church. The teaching is to be done by the men alone. 1 Cor. 14 has particular reference to the teaching service. Some Sunday School brethren have concluded that it is alright for women to teach children, but not the men. Where in the Bible do they get this rule? The women will generally teach only children up to the age of about twelve years. Since this varies from place to place, it's very hard to have complete agreement on this issue, especially since the Bible does not address it, except to condemn it. The problem is in trying to determine what rule they should abide by. If the classes be private, as some claim, then it's perfectly right and scriptural for women to teach men (cf. Acts 18:26). If, on the other hand, classes are public, then women may not teach at all, not even

children (cf. 1 Tim. 2:11-12, 1 Cor. 14:34-35). This is a problem that has long been debated among the Sunday School brethren themselves. Rather than solving problems, more division has resulted.

(2.) Today, muppets and puppets are used to teach the young children in the class. I fail to see how the seriousness of God's Will and the sacredness of Christ's sacrifice can be proclaimed by "Timmy Turtle" or "Kermit the Frog." Go into a church of Christ book store and see for yourself; I am not making up tales. Here is a catalogue description of one of the hand puppets. "Children squeal with delight when Timmy shows up! He fits right in with the other puppet friends."¹³ With children "squealing with delight" and Timmy Turtle narrating the Gospel, how much learning the Bible do you suppose takes place?

(3.) Although classes are to be under the oversight of the elders, in many cases they are unable to even keep an eye on the class. Why, you ask? Because when a woman teaches and a man is present in the class, she is said to be in violation of the scripture that prohibits the woman from usurping authority over the man. Think of the situation the classes have created.

(4.) Many a grieved mother and father have shed tears and spent sleepless nights because a son or daughter adopted the charismatic attitudes they were taught in the class, while separated from mom and dad. The parents encouraged the children to listen to the teacher and learn, and learn they did... but what?? I am not saying that the elders approved of the teaching of such, but all too often in the segregated class, the teacher has taught his/her false doctrine before it is brought out in the open. Paul warned us to beware, "lest grievous wolves enter in among you not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29). It might be good to read the next couple of verses too. We have a responsibility to know what our children are taught and this *cannot* be done when they are taught by someone else away from our presence. The scenario I just mentioned has

happened many, many times and honest brethren will tell you this is true.

(5.) If you are going to divide into classes to teach, how do you classify? By age or IQ? Or do you classify by spiritual maturity or physical maturity? Typically, children are classified by age and adults by certain other criteria. Let's take a class of twelve year old children and look at the problems of age classification. Now the purpose is to group so the students can best learn. In this twelve year old class, you have children who have been baptized and are needing to learn about Christian development. You have in the same class some who are not interested in obeying the gospel and are there only because their folks insist. You have some who have been in a class since they were babies, and some are there for the first time. Now, be honest—have you really gained anything over assembling the whole church together? In the final analysis, nothing has been gained but problems.

(6.) Perhaps the worst abuse is the one we are about to introduce. Some (in fact many) are going to classes and skipping the services of the church altogether. This is a fact. Too much has been written in various journals and concerned brethren have confided this very problem to me. In many places, after the classes are dismissed, the members go to the main auditorium for the communion service and after this the preaching, contributing, singing, etc. Many are leaving after the communion and never return until the following Sunday. More than a few Sunday School congregations have Wednesday evening Bible classes in place of a worship service. Yes, worship is coming in second place to the classes that man introduced under the guise of *helping* (?) the church.

We have long promoted the church as the blood bought institution that Christ died for. We tell others that the church IS important, but by the actions of church members, the reverse is being taught, classes have taken over. I am not saying that all approve, nor am I saying that the elders and preachers in the

places where this occurs approve. I am saying that this IS happening and it is not just in some isolated places. It is very wide spread, and is an obvious evil.

I have only mentioned a few problems that are encountered when one follows a practice not authorized by Scripture. There are untold problems that we never learn of until they have reached full maturity. Our brethren then become alarmed and begin talking to us about them. When we mentioned earlier that classes have become a monster that is swallowing the church, we were not exaggerating.

Arguments Refuted

Over the years, brethren have presented many arguments in an attempt to sustain this unlawful and unauthorized practice. We wish to look at a few.

One of the things that we need to get clearly before us is that classes are NOT a method of teaching, but are a method of arranging the assembly. We can sit in the class for hours and not be taught a thing unless some method of teaching is used. Classes divide and arrange the assembly.

Probably, we need to emphasize again that studying the Bible is not evil or wicked. What possible evil could come of studying the Bible any place at any time? What possible wrong could have been found in transporting the ark on the ox cart? What is evil about an ox cart? Nothing. The wrong is in using something as opposed to what God has commanded. God's anger was poured out on Israel because of their transgression in not "seeking God after the due order." When we are commanded to assemble together but choose—for whatever reason—to divide into classes, violating what God has asked us to do; we should all be able to see the danger.

(1.) "We are given the command to teach in *Matt. 28:20* and *Eph. 3:8-12*." One brother has said that "to teach" includes or authorizes the means and details whereby it may be accomplished. We have no great qualms with this, *but we are*

talking about the assembly of the church. We are taught how to both TEACH AND ASSEMBLE. (Reread the previous paragraphs.)

(2.) *"Bible classes are the expedient way to teach people."* We get into the area of expediency which is a very broad subject within itself. I simply want to deal with it this way: If we choose to do something based on expediency, we cannot violate the Scripture to do it. Classes, although said to be expedient, are in violation to the commands and examples we have for the assembly. For anything to be expedient, it must first be lawful.

(3.) *"But the Bible does not say we CANNOT have classes."* Those who seek to follow the Bible have long held to the motto, "Let's speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." We have all preached the need to hearken to the silence of the Scriptures. The church has never based her authorization on "what is not condemned." This idea very nearly conforms to Martin Luther's law of inclusion; that no doctrine should be rejected unless specifically forbidden by the Scripture.

(4.) *"Our classes are private."* If your classes are private, why do you only allow the sisters to teach children and not men? Where a woman can teach a child, she can also teach a man (Acts 18:26). If your classes are private, why are they advertised on the sign in front of the building, and in the newspapers, etc.? Friend, all Sunday School classes are open to the public. In fact, this is the whole purpose behind their use; to attract people. I have never heard of a person being refused entrance into a class.

Conclusion

We desire to be united with all brethren of the church. Division is wrong because the Bible condemns it. The Cause has been hindered and souls are lost because confusion and competition prevails within the church. Outsiders quickly

become disinterested if they think there is disagreement among brethren.

Those of us who are continuing to assemble without dividing into classes, are simply following the pattern that is as old as the "Jerusalem church." The division that followed the introduction of classes must be laid at the feet of those who introduced the innovation. Those who cling to truth can never be blamed with causing division.

The Scriptures have always been taught to men, women and children assembled together. They have always been able to learn together. They still can. The need to divide into classes is a fabricated need, not a real one.

The Sunday School was introduced by Robert Raikes of Gloucester, England, and not by the apostles who were inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Classes have not been a cure-all for teaching. Actually, they have created more problems than they have solved.

In spite of all the arguments for classes, they do not stand in light of the Scriptures. Our soul stands in jeopardy to have any part of them.

Every brother will agree that we do not have to have classes. If this be true, then let's unite on a "Thus saith the Lord" and assemble *together* as the Bible teaches.

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

The Lord's Supper

by Delton Cogburn

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom” (Matt. 26:26-29).

Purpose of the Supper

Knowing the frailty and forgetfulness of man, our Lord realized the importance of establishing a memorial by which we are regularly reminded of him. We can see his wisdom in the giving of something so practical as a loaf of unleavened bread and a cup of pure fruit of the vine. These were, and are, items within the reach of the human race universally. The value of observing this divine ordinance is never to be underestimated by Christians.

Both Luke (Luke 22:19) and Paul (1 Cor. 11:24-25) agree in their records that the primary purpose of this supper is to be in remembrance of Christ. Jesus emphasized strongly, “except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye HAVE NO LIFE IN YOU” (John 6:53). As the fleshly body is soon lifeless without literal food, so is the soul of man lifeless without this spiritual food. By eating his flesh and drinking his blood, symbolically, our inner being is kept alive and healthy spiritually. We are able to participate in “the bread of life” and “the bread which came down from heaven” as we eat and

drink of this sacred memorial. To the individual who takes into his hands and to his lips the elements of this supper with faith and love and warm devotion, it is a means not only of memory, but of loving contact with Jesus Christ. To a stranger, to an unbeliever, to a mocker, it would be nothing. To a lover of Christ it is a way to the presence of Christ.

Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:16, "The cup of blessing which we bless; is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" W. E. Vine, Strong's and several different translations render "communion" in this verse as participation or sharing in the body and blood of Christ. Hence, by our observance of this supper in faith, we become joint participants and sharers together in the body and blood of our Redeemer. Vine further says, "A having in common." The common or mutual interest we then have in this memorial should weave Christian believers together with Christ as well as with one another. We become joint partakers of the benefits of the body and blood of Christ in observing this ordinance.

From the tenor of Paul's writing in both chapters ten and eleven of 1 Corinthians, it is apparent that the Corinthian church witnessed a major problem regarding the supper. There were those who were more concerned about their common meals and were evidently in no condition to observe this supper with the reverence and understanding due it. The apostle indicates there were many weak and sickly, and even sleepers in their midst because of unconcern. There should be no question in the mind of an individual who loves and seeks God out of a pure heart as to his duty when he takes a portion of the bread and fruit of the vine into his bosom. This should be perhaps one of the most sacred moments in the Christian's life; a moment of quiet and serene meditation; a time when the disciplined mind can co-mingle with Christ's suffering, and yet rejoice in his victory over death. It is a place (as well as the entire worship service) where we must capture our utmost

devotions and yield our very beings to him by whose stripes we are healed. Anything less is incurring judgment and damnation upon our thoughtless souls. We are guilty of mockery and vanity in our service to God and our conscience should allow us no rest. Caution must be continually exercised lest formality and habitual tendencies prevail over the sincere mind, and we fail in discerning the Lord's body and blood.

Observance of the communion points: *Backward* to the life and death of Christ, "This do in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24); *Inward* to the very heart of man, "Let a man examine himself" (1 Cor. 11:28); *Forward* to the coming of Christ, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Pattern of the Original Institution

**Matt. 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:17-20,
1 Cor. 11:23-28**

Jesus instructed Peter and John to go into the city and make preparation for them to eat the Passover supper. Matthew and Mark indicate the disciples were looking forward to this supper with some degree of anxiety by asking Jesus where he desired to eat it. Luke records Jesus as saying, "*with desire* I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (22:15). Perhaps his desire to eat the Passover was an example for us to desire to eat his supper. Reason would tell us that freedom from Egypt would be the main theme at the Passover feast, but Christ had something more in mind at the conclusion of this particular passover. This ordinance is to us the passover supper by which commemoration is celebrated of a much greater deliverance than that of Israel out of Egypt.

The elements used in the Lord's institution of his supper were elements readily at hand at the Passover feast. First, there was the bread. All four recordings of the supper simply state that Jesus took bread and blessed it (or gave thanks), he brake it, and Matthew, Mark and Luke say he then gave it to the

disciples. Paul also indicates it was given to them. From this we learn he took literal bread, he blessed it, he brake it (brake implies eating), he gave it to them with instructions to eat it and an explanation as to the meaning of it. We ought to be able to understand what Jesus did and meant easily enough in regard to the bread.

Second, there was the cup of blessing. All four recordings say that he took the cup. Matthew, Mark and Luke all say he gave thanks for it; Matthew and Mark say he gave it to them; Matthew relates "drink ye all of it" (26:27); Mark says "they all drank of it" (14:23); Luke, "Take this and divide it among yourselves" (22:17). Matthew, Mark and Luke all imply the cup had a drink element in it, namely the fruit of the vine. In these passages we learn Jesus took a single, literal cup, with literal fruit of the vine in it; he blessed it and gave it to the disciples with instructions to drink of it and an explanation as to what it meant. Again we say, we ought to be able to understand what Jesus meant and what he did.

In consideration of anything so meaningful and sacred as the Lord's Supper, it goes without question that participants of it ought to be vitally concerned about the original pattern given by our Lord. The child of God who is true to his calling needs to understand the importance of following as closely as possible the example of Christ in this memorial supper. We would do well to have complete confidence that Jesus, in his wisdom, was (and is) able to formulate this supper to his choosing. Jesus knew of any and all implications of this supper and man should not fret himself worrying about microbes and/or diseases. Peter, like many modern folks, felt as though he was about to perish too! His problem was he began to doubt and lose confidence while walking on the water. The words of Jesus to Peter still apply; "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" (Matt. 14:28-31).

The original pattern of the Lord's Supper did not, does not and will not need any improvements (?) thereupon. It is a

perpetual ordinance that needs no amendments added.

What Constitutes the Lord's Supper?

1. BREAD: "Jesus took bread" (Matt. 26:26) The supper was instituted while Christ and his disciples were eating the Passover supper. The Israelites were strictly commanded to have all leaven out of their houses and to eat the passover lamb with *unleavened bread* (Exo. 12). We then can understand the bread used by Christ in his supper would of necessity be unleavened bread.

In the Passover, they were to take a lamb without blemish. Christ (without sin), our passover (1 Cor. 5:7), was also referred to as "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The passover lamb was to be eaten *whole* in each household without any bones broken (John 19:36). We do not question the oneness unit of the Passover lamb. Likewise, we should not question the oneness unit of the Lamb of God who said, "This is my body" (Matt. 26:26). There should be no doubt that that which Jesus took in his supper was one unit. If bread equals a single body, then that body should equal a single bread for each assembled group.

Matthew, Mark, Luke and Paul all say Jesus took bread and *broke* it. Now it shouldn't be too hard to see that Jesus wanted the disciples to do what he had just done. Luke and Paul quote him as saying, "This do." So, whatever Jesus had done, this he expected them to do. It stands to reason then, that whatever the disciples did on this occasion is what the Lord had done. Paul tells us "The bread which we break," and "We are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Cor. 10:16-17). Also consider the breaking of bread in Acts 2:42 and Acts 20:7.

It is preposterous to say Jesus broke the loaf of bread in or about the middle. It creates an impossibility for the disciples to do what he did if this were true. This would also necessitate someone breaking the bread twice in the communion service, a thing unheard of as far as Scripture is concerned. The modern

trend of many brethren who use “individual loaves” is so far from truth there is no semblance to the original as instituted by the Lord. The violence this does to the foregoing scriptures is overwhelming even to the casual reader.

Controversy exists over Paul’s statement: “This is my body which is *broken* for you” (1 Cor. 11:24). Firstly, many translations omit *broken* in this verse completely. Some simply say, “This is my body which is *given* for you.” Secondly, Luke 22:19 (a companion account to Paul’s) says, “This is my body which is *given* for you.” Hence, “broken body” and “given body” must mean essentially the same thing. In his death Christ’s body was broken (but not severed, John 19:36), and his body was given. Of the blood, Matthew, Mark and Luke all record “which is shed.” The officiant at the Lord’s Supper can no more *break* the Lord’s body than he can *give* his body or *shed* his blood. He could just as easily shed the fruit of the vine for it to represent the Lord’s blood as he could to break the loaf for it to represent the Lord’s body.

2. FRUIT OF THE VINE: “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine . . .” (Matt. 26:29). It is apparent that fruit of the vine was the drink readily at hand, and this Jesus chose to represent his blood which was soon to be shed for the remission of sins. Deut. 32:14 speaks of “Drinking the pure blood of the grape.” What better fruit of the vine could Jesus have chosen to represent his blood than the pure blood of the grape? Question—how could any blood of the grape which has gone through the process of fermentation be considered anything close to being *pure*? We can rest assured that the blood of Christ was pure, and how fitting it is that he would in turn choose something pure to represent his pure blood.

Isaiah says, “Thus saith the Lord, as the NEW wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it . . .” (Isa. 65:8). The Amplified Old Testament renders new wine in this verse as grape juice. New wine is not fermented wine, but the pure blood of the grape. Paul speaks of “the cup

of blessing” (1 Cor. 10:16) and Isaiah says a blessing is in that which comes from the cluster—new wine. Thus, we conclude the drink element used in the Lord’s Supper to be unfermented fruit of the grape vine.

It is interesting to note, in regard to the *fruit* of the vine as used by the Lord, that he chose the Greek word *gennema*, which means offspring or produce. Some versions render this word as “product of the vine.” Now, fermented wine is not a product of the vine, but rather a by-product. The grape vine does not produce fermented, intoxicating, leavened wine!!

From the book, *Bible Wines and the Laws of Fermentation*, by William Patton, D.D., we quote the following authorities:

Sir Humphry Davy, in his *Agricultural Chemistry*, says of alcohol, “It has never been found ready formed in plants.” Count Chaptal, the great French chemist, says, “Nature never forms spirituous liquors; she rots the grape upon the branches, but it is art which converts the juice into (alcoholic) wine.”

Professor Turner, in his *Chemistry*, affirms the non-natural character of alcohol. “It does not exist ready formed in plants, but is a product of the vinous fermentation—a process which must be initiated, superintended, and, at a certain state, arrested by art.” Dr. Henry Monroe, of England, lecturer on medical jurisprudence, says “Alcohol is nowhere to be found in any product of nature, was never created by God, but is essentially an artificial thing prepared by man through the destructive process of fermentation.” The noted commentator Albert Barnes said, “The wine of Judea was the pure juice of the grape, without any mixture of alcohol, and commonly weak and harmless. It was the common drink of the people and did not tend to produce intoxication.”

Reason alone should instruct us that Jesus would not choose something so vile that it is called a mocker (“wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise,” Prov. 20:1) to portray his pure and sinless blood. It would also seem markedly strange that since leaven was

forbidden in the Passover feast, that he would allow fermented (leavened) drink at his supper. What we commonly know in our day as wine is not the pure blood of the grape, but rather a by-product. Note that Isaiah said the *new wine* is in the *cluster*. Of the fruit of the vine Jesus said, "This is my blood in the New Testament which is shed for many" (Matt. 26:28). Symbolically speaking, as the bread was his body, he declared the drink element to be his blood. The benefits of this blood being shed are very numerous and Jesus desires that we participate in it with clean hands and a pure heart.

Since the early years of this century, many religious battles have been and are yet being fought over what Jesus did, what he meant and what his instructions were regarding the drink element in his supper. Actually, it seems unthinkable that so much controversy should arise over something so simple as that which he gave concerning this ordinance.

It is not hard for the unbiased student to see what Jesus did when the record said "He took the cup and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying drink ye all of it" (Matt. 26:27). We can know he took a volume of the fruit of the vine and gave it to the disciples. Of necessity, this volume was in some kind of a container. In this case the container was named as a literal cup. If, as is argued by some, the cup is here used figuratively, the fruit of the vine must also be figurative. Just as you cannot have the fruit of the vine figurative, you cannot have the container figurative. Who would argue that the fruit of the vine which Christ used was figurative? If one is literal, both must be literal. If one is figurative, both must be figurative.

Evidence shows the volume our Lord took was undivided. "Take this, and divide it among yourselves" (Luke 22:17). Note that Jesus did not say, take this which I or someone else has divided for you. It stands out that what he took was undivided; what he gave thanks for was undivided; what he gave to the disciples was undivided, with a command for them to take this undivided volume and divide it themselves. It is

difficult to understand how his language could have been more plain.

What were the disciples to do with this volume of the fruit of the vine? Matthew records, "Drink ye all of it"; Mark says, "They all drank of it," and Luke quotes, "Divide it among yourselves." When they all drank of it, they divided it among themselves. When they divided it among themselves, they all drank of it! The *New World* translation renders: Matthew, "Drink out of it, all of you"; Mark, "They all drank out of it"; and Luke, "Take this and pass it from one to the other among yourselves."

3. CUP OF BLESSING: "He took the cup" (Matt. 26:27). Did Jesus literally take a literal cup (drinking vessel) into his hands? It seems clear enough to the unbiased that a literal drinking vessel called a cup was the thing the Lord took, and yet there are those who are hesitant to admit this is what he took. *Moffatt's* translation says, "And he took a cup which was handed to him." Inspiration plainly dictates the truth on this matter. In all four recordings of the supper it is said, "He took the cup." He gave thanks and gave IT to them and they all drank of IT. That this literal cup contained the literal fruit of the vine should afford no controversy, as they could not drink something that was not literal and they definitely could not have a literal fruit of the vine in a non literal, thus non existent container.

Young's Analytical Concordance, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance*, and *W. E. Vine* all render "cup" as used in the Lord's Supper, a literal drinking vessel. It comes from the Greek word *poterion*, which they say means a drinking vessel. If these scholars be true (and they are) in their definition of the cup which Jesus took, who is the man who will deny both the words of Inspiration and the authority of these scholars? With this conclusion the Scriptures harmonize, but the folly of man's reasoning is clearly seen in the turmoil of trying to make the container figurative and the fruit of the vine literal. It cannot be

done.

Thayer's Greek/English Lexicon says of Luke 22:20 and 1 Cor. 11:25: "The meaning is, this cup containing wine, an emblem of blood is rendered by the shedding of my blood, an emblem of the new covenant" (p. 15). Mr. Thayer says, "this cup containing wine." If it contained wine (a liquid), of necessity it had to have sides and a bottom. Thus we see how unreasonable is the logic of those who try to do away with the literal usage of the drinking vessel as used by our Lord. Mr. Thayer goes on to say on page 533, "A cup, a drinking vessel" (Matt. 26:27, Mark 14:23, Luke 22:17-20, 1 Cor. 11:25,28). He further gives on page 510 in regard to Matt. 26:27, Mark 14:23, and 1 Cor. 11:28, "The vessel out of which one drinks." It is our conviction that we can very well know what Jesus grasped in his hands and gave to his disciples, simply by reading the four accounts of his establishing this memorial supper, without having to prove the meaning of the cup as used by him.

To say that Jesus had in mind a figurative drinking vessel in his supper is a serious error. Some go to Mark 10:39 to illustrate that "cup" was used figuratively in this instance, "Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." To this we agree; however, just as baptism in this verse does not invalidate literal baptism in Acts 2:38, neither does cup in this verse invalidate the literal cup as used by our Lord in Matt. 26:27. Both baptism and cup are used in Mark 10:39 as a figure of speech called a metaphor, defined in *The Second College Edition of the American Heritage Dictionary* as "A figure of speech in which a term is transferred from the object it ordinarily designates to an object it may designate only by implicit comparison or analogy, as in the phrase 'even of life.'" Numerous times Jesus employed this figure of speech, just as in John 3:16: "God so loved the world." The world was named to suggest the inhabitants therein. Going to Mark 10:39

to prove a figurative use of the cup has absolutely no bearing on the literal usage of the cup in the Lord's Supper.

Because we accept the importance of the common communion cup, it is demanded of us on occasion that we drink the literal cup. We fail to see the logic in this demand, for some of them too will admit Christ used a literal container. They, as well as we, must employ the figure of speech called metonymy when we say "drink this cup." In the *Commentary of the Holy Bible*, by Matthew Henry and Thomas Scott, it is said, "The cup is put for what was in it" with regard to 1 Cor. 11:26. We readily agree the cup must have fruit of the vine in it to be the cup of the Lord. We drink the cup by drinking what is in it. Mr. Thayer says of 1 Cor. 10:21 and 11:27 in regard to "drinking the cup," on page 510, "What is in the cup." *The Second College Edition of the American Heritage Dictionary* defines metonymy as "A figure of speech in which an attribute or commonly associated feature is used to name or designate something."

Does the Container Mean Anything?

Many of our brethren are quick to tell us the container in the Lord's Supper called "the cup" has no spiritual significance at all. To this we strongly object and note such reasoning must disregard Luke 22:20 and 1 Cor. 11:25; "This cup is the New Testament in my blood." Now, if the container means nothing in these verses, what portrays the New Testament in his blood? All agree the fruit of the vine portrays his blood, and the bread portrays his body, but what of the New Testament? We are told "the cup" is not defined by Christ, but the plainness of Inspiration cannot be ignored in this instance. Jesus simply said, "*This cup is the New Testament in my blood.*" As "the cup of the Lord," the cup contained the representative of his blood, namely fruit of the vine. The fruit of the vine was not without the container and the container was not without the fruit of the vine. They are inseparable.

As earlier stated, Mr. Thayer said, "This cup containing wine, an emblem of blood, is rendered by the shedding of my blood, AN EMBLEM of the NEW COVENANT" (emphasis mine, DC). Thus, wine equals blood and cup equals new covenant! To take away the container from the supper also takes away the new covenant. The blood was shed for the remission of sins. The new covenant was ratified or sealed by the blood which was shed. We dare not take away from that which our Lord gave, lest our part be taken away from the Book of Life. The new covenant contains God's plan of redemptive salvation which is sealed and made effective by the shedding of Christ's blood. "Without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Hence, without the shedding of his blood the new covenant would be ineffective. If we are unbiased we ought to be able to understand what Jesus meant.

Did Christ Eat and Drink?

We affirm that he did. Some tell us he did not. If Jesus was accustomed to eating of the Passover feast, why would it be thought unreasonable for him to eat and drink of his own supper? As on many other occasions, he is considered to be our worthy example here also.

Luke and Paul quote Jesus as saying, "this do." From this it should be clear enough that he wanted the disciples to do what he had done. Now we know that the disciples ate and drank of this supper. Is it not understandable then that when the disciples ate and drank they obeyed Jesus' command THIS DO, and in so doing *they did what he had done*? We have already established the fact that Jesus did not break the loaf and give it to the disciples in two or more pieces. That he broke bread all would concur. The only logical conclusion then, is that he broke bread and ate it, thus doing himself what he meant for them to do. For what purpose would he break bread if he did not eat it?

Mark quotes Christ as saying, "I will drink no more of the

fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God” (14:25). Matthew calls it “this fruit of the vine” (26:29). It is noteworthy then that he had already drunk it or else he would not have said I will drink NO MORE of the fruit of the vine. The terminology used by him will not fit unless he had drunk already. He had already given the cup to the disciples when he made this statement, “I will drink no more.”

In John 13:18 Jesus said, “He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.” He was apparently quoting the Psalmist in 41:9 which said, “Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” “Eateth bread *with* me” and “which did eat of *my* bread” shows that Jesus ate bread and that it was his bread.

When To Observe the Supper

There should be no misunderstanding but that the first day of the week is the specified day to observe the Lord’s Supper. We dare not risk the chance of any other day. The early disciples are an example in this respect. “Upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them...” (Acts 20:7). W. E. Vine speaks of “the first day after the Sabbath.” It was commonly understood in Old Testament times that the people were to honor EVERY sabbath. Since the sabbath came every seventh day, is it not logical that present dispensation disciples honor EVERY first day by observing his supper? John said he was in the spirit on the Lord’s day, Rev. 1:10, indicating a special day for worship.

Paul instructed the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:1-2) to make their gifts on the first day of the week. Unless there was some special significance to this day, why would he specify it? We know we can be safe in observing the supper on this day because we have Paul’s approval of doing so. Early day historians such as Justin Martyr and others wrote of the early Christians observance of the supper on the first day of the week. There

are some so bold as to say another day of the week would be permissible, but we are fearful to cast our lot with them.

How To Observe the Supper

The officiant at the Lord's supper can, we feel, be safe in handling the observance as nearly as possible to the manner in which Christ did. Of the bread, simply and plainly, he **TOOK** it, he **GAVE THANKS** for it, he **BROKE** it and he **GAVE** it to the disciples. This should eliminate any doubtful disputations. Perhaps a brief reminder of the purpose and importance of the supper is in order just prior to giving of thanks. Paul strictly warned of eating and drinking in a non-discerning manner, and the frame of mind we should be in at this time.

Giving thanks should be brief and to the point. Questions arise as to what should be said in this prayer. Is it not safe to consider (though not limited to) the reasoning of Paul, "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ" and "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ"? We have heard brethren, who in their prayer never got around to thanking God for the supper.

In all four recordings of the supper we are impressed that Jesus gave thanks. The record shows he gave thanks first for the bread and then the cup of blessing. Note also that **JESUS** gave thanks. It is both safe and scriptural for the one serving at the table to offer the prayer. We know it is pleasing in God's sight to handle the supper as Jesus did.

History and The Individual Cups

We have established the fact of the Lord using a single, unbroken loaf of unleavened bread and a single, literal cup (drinking vessel) containing unfermented fruit of the vine in the original institution of the communion service.

It is not uncommon for folks to question, "From whence, then, came individual cups into the Lord's Supper?" To answer

such a question one must turn to secular history due to the silence of the scriptures concerning them.

The earliest date we know anything about the individual communion cups appears to be March, 1894. From *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper* by Thomas H. Warner, March, 1938, we give the following: "Until near the end of the 19th century the chalice, or cup, was used in the distribution of the wine at the Lord's Supper. At that time more attention began to be paid to hygiene, and the use of a common cup began to be unpopular with communicants. Rev. J. G. Thomas, who was both a minister and a physician, was the originator of the idea of individual cups and felt that the Lord's Supper could be made more attractive and beautiful by the use of the individual cups. His first patent was granted in March, 1894. The first individual cup service was held in a little Putnam County church in Ohio."

Their appearance in the church of Christ is credited to G. C. Brewer and we quote from his work, *Forty Years on the Firing Line*: "A good many of the fights that I have made have been with my own brethren on points where I believed them to be in the wrong. I think I was the first preacher to advocate the use of the individual communion cup and the first church in the state of Tennessee that adopted it was the church for which I was preaching, the Central Church of Christ at Chattanooga, Tennessee, then meeting in the Masonic Temple. My next work was with the church at Columbia, Tennessee and, after a long struggle, I got the individual communion service into that congregation. About this time, Brother G. Dallas Smith began to advocate the individual communion service and he introduced it at Fayetteville, Tennessee; then later at Murfreesboro, Tennessee.

"Of course, I was fought both privately and publicly and several brethren took me to task in the religious papers and called me digressive. Brother Smith came to my rescue and in the year of 1915, Brother David Lipscomb wrote a short

paragraph in the *Gospel Advocate* saying he had changed his view in reference to the communion cup and that he did not believe it was any digression or in any way was a corruption of the service to use as many cups as might be demanded by the occasion. This brought that controversy to an end and, from then on, the churches began using the individual communion cup everywhere.” Brother Brewer evidently did not know that there were yet many soldiers of the cross who had not and yet do not accept this innovation.

J. W. McGarvey quoted in the *Christian Standard* around the turn of the century: “I have been a member of the church for 43 years and it has been my good fortune to be acquainted with several of our most learned and influential ministers—Alexander Campbell among them—and it seems strange to me that *they did not find a necessity for the individual cups.*”

This innovation is less than one hundred years old and has created major havoc in the church apparently from its very onset. It is still being forced upon folks on occasion regardless of conscience or consequences. It is so much in demand and its popularity so great that many brethren seem to forget the shame and disgrace brought on by dividing the body of Christ. They seem not to worry, as did Paul, whether or not they make their brethren to offend. There is no doubt such actions grieve our Lord who prayed so earnestly that we might be one.

Keeping The Supper as Delivered

Many religionists seem to feel God is not too concerned about how we keep this sacred ordinance. We should be extra cautious in regard to the observance of this supper. We do not want to be guilty of failing in our duty here. In 1 Cor. 11:23 Paul says, “For I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you...” Of all the versions we have read in regards to this verse, we like the King James (as quoted) best. It clearly shows what he was about to say concerning the supper was divinely inspired and that he was giving it to Corinth

exactly as he had received it.

We ought to be willing to accept the instructions regarding the Lord's Supper with the same determination and reverence that Paul did. We know the importance of keeping it as delivered in Christ's and God's sight. It should be the same with us. In verse two of this chapter Paul said, "I praise you brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you." He had just encouraged them to follow him as he followed Christ. To be unconcerned about the keeping of this ordinance renders us as guilty, perhaps, as the Corinthians who had corrupted the supper. Our calling is of a more noble nature than this and we would do well to be statesmen for the Lord in regard to his supper.

Paul said, "O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you" (RSV, 1 Tim. 6:20). He also wrote, "As we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts" (1 Thess. 2:4). Though we are not directly inspired as was Paul, the instructions are clear as to our duty. We have been put "in trust" to carry out the Lord's will in the communion service and we should guard this portion of the gospel with all the strength we possess. Many of our brethren, we say, would not allow their own personal testament (will) to be entrusted to men of like caliber as they are, and yet their will is of no significance at all compared to God's Will.

Many have deviated from that which the Lord gave, and strayed to strange practices by adding more than the one bread and the one cup of the fruit of the vine to the communion service. They have betrayed the confidence He placed in them. Most all agree the use of one loaf and one cup are scriptural, but try to bring in pluralities through the shaky door of expediency and sanitation (of which Christ knew more about than they will ever dream of).

In Leviticus chapter ten, Nadab and Abihu lost their lives

because they offered “strange fire” of which the Lord commanded them not. They were instructed as to the fire they were to use, but in the absence of a “thou shalt not,” apparently felt it expedient to use a strange fire. After all, they likely felt the main purpose was to burn the incense and the source of the fire was of little importance.

Moses was told to speak to the rock to obtain drinking water, (Num. 20:8). It would seem the primary purpose was to get water out of the rock, regardless of how. He was not told “thou shalt not strike the rock”; however, the Lord said “ye believed me not.” Because of what might appear as a small technicality to many, Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land. The way the Lord’s Supper is observed and distributed may appear as insignificant to many, but corrupting the pattern is sufficient reason to keep us out of the promised land also. Because of man’s ideas about sanitation and expediency, shall the Lord not say, “Ye believed me not?”

We would encourage folks to cast their lot with the reformers and plead “Back to the Bible; we will speak where the Bible speaks and we will be silent where the Bible is silent.” We desire to stake our claim on that which is tested and true, that which we *know* is safe and sure, and not be overcome with *doubtful disputations* of man. The Lord’s Supper is too meaningful and sacred to be corrupted by the modernistic trend of those who are not satisfied with the simplicity that is in Jesus Christ.

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The Bread Which We Break

by Darrell Cline

“The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” 1 Cor. 10:16.

It seems obvious to even the casual Bible student, that the church at Corinth was abusing the Lord’s Supper (see 1 Cor. 11:17-22). Apparently these people were using this as an occasion to have a supper for the purpose of satisfying hunger pangs. For some it was a feast, for others it was famine.

Paul took quick and affirmative action to correct this abuse. One thing is clear, Paul wanted to make the Corinthians understand his displeasure with their low regard for this sacred supper. These brethren were wrong in taking liberties that were not theirs to take. It is with that same concern that we observe people who still care so little for God’s Word that they, too, abuse this part of the worship. We must stand on truth for this part of our worship, just as we contend that the singing and teaching be scriptural. For all of our work and worship we must have a “thus saith the Lord.”

Proper Spirit Needed

Some critics have suggested that we give too much attention to detail, and not enough to the proper spirit of the communion service. It is of vital importance that we adhere to truth in both aspects of this service. It is possible that brethren give so much attention to the *one* cup and the *one* bread, that they fail to realize this is a time to *remember*. Always keep in mind, however, two wrongs do not make a right; they never have and they never will! If some have the wrong spirit while observing this memorial service, it is no reason to try to justify

the modern innovations of additional cups and multiple loaves on the table. We must, in order to be pleasing to God, “worship in spirit AND in truth” (John 4:24).

The Corinthians were obviously forgetting both the spirit and the letter of the law. Paul corrects them on both points. Their purpose and observance was carried out in the wrong way. Paul instructs as to how it should be, “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you.” Then he gives the purpose and attitude they should have. “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup ye do show the Lord’s death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:23-25, 26-34). The spirit of this observance must be right, we agree, but the major thrust of this material is to deal with the bread as to its purpose and preparation as well as the scriptural way to partake of the bread. Let’s look further.

The Bread’s Purpose in the Communion

The communion bread is an emblem¹ of the body of Christ. Its purpose is to portray to our mind the body of Christ, specifically, his body as it hung on the cross.

In Matt. 26:26, Jesus took bread (unleavened) and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” In verse 28, after taking the cup, he also said, “this is my blood.” In the very next verse, in reference to the same, he calls it the “fruit of the vine.” When Christ instituted the Supper, the bread and the fruit of the vine did not literally become flesh and blood; neither do they become such today. To us it is his *spiritual* flesh and blood.

Some, unintentionally promote the idea of transubstantiation (real presence of Christ’s body in the bread, etc.); but this is a doctrine foreign to the New Testament church. This idea has its roots in Catholicism. It was not even accepted by that denomination until the eighth century. The idea was not even defined and articulated until the nineteenth Ecumenical Council held in Trent, Austria (1545-1563).²

To Christians, the bread becomes a figure of the body of

Christ. In the communion service we look *backward* to remember Christ. It was Jesus himself who said, "this do in *remembrance of me*" (Lk. 22:19). This is a time to look *forward* as well, "For as often as ye eat this bread...ye do *show* the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26). It is also necessary that we *examine* ourselves as we eat the bread and drink the cup (1 Cor. 11:28). "But let a man *examine* himself." Also this is an occasion to show our faith in our Lord's return and our faith that his death was a sacrifice for our sins. "Ye do show the Lord's death till he come."

As we view the bread (which to us is the communion of the body of Christ), we must see the importance of its *oneness*. Christ had only one body, so we must have only *one* bread to represent that one body.

Type and Anti-type

Most Christians will agree that the Old Testament prophecies look forward to the coming of the Messiah, who was to be the Savior of the world. Under this law, the lamb, particularly its blood, was very important. The death angel passed over the house of Israel whose door post was sprinkled with the lamb's blood. The blood of the lamb saved the household from the certain death of the eldest child. No wonder then that John referred to Jesus as the *Lamb of God* (John 1:36). Isaiah and other prophets commonly referred to Jesus in their prophetic language as a lamb.

Perhaps nowhere is the "Lamb of God" more graphically portrayed, than in the observance of the Jewish Passover. The Passover lamb was a type of the body of Christ. "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7).

We would like to particularly notice the *oneness* as taught in this type of Christ's body. There was to be one lamb for each house (Exodus 12:3). Following this pattern, when Christians assemble, we have only *one* bread for that assembly. With this knowledge Paul is able to say "For we being many...are

partakers of that ONE bread” (1 Cor. 10:17).

When instituting his Supper, Jesus “took bread and blessed IT.” He then gave it to his disciples and said, “take, eat; this is my body.” Christ had only one body! It was unlawful for Israel to employ more than one passover lamb per house. Likewise it is unlawful for Christians to employ more than one bread in the observance of the Lord’s Supper, if type and anti-type are to be meaningful to us.

We will look more into the oneness aspect of the bread a little later in this work, as we study scriptural partaking. It is extremely important that we see the purpose of the one bread on the Lord’s table, because of it being an emblem of the one body of Christ which he sacrificed.

The Preparation of the Bread

As a people who “fear God and keep His commandments” we want neither to add to nor take from God’s Word (see Rev. 22:18-19). Some in trying to “keep the ordinances as delivered” go too far and make laws where there are no laws. Others are too lax and care too little for the laws that we must obey. We simply want to adhere to truth; no more, no less. Perhaps it would be good to see God’s disposition toward those who take liberties either way, “But the prophet which shall presume to speak a word in MY name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die” (Deut. 18:20). Our God has always been very particular with how we handle His word, so let’s use care and prayer.

With reference to the preparation of the bread, there have been, over the years, various ideas presented that we need to examine. Questions have arisen as to the kind or type of flour to be used in the bread. Should it be whole flour, or is processed or fine flour acceptable? Is wheat flour the proper flour or should it be barley, rye or some other? What kind of liquid is to be used to hold the flour together? Should it be

water and oil, or can we use oil at all? If so, what kind of oil is to be used? Olive oil, or cooking oil of any kind? How much of each ingredient should we use? Let's go to the Bible and see what we can learn.

Artos

Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22 and 1 Corinthians 11 all refer to the Lord's Supper. Matthew, Mark and Luke all give the account as the Lord instituted this Supper. Paul establishes this as an observance that is for the church. We keep this ordinance, because we are still in the kingdom (church) age.

Matthew 26 is fairly representative of the other writers so we will look at this chapter closely. "And as they were eating Jesus took bread," (Matt. 26:26. The Greek word for bread used here is *artos*³. This word is found 99 times in the New Testament. 72 times it is translated *bread* and 23 times it is translated by the word *loaf*. The word bread and loaf in these cases have the same meaning. The Hebrew word in the Old Testament for bread is *lechem*, and refers to food for man or beast, especially bread or grain.

From the words themselves, we can get very little information as to the actual preparation of the bread that the Lord had in his hands when the supper was given.

Azumos Artos

We learn more about the specific kind of bread when we take into consideration the setting when Jesus took bread (*artos*). From verse 17 we learn that Jesus and his disciples were observing the feast of *unleavened bread*, (*azumos artos*)⁵. Jesus instituted the supper during the passover observance which took place on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month Abib. It occurred during the feast of *unleavened bread*. During this feast of *unleavened bread*, no leaven was to even be in the house. Exodus 12:15, "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your

houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel.”

With this knowledge we are able to learn a little more about the bread Jesus had in his hands when the Supper was instituted; it was unleavened bread. Try as one might to extract a recipe for the Passover bread, it cannot be done! Follow the thread of scripture woven from Exodus 12 to Matthew 26 dealing with the Passover and one cannot determine the specific ingredients that were found in the bread. We *can* find what was *left out*; it was leaven. We must conclude that Jesus did take a specific kind of bread, not because of what was included in its make-up, but because of what was *excluded!*

Authorized Actions

Let's leave the bread for just a moment and see how at least some Christian actions are authorized, then we will take this information and apply it to the preparation of the bread.

Some Christian actions authorized in God's Word require a specific course of action, while others allow latitude according to the Christian's discretion. These commands are no less weighty and must be obeyed. Some actions are authorized in that they **MUST** be done, but discretion is allowed in the way these commands **MAY** be carried out. An example is found in Hebrews 10:25 where the command is given that Christians **MUST** assemble; but we **MAY** assemble at a house of worship at 10:00 a.m. or we *may* worship under a tent at 9:00. One place or one time is no more safe than the other as far as obedience to the scripture is concerned. You see then, we are commanded to worship on the first day of the week but we are at liberty to elect the time and place.

Now let's apply this to the bread question. We **MUST** (because of example) have unleavened bread, but the unleavened bread **MAY** be made up of unspecified ingredients. Obviously there must be some type of flour and some liquid involved. One rule of Bible interpretation is “apparent

knowledge.” It is apparent that there has to be a combination of ingredients and some baking take place in order to have bread. The exact ingredients or amount of ingredients and the amount of baking time or way to bake are left to our discretion. In the study of the unleavened passover bread (which is the bread Jesus had in his hand when he instituted the supper), it is not possible to determine the specific ingredients. Let’s be careful that we make no law where none are intended, but let’s carry the law out as it is intended.

Some breads of the Old Testament did specify the exact ingredients (see Ezekiel 4 and Leviticus 2 and 24), but when it comes to the passover bread, the only specification we can learn is that leaven was absent.

Water is and was a common ingredient in the making of bread: to this all scholars and Bible students will agree, yet water is never mentioned as being a part of the ingredients found in the passover bread. While water is perfectly acceptable to use, to say that it is the only liquid that may be used, is to go too far.

Just what kind of flour was used in the preparation of the passover bread is not known. Whether barley *artos*, as that which was used to feed the five thousand of John 6 or wheaten, as that used in the consecration of Aaron and his sons as priests in Exodus 29 or some other flour, the Bible simply does not specify.

Flour and water will make a loaf of unleavened bread. Flour, oil and water will make a loaf of unleavened bread. Salt was included in the unleavened bread of Leviticus 2, but whether or not it was in the passover bread the Bible does not say. Flour commonly used today, and scripturally so, is flour made from wheat. Most use fine white flour while some use the whole wheat flour. Either is fine as long as no law is made in either case. It is my understanding that wheat flour is the most commonly used flour of our day because yeast will permeate it better than any other kind of flour. Generally, of course, when

we make bread we want it to rise; not so when we make the communion bread, but we still use the flour we have available. Since we have access to this flour and as long as the leaven is left out it will work fine.

Commonly used liquids are water, olive oil, cooking oil and some have used milk, or a combination of these. Whatever the ingredients used, there should be proper care and consideration given to its preparation. Whether baked in an oven or baked in a pan, proper care should be taken so as to make sure the *unleavened bread* on the table is not too doughy or too hard so as to break to pieces when each communicant breaks their portion.

The bread is extremely important in the communion because of its being the body of Christ. Since the only specification we can find in the scriptures is that leavening is left out, let's keep this as law and make no others. Let's stand on the Bible and not men.

Leavening has often been equated with sin in the Bible. Perhaps this is the reason Jesus chose to use this particular kind of bread. For whatever reason, we will continue to use only *unleavened bread*, and know that we are scriptural.

Scriptural Partaking

Again it seems that the unity for which Jesus prayed in John 17:21 has been shattered because there are those who insist on following after the innovations of men, instead of following sound scriptural practice. The way the "bread is broken" is varied and many. Some have individual portions of bread on the table equal to the number of communicants prepared to participate. Others make one loaf but divide it down the middle before it is blessed and still others bless it as one bread then break it into two pieces. Others have only one bread and the one who officiates at the table blesses this one bread, takes his portion to eat then passes it on to the next communicant. We believe this latter method is based on the Bible and is therefore

scriptural. In Matt. 26:26, "Jesus took bread." This phrase, and in particular the word "bread," is always translated in the *singular*. Goodspeed renders this phrase "He took a passover loaf..." The A.S.V. gives the same rendering in the margin. The fact that Jesus took only *one* loaf is significant; let's see why.

In the first place, Christ had only one body and the bread is to represent that one body. If we are going to truly represent his body it can only be accurately portrayed with one bread. If we have many loaves on the table, this would be an indication that Christ had many bodies, which we know is not true. The figure of scriptural partaking is destroyed when the emblem is not representative of the object it portrays.

The Bible gives us a scriptural pattern to follow and that pattern allows for only one bread and no more. The only way we can be united, as Christ prayed that we would be, is to use a scriptural practice. No one will ever say that one bread is wrong, so let's use it as our common ground of unity. Division is wrong.

As Christ had only one physical body, so he has only one spiritual body, which is the church (Col. 1:18). Paul says in 1 Cor. 10:17, "For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread." How could language be more plain? Paul uses that which was common knowledge to them to help them understand that which was unclear. They were familiar with the one bread, so Paul uses this to teach that they were also all one in Christ. In the first century there was no question about the oneness of the bread, because it was not until the end of the eighteen-hundreds that the church of Christ finally yielded to the innovations of the multiple cup and multiple breads⁶.

All Break Bread

The term "break bread" was a common term of the first century, used to mean "eat bread" or "eat food." "Upon the

first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread . . .” (Acts 20:7). Notice this was the *disciples* who came together for this purpose, not just the Apostle Paul. Also in Acts 2:42, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread . . .” This again refers to the three thousand and others who obeyed the gospel as well as the Apostles. In 1 Cor. 10:16-17 Paul said, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.” Notice: “which **WE** break,” not just Paul. We conclude that partaking of the bread is for all who obey the gospel and not for just the one who officiates at the table or selected persons only.

Conclusion

When we partake of the bread we must have the proper spirit and purpose in mind, but we cannot run head long over the law to get this result. There is a scriptural way to partake and we must, as in all things, have both “spirit and truth.”

The bread has a specified purpose in the worship service. It is an emblem which portrays to the mind’s eye the body of Christ. Christ had only one body; therefore, we have only one bread. Otherwise, we lose the scriptural significance. According to type and anti-type we have only one bread for each assembly.

When we prepare the bread for the communion, proper care should be taken to prepare it without leaven. Because of the absence of a recipe in the Bible, we must use discretion with the ingredients used.

The bread is of extreme importance in our service to God. Let’s take care how we handle and partake of it, lest we call God’s displeasure upon us.

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1. *Websters New Collegiate Dict.*, 1973: Emblem: An object . . . symbolizing and suggesting another object or idea, p. 367
 2. *Catholic Encyclopedia Dictionary*, 3rd Edition. Transubstantiation and Consubstantiation, p. 500. also Vol. 5 p. 499 and p. 119. (See also *Communion Controversies* , p. 21)
 3. *Youngs Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, p. 62
 4. *Strongs Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Lechem, No. 3899, Hebrew
 5. *Ibid.*, No. 106
 6. *Forty Years on the Firing Line*, G. C. Brewer (Bro. Brewer claims to have been the first to have introduced cups into the church of Christ)

*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

by Norman Crouch

The subject of this discussion comes from 2 Tim. 2:15, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” We learn several things from this passage.

Timothy was to give diligence or make haste to show himself approved of God. Having the approval of man is not nearly so important as having the approval of God. Having the approval of God requires our energy, time, and effort, expressed here as giving diligence or making haste, which is the meaning of the word “study” as used in this passage.

This required Timothy to be a workman, indicating that being approved unto God is a job of work. It is a work that can be looked upon without any sense of shame for what we have done. To labor in the Master’s vineyard gives us no cause for shame or regret for how we spend our time.

A necessary and integral part of this work of Timothy was to involve himself in “rightly dividing the word of truth.” This is the subject of our discussion. This phrase, “rightly dividing,” *orthotomeo* in the Greek, is found nowhere else in the Word of God and it is translated “to cut straight or to divide right.” The Revised Standard Version renders it as “handling aright the word of truth.” Goodspeed’s American Translation of the New Testament says, “rightly shapes the message of truth.”

The Command’s Application Today

Let us look for a moment at how this command to rightly divide the word of truth will affect us today as we use diligence and make haste to show ourselves approved unto God.

Some Bible scholars think when Paul instructed Timothy to “cut straight” or “to divide aright” the word of truth, that he was really telling Timothy to give portions of the doctrine to others according to their spiritual needs and abilities. And there is likely some merit to this interpretation as we notice from Heb. 5:10-14, “. . . called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec. Of whom we have many things to say and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, you have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God: And are become such as have need of milk and not of strong meat. For everyone that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.”

It seems to be quite clear that one of the duties of those who held an office like Paul the apostle, or Timothy the evangelist, was to “divide” this doctrine to others according to their spiritual needs and abilities. We realize today that there are certain deeper areas of the doctrine that the unlearned will not receive much profit from until they are better instructed and grounded in first principles (although we must not spend all of our time on first principles, Heb. 6:1-3).

But this instruction to “rightly divide,” or to “cut straight,” or to “handle aright” the word of truth would also have to include the idea of properly applying God’s laws to the various dispensations to which they were given (Rom. 3:19, Gal. 3:24-25, 5:4). We feel this is a very important application of this passage found in 2 Tim. 2:15, and one aspect of its teaching that is too little practiced and not understood. To fail to utilize this principle properly will lead to great and grave errors in doctrine and practice of Christianity.

The Dispensations

As we study the Word of God, we readily understand that

there are several dispensations of time, each of which a portion of the Word of God is written about and for. It is a tragic and fatal mistake to attempt to apply any area of the word of truth to a dispensation or time to which God never intended that it be applied.

As we look at the dispensations, we find three major areas of time.

(1.) The Patriarchal age, from Adam until Moses (Deut. 5:1-3).

(2.) The Mosaical age, from Moses to the establishment of the church (Col. 2:14-16).

(3.) The Christian age, from the establishment of the church until the second coming of Christ (Acts 2:16-21, 1 Cor. 15:23-25).

Stephen tells of these dispensations in Acts 7.

Not only are there three major dispensations, but there are also minor dispensations or special occasions or special commands to be found within each major dispensation. For example:

Abraham and Noah both lived during the Patriarchal age, but each had some laws and commands from God which were different. Noah was commanded to build an ark because of the impending flood, yet this command was not intended for Abraham. Abraham was commanded to leave Ur of the Chaldees and later to offer his son Isaac for a sacrifice, but these commands did not apply to Noah. Both of these men served the same God during the same dispensation. As we study these commands and put them into the proper context as described by the Word of God, then we learn how to rightly divide them.

Let us notice some examples of special occasions or commands during the dispensation of the law of Moses. The command God gave the children of Israel to go into the land of Canaan and drive the heathen nations out (Deut. 7:1-2, 20-24) was given while they were camped in the plains of

Moab shortly before Moses' death. They were even told to make no peace with a near city (Deut. 20:10-17, Josh. 9:7). Yet hundreds of years later, while God's people were captive in Babylon, they were told to seek the peace of the city of Babylon (Jer. 29:7). Those captives in Babylon could not have properly applied Deut. 7:1-2, or Deut. 20:10-15 to their situation. In fact, Jeremiah told them to do the opposite while in Babylon. But these commands were given on special occasions during the dispensation of the law of Moses. Several centuries later, our Saviour Jesus Christ lived and taught during this same dispensation, yet neither of these earlier commands were appropriate to be applied during his stay on earth. John the Baptist also lived during this same age and he too had a special mission—to prepare the way for the Lord. John had a baptism which was not intended to be used before he came, nor was it intended for use in the Christian age, yet it was a special command for the special work of John the Baptist.

Another example of a special situation is found during the Christian age when the early church was in a childhood stage (Eph. 4:14, 1 Cor. 13:8-13). During this period of time, there were various miraculous gifts distributed among the members (1 Cor. 12:18-31, 14:1-3). But during the manhood stage of the church, which we live in today, the miraculous gifts were replaced by the completed Word of God—"that which is perfect," and also referred to as "the unity of the faith" and "a more sure word of prophecy" (1 Cor. 13:8-11, Eph. 4:11-16, 1 Pet. 1:12-21, Jude 3). We recognize these facts if we are going to handle the Word of God aright today.

Each scripture must be taken in its own context and its own relation to other scriptures in order to properly apply it—this is especially true of prophecy.

(A.) A passage may apply to more than one dispensation.

For example, a prophecy with a greater and lesser fulfillment like the prophecy about the new heavens and the new earth

found in Isaiah and Peter.

(B.) Or a passage may be given in one dispensation and may apply to another dispensation of time (Acts 2:16-17).

(C.) Many times the New Testament quotes or refers to an Old Testament passage which indicates that this Old Testament teaching has valid meaning or application to the New Testament.

(D.) The great principles of God are taught in all dispensations.

Considering Context

It is imperative for each passage of scripture to be taken in its proper context so we can know to whom and to what dispensation of time it is to be applied.

The only way we can be sure about how to apply any passage of scripture is to let the Word of God be its own commentary. Each passage of scripture must be interpreted so that it will be in harmony with all other passages of scripture. If there is a true conflict or discrepancy, then we have the wrong interpretation somewhere and we will fail to rightly divide the word of truth if a correct and harmonious interpretation is not made with the rest of the Word of God. So, let the Bible be its own commentary (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

We have an example of how to teach from the written Word of God given in Neh. 8:8. This is an especially important example of how to teach God's Word today because it can be applied to a type of teaching we are required to do today; using non-inspired teachers, teaching from the already written Word of God given by previously inspired writers. I know of no other example given in the Bible of how to teach God's Word under these circumstances (uninspired teachers teaching from the written Word of God).

Nehemiah 8:8—"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading"

(1.) "They read in the book in the law of God distinctly." All material comes from the Book of the law of God. It is read from that Book. It is read distinctly. This corresponds to what we would call "chapter" teaching today.

(2.) "And gave the sense." That is, they translated or interpreted the passage which would be equivalent to following the proper context or "rightly dividing the word of truth."

(3.) "And caused them to understand the reading." The purpose of the teaching was to cause understanding of the reading. This, sadly enough, is a far cry from much of the teaching we hear today in which a speech is made and at best some scriptures, devoid of their context, are sprinkled among the brilliant statements of the speaker, and rather than have the listeners to understand the reading, their attention is drawn to the subject of the speaker's speech. Many times very little is said about the "text" or the reading which was given before the man-made speech was given. Brethren, when we teach after this manner we are following the example of the apostate church with its "clergy" and "laymen." The only teaching about speech giving in the church seems to condemn the practice (Rom. 16:18).

A Positive Command

Here is a divine and positive command to "handle the word of truth aright," or "rightly divide the word of truth."

This means that the word of truth can be handled wrongly; that scriptures can be misapplied so the intended meaning is lost. When this happens, then we have lost the true meaning of that passage, hence, we have lost the truth. Consequently, our actions are no longer according to the truth if we practice what we preach.

To apply a passage of scripture in a manner not intended is very dangerous and can actually lead to our destruction. In 2 Pet. 3:15-16, the apostle Peter is speaking of a group who

have twisted or wrested the teaching of the apostle Paul and the other scriptures to their own destruction.

No command is more clearly given as a command than is this instruction to Timothy to “rightly divide the word of truth.” So, after we have investigated the Word of God, everything depends upon how we handle or apply it.

Some of the most radical doctrines have come from misapplied Scripture. As a result of misapplying the Scriptures, there are those today who think they are miraculously inspired so they can prophesy, speak in tongues, and perform miracles.

Some doctrines of the apostate church, in which they have twisted Scripture and given the wrong sense, allow one to rule over the church in the office of Pope. The same disregard for God’s Word has allowed many paganistic and idolatrous practices to be moved into the church.

Our understanding about divorce and remarriage hinges upon the application of the teachings of Jesus in Matthew, chapters 5 and 19. In which dispensation were these teachings given and to which dispensation do they apply?

Every facet of doctrine must be carefully examined with the idea of rightly dividing the word of truth. There is a tremendous amount of responsibility associated with this work of handling aright the word of truth.

The reason the Supreme Court of the United States of America has so much power is that it can interpret the law. Any law congress and the president make can be interpreted by the Supreme Court to mean what the Supreme Court wants it to mean. This gives that branch of government a tremendous power; more power in some instances than the congress or president have because they can, in effect, make any law mean what they want it to mean.

Make any law you want to make. Let me give it the meaning I want it to have and I have more power than you have. This is what we are doing when we interpret the Word of God. If we give it the meaning we want it to have, we have over-ruled

God and have put ourselves into a position of having more power than He has. This is why it is so very important for us to handle aright the word of truth, properly apply it, and not make it have a meaning or application which is not intended by God, the Lawgiver (Deut. 6:17).

All the Bible

The word of truth means all the Bible—the Old Testament and the New Testament (2 Tim. 3:16).

(1.) To be approved of God depends upon how we handle or rightly divide the teaching of the Old and New Testaments.

(2.) To fail to handle the Word of God aright would be to lose the approval of God.

(3.) We can have the approval of man and not have the approval of God.

(4.) It is possible to know many facts about the Bible and still be ignorant of how to apply those facts or how to rightly divide the truth. This would put one in the position of “ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7, 1 Tim. 1:7).

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Making the Home Christian

by C. T. Brady

The home is of divine origin. It had its beginning in the garden of Eden when God, seeing that it was not good for the first man to be alone, made "an help meet for him." He caused a sleep to come upon Adam and from one of his ribs he created a woman and brought her to the man. "And Adam said, this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:23-24).

The home is the backbone of a nation. Christian homes are essential to building up the church of our Lord. The influence of the home is powerful and lasting. It is here that character is molded and personality is formed.

Current Attacks on the Home's Value

Sin is stated to be transgression of God's Law (1 John 3:4). unrighteousness (1 John 5:17); iniquity (Titus 2:14); lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:7); disobedience (Heb. 2:2); and a failure to do what is right (James 4:17). Whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Rom 14:23). The tragedy of sin is its results. No matter how popular sinful acts may be, sin separates us from God (Isa. 59:1-2). Sin defiles us (Isa. 1:18), and condemns us to eternal torment (John 8:21). Sin destroys our homes.

The apostle Paul tells us the results of the works of the flesh. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told

you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21, 1 Cor. 6:9-10, Rom. 1:26-32). Every work of the flesh is an enemy of the Christian home.

Some of the modern moral issues, and the means used to promote them, are smoking, drinking, drugs, dancing, gambling, no respect for authority, abortion, profanity, movies, television, radio, news papers, and magazines, all of which contribute to sin in one way or another. The Christian is not to be conformed to this world (Rom. 12:2). John said, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world" (1 John 2:15). James says to keep ourselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27). Paul said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Peter said, "Because it is written, be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16). The apostle Paul admonished the young preacher, Timothy, "Keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22), and Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). The Christian should "abstain from the very appearance of evil." All sin erodes the spirituality of the home.

Home: Its Value Emotionally and Psychologically

It is impossible to overestimate the importance of stable families, whether we are thinking about the happiness of individuals or the good of a nation. It does not take very long to discover that children develop into solid, dependable personalities when they grow up in an atmosphere of love and order. It is imperative that the children know what to expect in daily living; they also need the assurance of a loving concern from those about them. These are gifts bestowed upon us by our families, if the family is a Christian family. Ungodly parents cannot produce, in the true sense, stable and responsible children. Rarely does a child become delinquent when the members of a family have successfully maintained love and

affection for God and one another. The home offers a place where the family may enjoy life and each other. The Bible teaches that we should be steadfast, unmoveable and always abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). We should be firm in character, purpose or resolution.

Love is the foundation of the Christian home. "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). The closest of all human ties is found in the home. The permanency of a home and the happiness of its members depend in large measure upon the love which they hold for one another. If Paul's admonitions regarding love apply to Christians in general, they doubly apply to the relationships among individuals in the home. "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil; rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Love never faileth" (1 Cor. 13:4-8, ASV). This type of love applied in the home will overcome the problems—big and small—which inevitably arise. It will rule out the selfishness which has often proven fatal to this God ordained institution.

A major difference between Christian homes and other homes lies in their attitudes toward God. The members of the Christian home are filled with a love for God as well as for one another. That love causes them to put God first, even before themselves. They carry out the admonition of Jesus, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33). Love for one another and love for God will make the home the permanent institution which it is intended to be.

Home: Its Value Spiritually

Good family life begins with a good marriage—a lasting

relationship according to God's arrangement. Holy wedlock, based upon mutual love and respect for its permanence, will assure God's blessings. Jesus said, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matt. 19:6). Christ's love for the church is the divine standard for love in the home. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it" (Eph. 5:25). Wives must love their husbands and their children (Titus 2:4). God is supremely interested in all family relationships. Women are "to be sober minded, chaste, workers at home, kind, being in subjection to their own husbands" (Titus 2:5).

A good family life comes from putting God first in your heart and in your home. All Christians, whether parents or not, should strive to be examples in both word and deed. Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world" (Matt. 5:13-16). The parents should assume their responsibility. If we do not want our children to drink, curse, smoke or do anything unChrist-like, then we should set the right pattern of life before them. Do our children see us read the Bible? Or hear us pray? Are we strictly honest in all things. The acid test of Christianity is in the home. Children should be taught to conduct themselves properly in the home.

We need to learn the privilege and the power of prayer. We need to study God's Word and build its truths, ideals and its principles into our daily lives. We need to grow as Jesus grew, "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).

Husband and Wife Relationship

Love is the tie that unites husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. Together they share the joys and sorrows, trials, tribulations, and the pleasures of life. A close tie of love should bind the parents and the children.

The Husband and the Home—God made the husband the head of the home. "For the husband is the head of the wife,

even as Christ is the head of the church” (Eph. 5:23). “But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God” (1 Cor. 11:3). In Eden, God said to the woman, “And thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee” (Gen. 3:16). As the head of the home the man is not a dictator. His position gives him responsibilities more than rights. One of these, which should be counted a privilege, is to love his wife above every other human being. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself” (Eph. 5:25, 28, 33). Peter enjoins husbands, “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel” (1 Pet. 3:7). If the husband loves his wife he will put her before himself and consider her wishes before his own.

As head of the home, the husband must provide for his family’s material needs. The duty is inherent in his position since his wife and children are dependent upon him. Paul’s statement to Timothy applies especially to him. “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). In marrying, a man contracts to use his wages for the welfare of his whole family, not just for himself.

The Wife and the Home—The woman was created as a help for her husband. When she marries, she places her duty to her companion above that which she owes to her parents, even as he does likewise for her. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:24). This does not imply that either will cease to love their parents, but rather that they are no longer tied to their apron strings, although they should love the parents and see that they are cared for until death; not abused

in their old age by dumping them in a so-called “rest home” and forgotten. If the rest home does become necessary, we should visit them and make them just as comfortable and loved as is possible.

Many homes have been wrecked because husband and wife did not recognize that their first responsibility was to one another rather than to parents.

The Christian wife must be submissive to her husband. “Wives submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord” (Eph. 5:22). “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives” (1 Pet. 3:1). Of course, a wife should be subject to God first, before her husband. “We ought to obey God rather than man” (Acts 5:29).

If young Christians marry other Christians, there should be no religious conflict. But there is always a danger in marrying out of Christ—one may be placed in a compromising situation. A Christian who marries a non-Christian is endangering his soul since the other person may prove the stronger and may lead him away from the Lord. Furthermore, it is easier to win one to Christ before marriage rather than after that contract has been made. Even if one does remain true to the Lord after he marries out of Christ, he will find his service to Christ greatly hindered by his unwise action.

The wife is a homemaker. She is to “bear children, guide the house” (1 Tim. 5:14). She has a greater influence upon her children in their tender years than does the husband. She cannot be an effective homemaker if the majority of her time is spent in affairs outside the home.

Parent/Child Relationship

The home should be the child’s greatest training school. “Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov. 22:6). A child, who had nothing

to do with his coming into the world, is entitled to, and deserves, a home that is worthy of children. It should be the training school for children loved by their parents who teach and train them in the true meaningfulness of life; in honor of God and respect for humanity. There is hardly any age the child cannot be trained. Training children involves grave responsibilities for the home—responsibilities for life and destiny. Our homes today are producing the world of tomorrow, therefore it is so important to teach and train them in ways of righteousness and godliness!

The apostle Paul said, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right, honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise... And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:1,2,4). Children are to be a part of the home. Obedience is too often forgotten in our modern world, and often because parents do not teach their children to obey. If parents do not have the respect and obedience of their children, they have only themselves to blame.

The above passage warns fathers against provoking their children to wrath. This can be done if a child is punished unjustly or punished when not understanding the reason for his discipline.

It is said of the boyhood of Jesus that he “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man” (Luke 2:52). His development was fourfold: *in wisdom*, mentally; *in stature*, physically; *in favor with God*, spiritually; *in favor with man*, socially. Parents must develop their children in these four ways, and most important is the child’s spiritual development. To bring up children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” requires religious teaching in the home. Parents should teach their children to love God, to pray, and to know the teachings of the Scriptures. They should teach, both by instruction and example. While the church has a duty to teach

children God's Word, the first responsibility is the parents'.

Correction of children (which at times may require physical punishment) is a recognized scriptural principle in child development. "Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh who corrected us, and we gave them reverence...now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby" (Heb. 12:9, 11). Solomon wrote, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame...Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul" (Prov. 29:15, 17). "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes" (Prov. 13:24).

There is no substitute for a good Christian mother or father in raising their children. Of children, Jesus said, "of such is the kingdom of heaven," and unless we repent and become as a little child we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. We should love our children all the days of our lives—they are depending on us and will love us, and take care of us as we grow older.

The Beauty of Its Permanency

The Word of God alone is our authority—not our feelings, our consciences, our parents' religions, the majority, or the traditions and doctrines of men. If the Word of God teaches something, that is our authority for doing it. If the Word of God does not teach it, then we have no authority for it, and we should not be doing it. The Bible is our authority in religion; it furnishes our every need (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

The marriage relationship is divine and began with our Father in heaven. Marriage must be looked upon as very sacred and holy. This means that those who unite in marriage must come to this divine union with the Will of God as their guide in life.

Man and his helpmeet, woman, when properly joined

together, constitute the highest, most noble and beautiful work of God on earth. The results of divorce are more than an assembly of statistics. Real wounds and scars are left on human beings; many times, wounds never to be healed. So often children, who suffer the consequences of broken homes, are never able to adjust themselves to the distresses and heartaches that follow. The cost of divorce is often paid by the children in a home—not in terms of money, but in terms of disappointments, frustrations, loneliness, desertions, crime and failure. How many children are robbed of the precious values of a home with its love, care, protection and guidance? These foundation principles affect the destinies of all broken homes.

Parents have a responsibility to be the kind of people that their children should grow up to be like. Fathers, especially, have a heavy responsibility to be good examples to their children. Fathers need to study the attributes of God and then need to reflect these qualities in their own lives, if they love their children and want them to love God.

There are many false conceptions of marriage and divorce in our country. We will cite some of the scriptures to show that God's plan for marriage is that it be permanent. We must understand we are living under the New Covenant (Heb. 8:13, Col. 2:14). "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man" (Rom. 7: 2-3). "The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord... Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband" (1 Cor. 7:39, 7:2). When the question of divorce was raised, our Lord quoted from the Old Testament Scriptures; "For this cause shall a man leave his

father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh; so that they are no more two, but one flesh." Then Jesus added, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Mark 10:7-9).

Every effort should be made to preserve the home. Marriage and the home are for the well being of mankind. To recognize and practice God's Laws will bring happiness; to fail to do so will bring grief, strife and broken homes. God's Way is always best.

Every family needs the strength that flows from a Christian mother and a Christian father. Every family needs the strength that flows from a full involvement in the activities of the church. May I appeal to you if you are a father who is not yet a Christian, or perhaps a mother, or even one of the children who is old enough to understand what it means to come to Christ, that you delay no longer in giving your life to the Lord, for your family's sake, but even more especially, for your own eternal salvation, I would urge you to believe in Jesus Christ as the divine Son of God and Saviour of the world. Let this faith grow deep and strong to the point that it leads you to confess your faith before men, turning away from the world with its sin. Then, in that great moment of total dedication to Christ, be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for the remission of your sins. Then the Lord will add you to the church. Do it because you love the Lord. Do it for your own eternal salvation. Do it because it will mean so very much to your family.

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The New Testament is Absolute Authority

by George Bentsch

“All power is given unto me (Jesus) in heaven and in earth . . . who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him . . . and he is the mediator of the New Testament” (Mt. 28:18, 1 Pet. 3:22, Heb. 9:15).

No Authority Equals Chaos

For any endeavor of men to succeed, there must be someone recognized as the commander. The people who are commanded must be disciplined to obey so that the orders of the commander will be carried out. Solomon points to the ant and locust as being organized and yet having no visible commander. Man does not so function. Success requires that someone be “boss” to direct the project, whatever it is.

There is a story that comes out of World War II that illustrates this point very well. A group of artillery men had set up their weapon then discovered that while they worked, they had been surrounded by enemy tanks. Deciding their situation was hopeless, the gun commander aimed at the nearest tank and gave the order to fire. Then, to his amazement, they swung the gun around and destroyed all the enemy tanks one by one. Their first shot destroyed the tank of the squadron commander and there was no one to order the tanks to open fire.

The above story well illustrates the fact “that it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps.” To me some of the saddest words in the Bible are these: “There was no king in those days and every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” The result of this condition was, “There arose a generation which

knew not God.” Through submission to God’s authority the Hebrews inherited a land that flowed with milk and honey. When they rejected the authority, the inheritance was lost. “These things were written aforetime for our admonition and learning, upon whom the ends of the world are come.”

“No man setteth out to build a tower without first sitting down and counting the cost.” Construction demands a planner and if the project is of any magnitude, a documented set of specifications and a clear set of blue prints are absolute requirements. Even with all this there still must be a superintendent on the job site to keep the men organized and moving. Without these three basic elements—a planner, a plan, and an executor—no building would ever be built nor any other worthwhile endeavor completed.

God’s Word Was Total Authority in All Past Ages

Jehovah God, the Planner, with plan in mind executed those plans by creating the universe, thereby establishing himself as owner and sovereign ruler of all things. David put it very well when he said, “The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. For he hath founded it upon the seas and established it upon the floods” (Ps. 24:1-2). God’s question to Job is even more impressive. “Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?” (Job 38:4).

God certainly had the power to construct man to be totally obedient, but He chose rather to make him a creature of choice. Therefore man is a free moral agent and responsible for the choices he makes, God having set before him rewards for good and punishment for evil. This was so from the very beginning as evidenced by His treatment of such people as Adam, Noah, and Abraham. These had not the written word, but moved with fear at the voice of God realizing that, as Abraham put it, “The judge of all the earth will do right.” When

Moses came on the scene, God gave a law written in stone giving directives for conduct relating both to God and man. Under this law, punishment was ordered to be immediate and without mercy under two or three witnesses, as Paul wrote to the Hebrews.

God is both Creator and Builder. So long as the Israelites were faithful, He built them up, but the way of the transgressor is hard. The way they chose was not according to the Will of God. In spite of all His warnings and pleadings through the prophets, Israel chose the way of idolatry for which they were dispersed among the nations.

Does their fall alter the authority of God's Word? No, in no way. They were told in the beginning to remain obedient. Afterward, over and over they were told to return to the God of their fathers. These warnings were given with all authority and the fate they suffered shows us the truth of the scripture, "God is not mocked."

The Futility of Human Opinion

Those things which were written aforetime were written for our admonition and learning. Thus, we have recorded the errors of the previous generations. Therefore, we would be wise to profit by the mistakes of others and thus avoid the judgment of God. It has always amazed me to read how the children of Israel were so soon moved from the worship of God to the worship of the golden calf in the wilderness. They even said, "These be the gods, oh Israel, that brought you out of Egypt." How foolish they were to ascribe the acts of divine deliverance to the works of their hands. All who admit a belief in the Scriptures will tell you that this worship of the works of their hands was total error, judged a sin by God. Yet these same people will meet in a legislative capacity to write the creeds, edicts, and laws by which their worship is governed. Are they not worshiping the works of their hands? Do they not serve the creature more than the Creator? Jesus said, "In vain

do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men.”

It is not ignorance or lack of information that brings men into condemnation. Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived, yet he fell into idol worship through the temptation of his sin-cursed wives. God’s sentence for this was, “I will rend the kingdom from the hand of thy son.” Solomon could in no way justify what he had done. All his life he had been taught, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve.” Not only this, but God had spoken twice directly to him. Thus, with the maximum of information at his disposal, he fell into the trap we sometimes feel is reserved for the ignorant. In the same way some of the most knowledgeable and best educated men of our time will defend the creeds of men to the death, paying more homage to human organizations than they do to God’s written Word.

In 1 Kings 11:31 the prophet, Ahijah, speaking to Jeroboam said, “The Lord giveth thee ten tribes of the children of Israel. Thou shalt rule so long as you worship and serve God.” How soon this man forgot. No sooner had he ascended to the throne, then he lost his faith in God, and said to the people, “It is too hard for you to go to Jerusalem to worship God in the prescribed manner at the designated place. I will set up these golden calves in Dan and Bethel.” He proclaimed, “Behold thy gods, oh Israel, which brought thee up out of Egypt.” Thus, Jeroboam sacrificed the truth on the altar of expediency and adopted a religion that was totally counterfeit. He stands as a sad example for those who would devise their own means and methods of worship.

It is written concerning those who were transplanted into the land of Samaria that “they feared the Lord and worshiped idols.” In them, there is an example of our modern religionists who long and loudly proclaim their love and faith in God crying Lord, Lord, yet not doing the things he says. (Compare Luke 6:46.)

The New Testament Is the Last Inspired Work of Authority

With this statement, "I will build by church," Jesus Christ established himself as the one who would use the plan which existed in the mind of God from the beginning to build the divine institution through which man could be freed from the curse of sin. With the possessive pronoun, "my," he established himself as owner or sovereign, if you please. The Hebrew writer portrays him as being both king and priest "after the order of Melchisedec." Therefore, he has the kingly authority to issue mandates governing our conduct in relation to each other and the priestly role of teaching men how to conduct themselves in relationship to God.

With this in mind, he said simply, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." Paul said that the only thing excepted from Christ's authority was God the Father (1 Cor. 15:27). The apostle also said, "For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (vs. 25-26). Therefore, as long as human beings are dying, Christ is reigning. There is no time lapse between the destroying of death and "then cometh the end."

By this we see that the priesthood of Christ is the last priesthood that will exist on the earth. His authority dominates all things until the end. He said very simply, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall never pass away."

Those who search for a new and direct revelation search in vain. Jesus said the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into all truth and that he would recall to their memory the teachings of our Lord himself. They wrote for us what James refers to as the "perfect law of liberty." Paul writing to the Galatians said, "Though we or an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you than that you have received, let him be accursed." It is plain then, that the gospel is, according to Paul, "the power of God unto salvation." It represents the completion of God's plan to reconcile man unto Himself.

The Necessity of Complying With the Law

Isaiah said, "It is not in man that walketh to direct his steps." We can see by reading the Old Testament the unfortunate end of those who laid aside the commandments of God for the doctrines of men. Paul commended the Corinthians by writing, "Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances as I delivered them unto you" (1 Cor. 11:2). *He did not praise them for anything more or less than strict obedience.* To Timothy he wrote, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou has heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13). In the second chapter, second verse, he wrote, "And the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." The importance of the propagation of sound doctrine (or in plain words, the truth) cannot be overemphasized.

Paul said, "Whatsoever is not of faith, is sin," and "Faith cometh by hearing the word of God." He further wrote in 2 Timothy 3:14, "But continue thou in the things which thou has learned and has been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them." Timothy's close association with Paul was enough to give him all confidence in his teacher. There are those who question the authority of Paul's writings, but Peter put them on par with other scriptures. He wrote that Paul's writings were difficult to understand and that those who were unstable and unlearned wrested them as they did the other scriptures unto their own destruction. Peter also wrote concerning Christ, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Pet. 1:3-4). The Hebrew writer wrote in

Hebrews 4:1, "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him" (Heb. 2:3).

We therefore conclude that we should pass the time of our sojourning here in fear, lest, yielding to the pressure to compromise, we find ourselves standing with those who, as we have said, sacrificed truth on the altar of expediency, and have established a counterfeit religion so like the true one, yet different. These are they who will stand before the judge of all crying, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name cast out devils and in thy name done many wonderful works?" To whom he will answer, "I never knew you, depart from me ye workers of iniquity."

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

The Error of Predestination

by Hubert Laney

Can man do anything about his soul's salvation, or was his destiny foreordained and predestined before the world began? Some believe (Presbyterians), "God, from all eternity, did, by most wise and holy counsel of His own will, freely and unchangeably ordain whatever comes to pass."¹ Moreover, "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of His glory, some men and angels are predestinated unto everlasting life, and others foreordained to everlasting death. These angels and men thus predestinated and foreordained are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished."² This belief seems to me like an example of fate as described by ancient Greek mythologists. "Fatalism properly understood would reduce practical ethics to nothing but the advice that we should resign ourselves indifferently to the course of events."³ In the strictest sense, the doctrine of predestination is Fate personified. "The ideal of fate as an impersonal force that absolutely predetermines all events was, to the ancient world as it is to the modern, a philosophical or theological concept."⁴ We can see that this doctrine was definitely based on the ancient belief of fate.

God did not make us as robots, in that we cannot choose the course we want to take. This is what predestination actually teaches. Both double predestination and unmerited salvation are a part of it with unmerited salvation being the common theme.

Some would argue that God is always of the same mind, therefore cannot save man one day and condemn him the next

day. For this they take us to Job 23:13. "But he is in one mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth." Let us go back to the time of Jonah and see, if by man's obedience, God will change His mind on how He deals with man's sin. "And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh will be overthrown" (Jonah 3:4). But in the 10th verse of the same chapter, "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not." So we see that God deals with us on the basis of our obedience.

Of unmerited salvation, we are told by those who believe this doctrine that salvation is unconditional because it is of grace and not of works. To prove this they take us to Rom. 11:5-7: "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace. And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." From this reading they would have us believe that God just hands salvation to certain men, free, without anything done on their part, and purposely blinds the hopes of the others.

But let us look at grace. Man sinned in the garden and until Christ, there was no forgiveness of sin. Man was guilty and deserved punishment but, by the grace of God, He gave man a plan whereby he could come back to God or be reconciled to God. He set down some rules or laws that man could conform to. He gave man a covenant (Heb. 8:6) through his mediator Jesus Christ (1 Tim. 2:5). This new testament (Heb. 9:15) was given by the grace of God. He gave us a way to eternal life (Jno. 14:6) of which we were not worthy. He did not owe us salvation because of our works, hence salvation is not of works but of grace.

What about the argument concerning Jacob and Esau in Rom. 9:11-13? "(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger. As it is written, Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated." Predestinationists take these verses out of context. The whole chapter is talking about Israel as a nation—not *individuals*. Here Paul quotes from the old law to those that knew the old law. They knew what he was talking about and did not take it out of context as some do today. In Gen. 25:21-23 we read the first half of the quote. Verse 23, "And the Lord said unto her, Two nations are in thy womb, and two manner of people shall be separated from thy bowels; and the one people shall be stronger than the other people; and the elder shall serve the younger." Notice he uses the word *people* which is plural, and not a word about God hating the person of Esau. The scripture Paul quotes in the last half of the verse is in Mal. 1:1-4, "The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi. I have loved you, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the Lord: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau, and laid his mountains and his heritage waste for the dragons of the wilderness. Whereas Edom saith, We are impoverished, but we will return and build the desolate places; thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall build, but I will throw down; and they shall call them, The border of wickedness, and The people against whom the Lord hath indignation for ever." This plainly talks about the nation and not the individuals. God has always demanded obedience, and has punished the disobedient (Eph. 5:6 and Col. 3:6). Therefore, Paul is not talking about the salvation of Jacob and Esau as individuals.

Another argument is from the 20-24th verses of the same chapter (Rom. 9). Paul writes about the potter and clay: "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the

thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor? What if God is willing to show his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction: and that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?" We only have to turn to the reference in Jer. 18:1-10 to see what Paul is referring to. "The word which came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the Lord came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instance I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." Here he is talking about a nation and a kingdom. In verse 7 he says if one becomes marred in the potter's hands he changes it. He does not try to make it bad. But we find in the 10th verse that should it go bad he no longer holds it in esteem. There is no predestination here.

Some also use 2 Tim. 1:9 to prove their doctrine; "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to

our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” Predestinationists use this verse in an attempt to show that God saved us individually before the world began. As always, they take the verse out of context and try to put it against many very clear passages of scriptures. Here again, Paul is talking about a state of being, and not of individuals. He is talking about the state of being IN Christ; therefore, all one needs to know from here is how to get into Christ. We find that God had determined, even before the world, that salvation be only in Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). We also find that Jesus is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). Hence, we must be in Christ to be saved. We are *not* saved individually (with a special plan or through predestination)—God does not deal with us any differently than he does with anyone else.

Most people would like to have a “special personal” relationship with God, but we *all* have to go through Christ to get to God. We agree that we are judged by our individual efforts as they agree or disagree with our rule book, the Bible. ALL blessings we receive as Christians come through Christ. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3). We can safely conclude that outside of Christ there is no salvation.

In reference to 2 Tim. 1:9, how are we called? “But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Thess. 2:13-14). Thus we are called by the gospel. If then we are called by the gospel, how could we be saved without obeying the gospel?

Were we chosen or elected before the world began? It would

sound that way if we lifted Eph. 1:4-5 out of context. "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." We are children by Christ. How? Gal. 3:26, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." By faith. How? Rom. 10:17, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So we obtain faith by hearing, but is that all there is to salvation's plan? James 1:22 says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." It sounds to me like we have to do something. James further states in the second chapter, verses 17 and 18, that without works, faith is nothing. So again putting the text back in context, we find that God chooses us IF we are in Christ. He chose to make His calling through Christ, even before the world began. Christ calls, but we must answer.

Again, some would turn to Acts 13:48, "And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed." Predestinationists say that only those whom God appointed believed. But Paul said in verses 38 and 39 in the same chapter that forgiveness was for ALL that believed. In verse 46, Paul said that the Jews put it (the Word of God) from them and judged themselves unworthy. It was their choice and God does not make that choice for them.

Another favorite quote of theirs is found in Eph. 2:8-10. "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." Again, if we read the whole chapter it is talking about the Gentiles being brought in. The Gentiles were without hope (verse 12) and God gave them a way to be saved (verse 13), just as the Jews (verses 14, 15 and 18), thus

bringing us together as Christ said in Jno. 10:16, that we should be one fold. Therefore the language, "not of yourselves." The Gentiles could not save themselves nor could they work out a way of salvation. God alone could supply them (or us, we being Gentiles), with a plan for salvation. How do we have access to this grace? "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom. 5:2). So it is by faith. Again, faith cometh by hearing.

In another attempt to uphold the doctrine of predestination, they take us to Jno. 6:37-39. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day." We only have to read the next verse to understand who God gives to Christ. Verse 40, "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." So those who believe on him are the ones given to Christ. No predestination here.

Another predestination text comes from Rom. 8:28-30, "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified." Again these verses by themselves sound like they support the doctrine. But the very first verse gives us a key of whom he is speaking. When we study the Bible we need to ask some simple questions to better understand what is taught. Who said it? When was it stated? To whom was it given? Why

was it written? Where did it take place? If most or all of these questions can be satisfied, we can better understand and rightly divide the Word of Truth. So with these verses let's ask some questions. Who was he referring to? Verse one (Rom. 8), "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." He is talking to those who WALK AFTER THE SPIRIT. Dropping down to the 7th and 8th verses, we find we are in the Spirit, *IF* we let the Spirit or Will of God dwell in us. Verses 13 and 14 teach us that we have the option of living after the flesh or killing the fleshly desires. Putting it plainly, in the 14th verse if we are led by or if we follow the Spirit of God, THEN, and only then, are we the sons of God. Who then is God's elect? Those who obey him!

There may be other scriptures that are used, but I think we can put them in context and understand what was the original message. Predestination is not only a doctrine based on misconception, but it contradicts the entire Bible plan of salvation. *IF* God were to choose who would be saved or lost regardless of what they did, He would be a respecter of persons. But we hear Peter say in Acts 10:34-35, "...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him." Therefore God calls ALL men, but sadly, few answer. Matt. 7:21-22 also shows us that there is something to do. Rev. 22:14 states that the promises are to those who DO his commands. Christ's invitation is to ALL men (Matt. 11:28). We are told that we are able to make our calling and election sure in 2 Peter 1:10. How can this be if we are saved unconditionally? There are many, many other scriptures to refute this doctrine but I hope those we have considered are enough to put us on the right track concerning predestination.

We believe in predestination as taught in God's Word. It is to a group of people (Christians), and NOT to individuals. In conclusion, any time we study a subject, we must look at ALL

passages pertaining to the subject and put them in their proper context. Let us study to understand the truth and not to win an argument. Let us accept the truth once we find it. The doctrine of individuals being foreordained and predestined to eternal salvation (or eternal damnation) goes against all gospel teachings. It must be rejected. We and only we can make the choice where we spend eternity. God has done His part, now it is up to us.

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1. *Presbyterian Confession of Faith*, Chapter 3, Section 1.
 2. *Ibid.*, Sections 3, 4 and 5.
 3. *Encyclopedia Britannica* 9, 1973, pg. 109.
 4. *Ibid.*, pg. 110.

*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

CULTS – the Religious Deceivers

by Lindley Fowler

“And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many . . . And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many . . . For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matt. 24: 4-5, 11, 24).

People today are spiritually starving. Our society is now almost totally secularized and provides little satisfaction for spiritual hunger. Religious denominations and even the church of Christ have, in many cases, lost sight of the meat and drink of God’s Word. The result is that many who “hunger and thirst for righteousness” remain unfilled, craving food but not knowing where to find it.

In come the cults and new religions, spin-offs of orthodox religions. These groups offer hope, purpose and spiritual nourishment, however false and deceptive they may be. Many young people are quite willing to try to meet their needs in these new religious movements.

The actual number of religious cults currently in the United States is unknown. James and Marcia Rudin, two outspoken anticultist authors, cite various estimates that between two and three million Americans have become involved as members in anywhere from one to three thousand such groups. The Citizen’s Freedom Foundation – Information Services, the largest national coalition of anticult associations, offers the figure of over 3,000 “destructive cults” operating in this country.¹

Cults tend to flourish in an atmosphere of stress and social change. Past history indicates that when times are difficult, when people must work together to achieve an end, when total devotion or commitment is required for mere daily existence—at such times, cults serve few needs. But if life is too easy, if one has neither purpose nor direction, if there is no ordeal ahead to test courage and ideals—at these times, cults are indispensable.

A Cult by Definition

How do we identify or describe a cult? *Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary* defines a cult as “a system of worship of a deity . . . the rites of a religion; great devotion to some person, idea or thing, esp. such devotion viewed as an intellectual fad; a sect.”

In defining the word “sect,” Webster expands on these thoughts: “a group having in common a leader or a distinctive doctrine, a following; in religion, a party dissenting from an established or parent church.”

For the Christian the most significant part of a definition of cult is theological in nature. This is so because basic issues of truth and error are involved and he must be able to distinguish one from the other.

A theological definition of cult must be based on a standard of Christian orthodoxy. Using the Bible's teaching as a basis, James W. Sire defines cult as “any religious movement that is organizationally distinct and has doctrines and/or practices that contradict those of the Scriptures as interpreted by traditional Christianity as represented by the major Catholic and Protestant denominations, and as expressed in such statements as the Apostle's Creed.”²

According to Lowell D. Streiker, “A cult is a movement of social protest and personal affirmation. It offers a total way of life to those who are alienated from their families and the attitudes by which their families and their society attempted to prepare them for successful adulthood. Cults attract the

dispossessed, the bored, the lonely. Neither poverty nor youth is a necessary precondition for feeling the lure of a cult."³

Characteristics of a Cult—What features can we expect to find in most cults? Listed below are several characteristics. All cults will have some of these features; not all cults have all of them.

1. Authoritarian leadership is a crucial element in all cults. There is always a central, living human leader who commands total loyalty and allegiance. This leader has authority over both doctrine and practice, and his/her interpretations of the "truth" are accepted without question.

2. The beliefs, practices and values of a cult are contrary to those of the dominant culture. An example of this would be the normal family relationship which is totally destroyed by some cults.

3. There is a new "truth" in addition to or which replaces the Bible as the authoritative source for one's salvation.

4. Rules and regulations control every detail of a member's life, both for spiritual matters and everyday living. These rules originate with the leadership.

5. Cults are sanction-oriented. Members are required to conform to established practices and beliefs. Various means are used to insure conformity. The more extreme cults use fear, intimidation and guilt to manipulate its members. Some may require signing of covenants and loyalty oaths as a means to achieve control.

6. Nearly all new religious movements are persecution conscious. They believe they have been singled out for persecution by mainstream Christians, the government, the press, or parents.

Dangers of Cults

The majority of converts to the new religious movements or cults come from the ranks of our young. The average age at the time of the first contact is between eighteen and twenty-two

years old. In other words, the immediate post-high school period is when a potential joiner is most vulnerable, though persons as young as fourteen have become victims. A profile of the typical cult member reveals that he or she is white, middle or upper-middle class, with at least some college education and a nominally religious upbringing. In short, the typical cult prospect fits the image of the all-American suburban boy or girl next door.⁴

Perhaps more than anything else, young people pursuing cults today are involved in a search for identity and a quest for spiritual reality that provides clear-cut answers to their questions.

This identity confusion is commonplace among the children of affluence, the chief target of the cults. As an ex-member of the Children of God describes it, "this is such a searching generation, because everything's been so easy for us. Everything's been handed to us. We've never been hungry. It's almost like we're drowned in a sea of possibilities." Or, as Theodore Roszak observes, "Never before has such freedom of choice been available in regard to work, styles of life, and beliefs. Youth may well be victims of the dilemma of overchoice."⁵

Mental health authorities who have researched the effects of cult membership on the mental and physical health of young people have concluded that "those who already have major emotional problems before joining run the risk of additional damage through prolonged exposure to extremist cults that practice mind control and prevent or inhibit autonomous behavior...they may eventually lose the ability to think and function with any degree of effectiveness, especially in the outside world."⁶

Even more disturbing is the fact that young people who have no history of mental illness, and who have relatively normal, healthy personalities upon joining a cult, suffer the destructive impact of a very real, very frightening form of thought control

that stifles independent thinking and defeats the will.

Chris Elkins, an ex-Moonie who wrote about his experiences with the Unification Church, related an incident which indicates all too clearly the horror of the fruit that a cult bears: "Once, while I was still a Moonie, a certain thing troubled me. It had to do with a particular teaching of the Unification Church, one that emerges from the verse in Matthew where Christ says, 'He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me . . .' Inasmuch as Moon's children are often at odds with their natural parents, the Church asserts that 'to be truly principled' one must sever ties with his or her family. This teaching is stressed in a variety of ways, and it forced me to ask a question of David, a Moonie friend of mine. I asked, 'If Father (Moon) asked you to do so, would you kill your mother and father for the sake of the church?' 'In a second,' David replied."⁷

Cults Examined

Unification Church (Moonies)—The Unification Church, short for Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, was established in Seoul, Korea in 1954 by Sun Myung Moon. The basic stated objective of the Moon church is to bring happiness, new hope, and unification to a world in despair and change.⁸

Moon, born in 1920, claims that on Easter morning in 1936, while praying on a Korean mountainside, Jesus appeared to tell him he had been chosen to finish the work that Jesus had begun. For the next nine years he prepared himself for that mission. In 1957 the new revelation Moon claimed to have received from God was published in a book entitled, *Divine Principle*. In a speech to his followers, Moon said, "Unless you truly know the meaning behind it, the Bible can reveal very little . . . the *Divine Principle* gives the true meaning of the secret behind the verse."⁹

Sun Myung Moon traces all problems of human history back

to the Garden of Eden. It was there that Adam and Eve failed to obey God and form a sinless family that would have served as a pattern for succeeding generations. The archangel Lucifer, jealous of God's attention to Adam and Eve and filled with lust for Eve, literally seduced Eve, making him the spiritual parent of all mankind. Eve's fornication with Lucifer, made worse by her later seduction of Adam in an attempt to erase her sin, was the original sin that caused God to cast them out of Eden. Since that time, all human history has been a succession of unsuccessful attempts by various Biblical figures such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus to marry and raise a model family as God originally had intended Adam and Eve to do.

Unification theology refers to Jesus as the Son of God and admits that he did provide spiritual salvation for mankind by his death on the cross. However, Jesus is not recognized as part of the godhead. In fact, Unification teachings ignore the concept of the Trinity that is so basic to orthodox Christianity.

The Unification movement is millennial. Moon claims we live in the last days when the Kingdom of God is at hand. He first predicted that 1967 would be the year of the coming kingdom. Later he revised that date to 1981 and recently has extended the date to the year 2001.

Though most Moon followers, and Moon himself, hedge on publicly admitting that he is the Lord of the Second Advent, there is no doubt that most members see him in that role. The *Divine Principle* indicates the Messiah will likely be a South Korean.

The People's Temple—The forerunner to the People's Temple, the non-denominational Christian Assembly of God Church, was established in 1953 by evangelist Jim Jones. Jones offered a ministry to the poor which included soup kitchens, day-care facilities, and drug counseling. Jones stressed racial equality which, during that time, was an unpopular message with many whites. Later, his Indianapolis church was affiliated with the Disciples of Christ denomination,

and in 1964 he was ordained a Disciples of Christ minister.

In 1965, Jim Jones moved to California, taking with him 100 members of his Indianapolis People's Temple. He claimed to have had a vision of a nuclear holocaust that would soon destroy most of the United States, and felt that for some reason he could survive the disaster in the Redwood Valley of California. He continued the same charitable pursuits that he was known for that attracted poor inner-city blacks and a small following of whites.

Jones moved most of his organization to remote Jonestown, Guyana, in 1977, where his idea of "revolutionary suicide" turned into the reality of a horror story in November, 1978.

Observers say that during the early years of Jones' ministry, he and his church were persecuted. This, they say, caused him to become paranoid and very insecure, and probably helps to explain his later actions. Jones originally preached a fairly standard, basic Christian message which stressed the brotherhood of all persons regardless of race. It's not known whether as time went on he simply became emotionally and mentally unbalanced, or whether he just turned into a shrewd, manipulative hypocrite. In the late 1960's, his message began to change radically. He began claiming the ability to perform miracles in curing illnesses and resurrecting the dead. At various times he said he was a reincarnation of Jesus, Buddha, Marx and Lenin. The Bible meant less and less to Jones until it was simply replaced by his own prophecies and teachings. In 1973 he actually told his followers to call him "Father" and to pray to him. He also asked them to carry his picture in their wallets.¹⁰

Jones had become very disillusioned with the American economic and social system. This is believed to explain why he became such a strong advocate of socialism and, in time, was attracted to the idea of revolutionary suicide as a dramatic act of defiance.

The People's Temple was unlike the majority of other cults

that focus their recruiting on young adults from middle-class families, predominately white. In contrast, almost 80% of Jones' followers were black and from the lower economic end of American society. Almost one-fourth were old enough to be drawing Social Security and about one-sixth were under twelve years old.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness—ISKCON's members are usually known by their nickname, the Hare Krishnas or simply the Krishnas.

The worship of Lord Krishna as the highest manifestation of God, had its roots in the fifteenth century as part of the Hindu religion. A Hindu saint, Chaitanya Mahaprabha, born in 1486, promoted this worship. (Krishna followers view Chaitanya as a living incarnation of Krishna.) He taught that love for Krishna rather than worship of other manifestations of God, would overcome spiritual demerits and provide ultimate liberation. Over the past four and one-half centuries, a succession of swamis ("one who controls his senses" or "enlightened teacher") has carried on Chaitanya's creed.

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, a sixty-seven year old Indian businessman, founded the Krishna movement in New York City in 1966. In 1959, while still in India, he followed the Hindu custom of forsaking all previous ties to the material world and devoting himself exclusively to religious matters. He left his wife and five children and became a Hindu monk, later carrying his message of Krishna worship to the western world.

After a year in New York City he moved his mission to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district, where he attracted large numbers of hippies and other counterculture youths, who were most open to his convictions. He promised that one could "Stay High All the Time and Discover Eternal Bliss."

Classical Hindu theology claims that there is one Eternal Absolute in terms of which our own eyes and our individual consciousnesses are simply illusions. The goal is to lose one's

sense of distinctiveness and merge into the Absolute.

The Krishna's most famous trademark, their chant of "Hare Krishna" is their primary ritual of devotion. Each member is to say the chant daily for sixteen rounds (one round equals a chant once for each 108 prayer beads on a string.) They believe this mantra tunes in to Krishna's divine energy.

There are approximately 3,000-4,000 members living in temples throughout the United States. Many new members try the lifestyle, believing the promises of a new religion, but soon abandon its demanding practices. The Krishnas also have an experimental period to filter out people they do not want as members.

Temple presidents, who lead the members at each temple, are frequently the charismatic members who stand out in the group. They may appoint a successor upon retiring. Preachers, not assigned to any specific temple, lead Krishna revivals, study scripture, promote theology, and lecture.

Children of God—The Children of God organization recently changed its name to the Family of Love, partly because of the negative publicity it has received in the United States and Europe. It began as a coffeehouse ministry, Teens for Christ, in Huntington Beach, California. David Berg, an evangelist, took over the management of the coffeehouse in 1968, and adopted the long hair and the more laid-back lifestyle of the hippies to attract street people. Many converts moved in and lived communally.

Berg, an ordained minister of the fundamentalist Christian and Missionary Alliance, left the organization after bitter disagreements, and adopted a dislike of all organized religion. His Teens for Christ began disrupting services at local churches, sitting on the floor, challenging the minister, or shouting abuse at worshippers.

Berg and some of his followers began canvassing the country selling literature and recruiting members. The media nicknamed the group Children of God, and it stuck.

In 1972 Berg, calling himself “Moses,” led groups of followers outside the United States. He had aroused nationwide hostility from the press and parents of young members. The first American anti-cult organization, “Parents’ Committee to Free our Sons and Daughters from the Children of God Organization,” was formed, and a deprogramming service was set up.

There is no systematic statement of theology. The Bible is the cult’s main scripture, supplemented by Berg’s prophecies. It believes in the millennium, at which time the Children of God will battle Satan (“Systemites”—all non-believers and most other religious persons). It believes Christ and his “defenders” will achieve victory and establish a throne in Jerusalem with Children of God members serving as important rulers. Members believe world conditions will decline drastically before the end of the social and political worlds in which they live, and withdraw into communes to await the return of Christ.

Members attempted to remain self-sufficient financially by pooling their cash, growing their own food, and shoplifting (“spoiling Egypt”). As this became increasingly difficult to do, they began to solicit donations from the “corrupt” society they condemned, begging money from passers-by in exchange for literature.

It has been difficult for Berg to oversee the far-flung colonies, and the possibility of larger groups splitting off into factions is a continual concern. Yet to further bureaucratize the movement will transform it into the very sort of thing—organized religion—he despises.

EST—This movement was founded by Werner Erhard in 1971. The major thrust of the EST organization is the Erhard Seminars Training, an intensive 60-hour training program. The official stated purpose of this training “is to transform your ability to experience living so that the situations you have been trying to change, or have been putting up with, clear up just in the process of life itself.”¹¹

One of the main doctrines of principles of EST is that each of us is totally responsible for our lives. We can't blame others for our mistakes and problems. We are in complete control of all that happens to us, and whatever happiness or sorrow we experience is what we have chosen to happen. Therefore, right now our lives must be exactly what we want them to be.

What this means, of course, is that our own experiences create ultimate reality. And if we create ultimate reality, we are nothing less than God. Werner Erhard's belief is that "human beings are God." Graduates of EST training testify to the same view, "You are God and you create everything around you and you create the Universe."¹²

This is an Eastern concept of god. God is all that exists. Everything is part of God. Anything that is not a part of God is illusion.

Mr. Erhard claims that EST doesn't interfere with anyone's religious beliefs, but says, "Had I been in any religious order or any church or monastery, I definitely could not have done any of this. It would be heresy." He goes on to explain, "For instance, I believe that belief in God is the greatest barrier to God in the universe—the single greatest barrier. I would prefer someone who is ignorant to someone who believes in God. Because the belief in God is a total barrier, almost a total barrier to God...there isn't anything but spirituality, which is just another word for God, because God is everything."¹³

Brainwashing

Many writers are convinced that new converts to many cults or the so-called "new religions" undergo a form of brainwashing. Although I'm confident that some type of "mind-control" or "mind manipulation" is involved in many cults, my limited knowledge of the subject is such that I can't say that it would come under the strict definition of brainwashing. It certainly could not be classified as the same type of brainwashing used by the North Koreans during the Korean War, which used

torture with extreme physical deprivation.

Webster defines brainwashing as “the forcible replacement of one group of political ideas by another group, especially through indoctrination and mental torture.

San Francisco State professor Richard P. Marsh says brainwashing is “an attempt to confuse by sudden reversals of logic, to frighten and humiliate a captive subject in order to break his will and insinuate forcibly into his mind the belief system of his captor.”¹⁴

The question of brainwashing seems to depend on the amount of force and coercion used to induce the change in beliefs. Also, implied in the use of the word is the idea of involuntary confinement.

Of the cults that I have examined, perhaps EST training comes closest to using brainwashing in its strictest sense. EST involves sixty hours of intensive training of consecutive week-ends.

On the first Saturday morning, a training supervisor goes over the ground rules several times. There will be no talking, no smoking, no note-taking, no watches allowed in the seminar room, no sitting next to anyone you knew before you came, no getting out of your chair except for one food break and three bathroom breaks during each sixteen-hour day. The trainer then gets onto the stage and wastes no time in getting down to business. There is no introduction, no niceties. He glowers at the participants and proceeds to tell them that they are all machines, that their lives don't work, that their best strategies, theories, beliefs, and hopes about what is true in life are all worthless. He paces the stage and accuses, continually peppering his speech with profanity.

Participants are allowed to respond by raising their hands. Many, of course, raise objections to what is being said. But the trainer relentlessly kids and/or curses each one into seeing that no belief system works.

As the hours pass, backaches, full bladders, hunger, nausea

and boredom set in. Some participants ask for vomit bags. Complaints grow. Finally, between midnight and 3:00 AM, participants are sent home exhausted. But this is only the beginning.

The next three days of the training go much the same way. The verbal abuse continues. Long periods pass between breaks. Sometimes the temperature in the training room is set in the low 40's.

Trainees are put through various "processes"—one called the "truth process," one called the "danger process." William Greene, author of *EST: Four Days to Make Your Life Work*, describes it this way: "The first row is told to go to the platform and make eye contact. Watching this process is somewhat like being transmitted to a combination insane asylum/torture ward. What happens to the trainees is absolutely incredible... like a scene from a horror movie, people begin to fall apart right before your eyes."¹⁵

Greene goes on to say that "Everyone goes through a tremendous emotional upheaval. During that upheaval, the belief systems of the trainees are very often cast aside." One EST trainer told his trainees, "We're gonna throw away your whole belief system... We're gonna tear you down and put you back together."¹⁶

Intellect alone cannot easily withstand the onslaught of the training. Intellectual attackers often become yielded converts. A Dr. Kovel remarks, "The most sophisticated judgment is no match for such seminar conditions—which indeed make their effect felt, not on the intellect, but on the soft space that yearning occupies behind the mask of reason. Numerous people who have undergone EST tell how they attempted to dispute the trainer, only to become confounded and yield. What such reports leave out is that the most powerful intellect necessarily becomes puerile under the conditions of the training. It is like playing tennis with your side of the court under water."¹⁷

The techniques used by the Unification Church (Moonies) are somewhat different. After attending one or more preliminary lectures, a potential convert is usually asked to attend a three-day workshop located at a church, a camp, a training center, or a rural retreat.

One learns quickly that he is not to be left alone and that all "spiritual children" have someone of the opposite sex from the "family" assigned to them. If one should wander off by himself, someone will follow and politely ask him to rejoin the group.

One also learns that there is a rigidly held schedule. There are certain times for eating, exercising, singing, attending lectures, etc.

Rarely is one allowed to engage in casual conversation with anyone. Creativity is discouraged. All day one is bombarded by ideas. There is little time for rest or relaxation, so one's resistance is low. When one resists in any way, he is met with benevolent concern. Peer approval is an important technique which subtly tells one to conform. The trainers aim directly at one's most vulnerable points—the need to belong, to feel useful, and to feel loved. Throughout the workshop one is smothered with affection—hugs, pats, hand-holding and smiles.

There comes a point when negative reaction to the regimental control gives way to automatic reaction. One then tries to please, but the only way is to conform. One succumbs many times to small acts of conformity without realizing it. One feels guilty when he holds back, and is told that wanting to be alone is a symptom of fear and alienation. One also realizes that the lectures are becoming more emotional and that he is being affected by them.

Usually, at this point one is asked to join the Moonie movement. The family member who has been with him most will beg and plead with him to stay. There will be tears and begging until one decides to stay.

Once one has committed himself to the movement, things

begin to change. In time, the church sees to it that being with them makes one so unable to cope with the real world that he is compelled to stay with them. One is taught to mistrust his mind and is given an interpretation for every situation. He no longer needs to think or evaluate for himself. One becomes so dependent that he will do anything for the church and for Moon himself.

What Can We Do?

First of all, we can learn some lessons from the cults:

1. It is essential that we study our Bibles and “be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks us a reason of the hope that is in us. And we must teach our children adequately so they can do the same. One of the major appeals of the cults is that they provide ready answers to every question. Also, we must be well-prepared so that we can recognize false doctrine as such when we are confronted with it, so as not to be taken in by it.

2. How much more could be accomplished for the cause of Christ and the spread of the Gospel if we made a sincere commitment—if we all worked with the zeal, enthusiasm, determination and dedication that most members of cults have. Not that what they advocate is correct, nor the methods used. Their untiring dedication and enthusiasm is, however, a desirable trait which we should emulate.

An ex-Moonie, after leaving the Unification Church, had this to say: “I was lured to the Unification Church by people who acted upon what they believed. After years of being a Christian whose beliefs didn’t mean anything in terms of commitment or sacrifice, I was exhilarated to give all of myself to Moon. It was, at least for a time, something that gave my life some significance.”¹⁸

3. Many members of cults are simply “filled to the brim” with happiness, love and caring for others. These are traits that probably do more to account for the success of initial contacts

with potential converts than anything else. Why shouldn't members of the church of Christ, as heirs of God and recipients of that great promise of eternal life, be among the happiest people on earth?

"This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man that this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13). If a Christian believes this, he will exude love and concern for his fellow man.

How can we help our children? First, we must understand why cults are so attractive to our youth. Second, we must have totally open communication with our children. If we pretend that there are no problems in our lives, no doubts, no failings, we only widen the generation gap. Third, we must make the most of the formative years of our children. These years must be taken seriously. We must recognize that what we cannot do for our children in the first eighteen or twenty years of their lives, we are unlikely to accomplish by intervening when they become adults. We must begin when our children are young to teach them the truths of God's Word and instill in them a desire for commitment.

Consider the following excerpt from the book, *The Cults are Coming*, by Lowell D. Streiker. Mr. Streiker writes:

"The other thing to which my attention was riveted at COG (Children of God) headquarters was a sign in the kitchen: There is No Room for Self Here. A total trip. A simple transaction: total fulfillment in return for total subjection.

"I spoke not long ago at a suburban congregation of the United Church of Christ on the appeal of contemporary religious sects. Parents whose children are approaching adulthood were quite concerned. 'How can our church be as attractive to our young people as the religious groups you have described?' I was asked. 'You can't compete,' I responded, 'unless you are willing to be as demanding as the cults. Are you willing to ask young people to give up comfort, security, and

pleasure in order to devote their whole lives to your faith? Do you have a vision of a better world that they can actualize now through the full-time devotion of their every thought, word, and deed? If not, you cannot win.' Neither the minister nor the congregation liked what I had to say. For I was generating images of the kind of religion many of them had experienced as children—authoritarian, moralistic, intolerant. They did not want their children to suffer. And that's the point. Many of their children do. For them, the cults are coming."

Conclusion

In Matt. 7:15, Jesus warned, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves."

How can we know who to believe? If we truly believe God's Word, we need go no further than John 14:6, where Jesus said to Thomas, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In John 8:31-32, Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." It is the Word of God that we must know and heed. I pray that we will be equal to the challenge.

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1. David Bromley, *Strange Gods*, p. 24
 2. Ronald Enroth and others, *A Guide to Cults and New Religions*, p. 15
 3. Lowell D. Streiker, *The Cults Are Coming*, p. 9
 4. Ronald Enroth, *Youth, Brainwashing, and the Extremist Cults*, p. 149
 5. *Ibid.*, p. 151
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 155
 7. Christ Elkins, *Heavenly Deception*, p. 13
 8. Ronald Enroth, *Youth, Brainwashing, and the Extremist Cults*, p. 99
 9. David Bromley, *Strange Gods*, p. 33
 10. *Ibid.*, p. 54
 11. Ronald Enroth and others, *A Guide to Cults and New Religions*, p. 76
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 86
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 87
 14. Ronald Enroth and others, *A Guide to Cults and New Religions*, p. 84
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 80

16. *Ibid.*, p. 84
 17. *Ibid.*, p. 84
 18. Chris Elkins, *Heavenly Deception*, p. 141
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Suggested Readings:

- Awake In a Nightmare*, Ethan Feinsod, W. W. Norton & Company, 1981
Cults Are Coming, Lowell D. Streiker, Abingdon, 1978
Guyana Massacre, the Eyewitness Account, Charles A. Krause, Berkley, 1978
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A Study of Jehovah's Witnesses

by Clark Carlo

Of the several works consulted, all are unanimous in ascribing that religious sect called by the above name as being founded in 1872 in Pittsburg, PA by the American clergyman Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916). Not until 1931, however, did this sect officially go by the designation "Jehovah's Witnesses." Previous to this they were known as "Millennial Dawnists" or popularly referred to as "Russellites," after the founder of their sect with its many peculiar and singular Russellite tenets. For this reason I could easily identify with the conclusion of one Dr. William Edward Biederwolf who lived contemporary with Mr. Russell. It was his opinion, that although in his day the movement was known as the Millennial Dawnists, "Russellism" would have been a good name for it, for its doctrines are all his. A brief mention of some of those doctrines would suffice in coming to this conclusion:

That Christ's second coming took place in 1874; that all Christians having died previous to 1878 were raised from the dead to carry on in unseen form a special ministry; that Christ was to set up his millennial kingdom on this earth in 1914 at which time the end of the time of the Gentiles took place; that during the 1,000 year reign the dead will rise to life for a second chance to be saved; that at the end of this reign Satan will be destroyed and the saved will have everlasting life to be lived here on this earth; that only 144,000 will go to heaven; that death is extinction; that the soul is not immortal; that there is no literal hell; that there was no bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ; etc., etc.

In this treatise it shall be my purpose to subject a few of the

above tenets comprising the structure of Jehovah's Witnesses to the light of the scriptures.

Millennialistic

The term "Millennial Dawnists" suggests from the outset a people expecting the near dawn of a beginning millennium or thousand year reign. The term fit them very well, and as such they categorically made many of the same mistakes of other millennialists before them. History abounds with many religious groups who believed in a coming 1,000 year reign of Christ on this earth. It appears, moreover, that the majority of these millennialists dating back in history, believed likewise in the nearness of the reign's beginning in their respective lifetimes. Montanus was a man living way back in the second century who taught the eminent approach of a 1,000 year reign. He fell into ecstatic utterances claiming the ability to "prophesy in the power of the paraclete" and possessing new and fuller divine revelation than transmitted by the apostles. Maximilla became a Montanist and believed that after themselves would come the end of this age to begin the dawn of a 1,000 year reign. Likewise it is said of Tertullian who upon becoming a Montanist thought that the New Jerusalem and all it implied to the Montanist was closely imminent.

Other millennial groups found in history include the group who were responsible for the preservation of the Dead Sea scrolls found near Qumran. They believed in a final battle to come in their lifetime involving "the sons of light" versus "the sons of darkness." The aftermath of this mighty contest was to leave only their group as survivors. Cerinthius was another who lived in the first century contemporary with the apostle John. Eusebias in his work *Ecclesiastical History* relates how Cerinthius claimed information delivered him from angels, that after the resurrection would be a 1,000 years of earth reign. Eusebias goes on to quote from Irenaeus a tradition from Polycarp wherein John the apostle calls Cerinthius "that

enemy of the truth.”

So in the long line of pre-millennialists comes, in the late 1800's Charles Taze Russell. Like Maximilla and others, Russell also believed that the 1,000 years was close upon the world, even to be in his own lifetime. Somewhat as Montanus, Russell thought he had in his lifetime special ability to interpret the prophesies by virtue of having come to “the due time” when truths previously hidden were then brought to light. And as the group near Qumran who preserved the Dead Sea scrolls, Russell also taught that in his lifetime the final overthrow of all civil governments, as the world then knew them, would come to an end in 1914, quickly followed by a 1,000 year earthly reign of Christ.

The Millennium

What do the scriptures actually teach concerning the 1,000 year reign? Contrary to what many millennialists would seemingly have us believe, the 1,000 year reign is not taught in every other verse of the Bible. In fact, the only place you will find it mentioned is in Revelation chapter 20 and the first 7 verses. Far from containing the many fanciful and unfounded doctrines of Mr. Russell, these 7 verses will in fact positively rebuke the idea of Christ ruling and reigning on this earth in a theocratic sense. The reader should at this time lay aside this article and carefully read these 7 verses for himself before we go any farther. Verse 4 speaks specifically of the martyred dead. It reads, “And *they* lived and reigned *with Christ* a thousand years.” Whatever this passage is teaching, remember this key phrase, they “reigned *with Christ*.”

There are two things we know for certain concerning the reign of Christ; (1) when it began, and (2) when it shall end. It began shortly after his ascension to God's right hand where and when he took the throne of David (see Acts 2:29-36). His apostles beheld his ascension toward the throne, (“And while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of

their sight," Acts 1:9). In this time frame as he came to his reign, Daniel beheld the heavenly side of Christ's ascension to that throne; "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man *came with the clouds of heaven*, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before them. And there was given him DOMINION, and glory, and a KINGDOM, that all people, nations, and languages should SERVE HIM" (Dan. 7:13-14). The very fact that Acts 2 places Jesus on David's throne plainly declares the fact of his beginning reign at that time. That Daniel 7 assigns him DOMINION and a KINGDOM as he comes to that throne indicates again the implementation of his reign. Peter could have made it no plainer than in Acts 2:36, "Therefore" (in view of the fact that David prophesied of Christ to sit on his, David's, throne; that in so doing he referred to Christ's resurrection; that being resurrected he was exalted to the right hand of God and placed upon that throne) . . . "therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." It follows that at the point he was given a throne and a kingdom and dominion and made LORD—at that point he was given to reign and began to do so. So, we know when Christ's reign began; at his resurrection and subsequent ascension.

Secondly, we know when Christ's reign will end. I speak not of the day nor the hour; no man knows the day nor hour. I speak of knowing when Christ's reign will end in relation to its coinciding with other events which are to simultaneously take place. Those events to which I refer are Christ's second coming and the end of this world which are to take place at the same time. The scriptures on this point are as plain and forthright as any statement of fact could possibly be! 1 Cor. 15 devotes an entire chapter to the resurrection and relating events. Two of those related events, according to the apostle, are the end of the world and the end of Christ's reign, verses 21-28. Verse 21 clearly defines the subject; "The resurrection of the dead." Of

this event and time, Paul places the second coming of Christ. Verse 23, we notice, still speaks of the resurrection, and specifically of those that are “Christ’s *at his coming.*” So he is talking about two things; (1) the resurrection, and (2) Christ’s coming again. Now notice his very next words in verse 24 where Paul ties in a third event; “**THEN COMETH THE END.**” When does the end come? At Christ’s coming *which is also the time of the resurrection!* Then Paul goes on to show us one other significant event which takes place at this same time: *Christ quits ruling and reigning!* Verse 24, “Then” (at the resurrection) “cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; *when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.*” When will Christ quit reigning? “At his coming.” And what takes place at his coming? “Then cometh the end” (v. 24), and “the resurrection of the dead” (v. 21).

These two things we know of a certainty; then, about the reign of Christ; (1) it began at his resurrection, and (2) it shall end with his second coming! Therefore, when Revelation 20:4 shows us the souls of the martyrs reigning WITH Christ, we know that reign takes place sometime between his ascension and his second coming. One thing we know for certain, and that is the 1,000 year reign of Rev. 20 cannot take place after Christ’s second coming; for then he quits ruling and quits reigning, giving these back to God the Father. Although space in this treatise does not afford me the opportunity to elaborate more fully upon the nature and characteristics of the 1,000 years of Rev. 20, we have shown enough to know that, contrary to the pre-millennial viewpoint, it will not be after Christ’s return.

The Date Setters

In the 24th chapter of Matthew, the disciples asked two questions of the Lord. Their second question was “What shall be the sign of thy coming and of the end of the world?” (v. 3).

In response, he answers, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (v. 36). Notwithstanding this clear, precise, unambiguous answer of truth from the lips of the Lord himself, untold groups, cults, -isms, and individuals have flown in the face of the Lord to proclaim inside knowledge to the date of the coming of the Lord! Included in this long and evergrowing list was added the vociferous proclamations of the founder of Jehovah's Witness and his followers.

Mr. Russell has it that Christ's second coming took place in 1874, but that his coming was an invisible coming. Not only does his assertions run counter to a man *not knowing the day* of Christ's coming, but it also does specific violence *to the manner* of his coming. As opposed to an invisible coming, the scriptures teach rather the opposite, as follows:

1. Acts 1:11 teaches as human eyes beheld Christ's bodily resurrection into the clouds, so his return *will be also in visible form* as also says the angel; "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in *like manner* as ye have seen him go into heaven." (Nothing invisible about it!)

2. Rev. 1:7, "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and *every eye shall see him*, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him." (Nothing secret, or invisible here.)

3. 1 Thess. 4:16-17, "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

4. 2 Thess. 1:7, "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels..."(Nothing secret, but rather, he is to be "revealed" not concealed!)

But the date setting of 1874 is just one of many dates Jehovah's Witnessism sets. Not only did Christ come again in 1874 but 4 years later, in 1878 Mr. Russell taught that Christians then in their graves were resurrected from the dead to remain here on earth for a certain ministry! Needless to say, we see Bible truths violated by such a doctrine. For instance:

1. 1 Cor. 15 teaches, as we have already shown, that the resurrection takes place immediately "at his coming." Yet here is Russell teaching that the resurrection waited four years later than "at his coming" to transpire.

2. 1 Thess. 4:16-17 teaches that both the resurrected and the Christians alive and remaining are "caught up together . . . in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord!" Russell says they are not caught up in the air but left down here on earth. (Quite a difference!)

Kingdom Date 1914

But on no date was the founder of Jehovah's Witnesses more certain in setting than the year 1914 as marking the end of this age and Christ's kingdom being fully established on this earth. Following are several quotes from the pen of Mr. Russell as taken from the tract *Russellism Unveiled* by Wm. Edward Beiderwolf, pages 27-29:

"We consider it an established truth that the final end of the kingdoms of this world, and the full establishment of the kingdom of God, will be accomplished at the end of A.D. 1914"—*Studies in the Scriptures*, Vol. II, pg. 99.

"The present governments must all be overturned about the close of A.D. 1914"—Vol. II, pg. 242.

"The 'Battle of the Great Day of God Almighty' will end in A.D. 1914 with the complete overthrow of earth's present rulership"—Vol. II, pg. 101.

"The Gospel age harvest will end October 1914 and the overthrow of 'Christendom,' so called, must be expected to

immediately follow”—Vol. II, pg. 245.

Mr. Biederwolf went on to quote other statements of Mr. Russell concerning his date of 1914. It has been over 70 years since Russell's 1914 date, and his many emphatic prophetic assertions. They have simply and utterly failed the test of time. We live to know “that the final end of the kingdoms of this world” most certainly did not end in 1914 nor even yet to this day have done so! Nor has “the full establishment of the Kingdom of God” in the millennial sense of Russell's prediction come to pass in 1914. The overthrow of Christendom did not “immediately” follow his favored year of 1914. Russell's prophecy was all a failure and a boondoggle!

Yet, the closer 1914 came, the more adamant Mr. Russell became in his assertions. At one point he specifically allowed that should he miss his prophetic date of 1914 by so much as one year then his whole system of reckoning would be proven wrong. With our present advantage of hindsight we clearly know that he missed it completely. But strange things happened in his assertions. In spite of earlier admitting his system depended upon his versions of events to be fulfilled in 1914, Russell himself had to admit that 1914 was wrong. He then claimed that all he prophesied for that year would instead take place in 1915. In this change of predictions, it is a matter of record that we have the “prophet” Russell contradicting the “prophet” Russell. Such confusion!

Again, viewing his predictions from our present vantage point, we have clear answers to the following questions as we review Russell's predictions for 1914/1915. Did the final end of the kingdoms of this world come to an end in 1914? Did the full establishment of God's kingdom (as Russell viewed it, or in some other manner, for that matter) become accomplished fact by year's end 1914? Did the gospel age harvest come to an end by October 1914? (Has anyone been converted to Christ and found salvation since October 1914?) And did Christendom come to an immediate overthrow following October 1914? The

answers, which are self-evident, will prove sufficient to test whether the prophet who made them be true or false. You be the judge.

This Generation

Amazing as it is, in spite of the complete failure in Russell's attempt at date-setting, his movement did not come to an end though thus proven unreliable. Hurt them it did. Large numbers left the movement. Yet, in time, this sect made a remarkable comeback. Taking the helm after Russell's death was Mr. Rutherford, who was fond of proclaiming "Millions now living shall never die." And what is this but another form of date-setting. It is in a little more subtle tone, yet its impact upon the hearers has the same designed effect as did Russell's. It suggests that the "prophet" has some inside knowledge as to the time of the coming of the Lord, "therefore join our bandwagon and follow us." Yet since the late teens when Rutherford came to the helm of this movement until our present day, away and by far the majority of those who heard him first make this statement have nonetheless and in fact died. It is now safe to say *that Rutherford's generation has passed* and still the Lord has not come.

The present generation of Jehovah's Witnesses have not given up on the old date-setting tendencies. For 20 years or more now they have been saying "this generation shall not pass" till all their expectations are fulfilled! In so doing they quote this phrase from Matt. 24:34, then proceed to apply all contained in the preceding verses of that chapter and verse to our present generation: "wars and rumors of wars; nation shall rise against nation; famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places; immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." All the aforementioned signs are then paraded before us as if they can only apply to our present

generation followed by the conclusion that this, our present generation, therefore, shall not pass before Christ comes again.

Allow me to insist that in Matt. 24:3 the disciples asked two distinct questions: (1) "When shall these things be," that is, the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem with it, and (2) "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" That method of application which places verses 4-34 as applying to signs of the end of the world (which signs include "wars and rumors of wars, famine, pestilence, earthquakes, sun be darkened, etc.") carries with it two serious and peculiar flaws. The first flaw is that if verses 4-34 apply to the second coming and the end of the world, *then Christ never did answer the disciples' first question!* For it seems universally agreed that verses 36-51 apply to the second question. But if verses 4-34 also apply to the second question, then Jesus left the disciples hanging without ever answering their first question.

The second flaw being that Jesus said concerning the things of verses 4-33 that "This generation shall not pass, *till all these things be fulfilled!*" That generation did pass, however, before the end of the century in which Jesus spoke. But if "these things" yet need their fulfillment, then there remains a generation that is very old indeed! We feel strongly that Jesus answered both their questions, and, moreover, did so in the order in which they were asked. I submit that in verses 4-34 Jesus is specifically answering their first question relating to the destruction of Jerusalem and waits until verse 36 to begin his answer to their second question dealing with the end of the world with Christ's second coming.

A Few Specifics

Properly understood, there should be no difficulty with the specific signs Jesus detailed in verses 4-34 as applying to the first question and the destruction of the temple. Verse 5 said "for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ and shall deceive many." Historians confirm the fact of many within this

very time frame doing exactly that. Josephus mentions by name a certain of these who drew away hundreds after him down to the river Jordan where as a sign to them he was to part the waters and cross dry shod. Though perhaps hyperbolically speaking, he goes on to say that during this time there were "ten thousand other disorders in Judea." Perhaps it was even to some such, the great Gamaliel in Acts 5:36-37 had reference in speaking of the cultists Theudas and also of Judas of Galilee. The "wars and rumors of wars" accurately fill the order of the days from Christ's resurrection until Jerusalem's destruction. Even so the "famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes in divers places." Barnes in his *Notes on The New Testament* concerning the earthquakes, relates how "Tacitus mentions one in the reign of Claudias, in Rome; and says that in the reign of Nero, the cities of Laodicea, Hierapolis, and Colosse were overthrown; and the celebrated Pompeii was overwhelmed and almost destroyed by an earthquake, *Annales*, 15, 22. Others are mentioned as occurring at Smyrna, Miletus, Cios, and Samos." No, one need not doubt that all these signs did indeed occur even before "this generation" to whom Christ spoke passed away!!

Even the requirement of verse 14, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come" fits very well. (The "end" mentioned here signifies the end of Jerusalem.) Speaking of the faith that cometh by hearing the gospel, Paul says in Rom. 10:18, "Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." Would not this be sufficient to fill the requirement of Matt. 24:14? Yet, Paul says again to the Colossians in ch. 1:6, 23, "The truth of the gospel, which is come unto you as it is in all the world. . . and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature." Both of these statements were penned by Paul before Jerusalem's overthrow and thus, again fulfills the

requirement of Matt. 24:14.

The Sun Be Darkened

All these signs fit and fulfill the requirements Christ intended them to, even prior to the downfall of the temple. Nor is Matt. 24:29 out of its place as being fulfilled within this same time frame. Let's read it again, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken." Unneeded in this verse is a literal application of its terms. Yea, moreover, to do so is to misconstrue its interpretation. Throughout this chapter Jesus fills his role as "that prophet" as he foretells the future. And as the prophets before him, he here breaks forth in the language of the prophets using their very terminology. These are terms used in a *figurative sense* and the truth the *figures project came to pass* "immediately after the tribulation" experienced by Jerusalem.

The term "the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light," is not here speaking about the end of the world. Rather they are here used as the figurative terms of the prophets in the same sense as the prophets often employed them before. In Isaiah 13:10 the prophet there used the identical terms, "the stars . . . shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened . . . and the moon . . . shall not shine." "Therefore I will shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place" (v. 13). Was Isaiah speaking of the literal end of the world? Not at all. He tells us in verses 1 and 6 he was speaking of the destruction of Babylon which then was even at hand. His prophecy has long since been fulfilled. But, needless to say, if his terms required a literal application, then this world would not now be standing. Rather, the terms were prophetic language often employed by the prophets and were figurative terms. In this exact sense did Ezekiel also use these identical terms when, in his chapter 32:7 he prophesied against Egypt.

Egypt has long since seen her stars put out and her sun and moon darkened. Did this mean it was the end of the world? Not at all. Other prophets, using these same terms, include Joel in his chapter 2; Isaiah again, in chapter 34; as well as John the Revelator in several passages.

If the Old Testament prophets used these terms to signify the downfall of civil nations in their prophesies, how much more do these terms of Jesus apply when designating the downfall of God's chosen nation? We need not look to a point yet future for the fulfillment of Matt. 24:29, for it has long since been fulfilled even by Titus, the Roman in A.D. 70, and the complete overthrow of national Judaism "immediately after the tribulation of those days!"

When will Jesus return? No man knows. Not even the Jehovah's Witnesses, though they would press their date-setting phobia upon the unaware by twisting "this generation" of Matt. 24 to apply to others than to whom Jesus gave it to signify.

Conclusion

Should we have dealt in any detail at all on the many other dogmas of Jehovah's Witnesses, this volume would obviously swell to perhaps inappropriate proportions. I shall count that time for the present has failed me to compare with the Holy Scriptures this sect's viewpoints on such as I introduced at the beginning—a second chance for the wicked to be saved; everlasting life for the saved to be spent on this earth; that only 144,000 souls will go to heaven; that the soul is not immortal; that death is extinction; that there is no eternal burning hell; that Jesus was not bodily resurrected from the grave, etc.

We have, however, presented for your consideration, several concepts that are drastically out of step with the Scriptures. The misconstrued millennialistic mentality has failed to conceive the true nature of the kingdom of God. In vain attempts to force upon it a civil, earthly concept and structure,

they must torture out of context most of the prophecies and scriptures relating to it. Jesus said his kingdom is not of this world, but that it dwells within us. It is not “meat and drink” nor carnal or civil in nature. To conceive of it otherwise is to fall into the same mistakes made even by the Jews in Jesus’ time who were looking for a theocratic kingdom. It is this same misconception that so troubled the ancients from Cerinthius, Montanus, and others on up to Charles Russell and a host of others to this very day.

Study the Scriptures. They alone are able to make us wise unto salvation. Know that many deceivers have gone out to deceive. It is ours to study, watch and pray.

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Hell and Eternal Punishment

by Leonard Hendrickson

Out of original Scripture we have Sheol, Hades, Geenna, and Tartaroo translated into the word Hell. Sheol is Hebrew from the Old Testament, and the others are Greek from the New Testament.

Hades and Sheol correspond as being the unseen state of the dead. Hades is the intermediate state between decease and the resurrection prior to judgment. It is not merely “the grave,” but sets forth a consciousness wherein the just dead experience comfort and the unjust are troubled (Luke 16:25).

Hades is before judgment, and in time is for a term. The same is true of Tartaroo in which only “the angels that sinned” are reserved for judgment (2 Pet. 2:4). Geenna follows judgment, and in time is AINOIS (eternal, age-lasting, everlasting, for ever and ever). It is the eternal hell into which are gathered the angels that sinned, the unjust dead of mankind, the devil, the beast, and the false prophet. For the unjust dead, Geenna becomes a “second death” (Rev. 20:14, 21:8).

By the Bible’s metaphor and symbol, punishment in both Hades and Geenna is awesome. Geenna is the Greek for the Hebrew Gehenna having reference to the Hinnon valley dump south of Jerusalem wherein fires and maggots were perpetual, and from this Christ borrowed a description of hell with his words “where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44). How close to literal this, and other references are, we cannot be sure.

We do know that Geenna is *ainois* (eternal), just as heaven for the just is *ainois*. Each shall contain those who go therein

into ainois, and since torment requires consciousness, the unjust in Geenna are neither destroyed or annihilated in the sense that these souls cease consciousness or existence. Some mistakenly acquire this notion.

Geenna shall subject its inhabitants to *Ekdikesis* (full justice, 1 Pet. 2:14), to *Epitimai* (penalty and burden, 2 Cor. 2:6), *Kolasis* (restraint, Matt. 25:46), and *Timoria* (vengeance, Heb. 10:29). The connotation in these words seem beyond our prehension.

The body and spirit of man is said to part in death. But some in religion would also part his spirit, soul, and heart. Definitions of Greek words in our Bible let us in on the truth, and we see right away that the soul (*Psuche*) is "the natural life of the body... the immaterial and invisible part of man... the disembodied man... the seat of personality as in the expression 'one's own self'... the seat of the sentient element in man such as that by which he perceives, reflects, feels, and desires... his seat of will and purpose... the origin of his appetite... his inward man... the seat of life," etc.

A few comparisons snatched from Scripture are these: Christ is sorrowful of soul (Matt. 26:38), and troubled in spirit (John 13:21). The soul rejoices in God (Psa. 35:9), but equally does the spirit (Luke 1:47). We are body and soul (Matt. 6:25, 10:28, Luke 12:20 and Acts 20:10) and likewise body and spirit (Luke 8:55, 1 Cor. 5:3, 7:34, and James 2:26).

Our heart (Gr. *Kardia*) as a body organ is our blood pump, but this word in Scripture denotes something about us which can be depraved, is called the hidden man, is shown to be the seat of our moral nature and our spiritual life. It grieves, it joys, desires, perceives, thinks thoughts, has understanding and reasoning and imagination, is conscious, has intentions, can purpose and will, and is that in possession of our faith.

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Salvation

By Faith Only?

by C. O. Etheredge

The word salvation suggests a means of being saved and delivered from the power and penalty of sin, thus redeemed. Our subject under consideration is one of much controversy and deserves serious study. The issue is “can faith ONLY save a person?”

To believe in God is to commit ourselves and our ways into His hands and to diligently follow His directions. Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:15). When the phrase “by faith” is used it includes complete obedience to all things commanded.

First, let us deal with the importance of faith. Faith in God will bring about full confidence in God’s love, mercy, grace, and wisdom. “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). The writer of this passage certainly stresses the importance of faith. Without faith it would be impossible to please God. The importance of faith is also seen in the question asked in Acts 16:30-31; “Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.” The question was asked by a Philippian jailor who knew very little, if anything at all, about salvation. This being an opportunity for Paul and Silas, they simply taught the man and all that were in his house the Word of the Lord.

The first statement made by these teachers was, “Believe . . .”—this is imperative. For example, if one becomes a member of any organization, it would by all means require faith in it. You must believe certain things to become a member

of any organization. Faith was the first thing required of the jailor. In order to submit all evidence of salvation to the jailor, faith was the key. He would then become receptive to the teaching of the Word.

In Heb. 11:8 we read, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." Abraham's faith prompted him to obey, and his obedience took him from his home in Ur of the Chaldees to the far distant land of Canaan. Thus when God spoke, Abraham obeyed by faith, making him the father of the faithful. Hence, the phrase, "by faith" includes every step from Ur to Canaan. Likewise the phrase "believe on the Lord Jesus" (Acts 16:30-31) includes every act (step) beginning with faith and ending with baptism. Rom. 5:1 tells us: "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul said we are justified by faith, but not faith ONLY, as we will discuss later. He continues to say that we "have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Our faith allows us to rejoice even in tribulations knowing that tribulations work patience (Rom. 5:2-3). Faith is the key or sustenance that will enable us to continue faithful unto death that we may be able to receive a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

Having discussed the importance of faith we now advance to the next part of this lesson; "saved by faith, but not faith only." "He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings" (John 14:24). Faith that does not involve us in the Will of God cannot benefit, therefore salvation is not by faith only. True, we are saved by faith, but not saved by faith ONLY. That is, we are not saved the very moment we believe. "He came unto his own and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on his name" (John 1:11-12). Notice here, he gave the believer the right to become the child of God. First they

were to believe, and second they were given the right to become children of God. If saved by faith only and the very moment one believes, he would be saved before he becomes a child of God. Only the believer is given the right to become the child of God. What is necessary to become such a child? In simple terms, it is carrying out God's commands. God stipulates certain commandments that one must obey to become a child of God. A new birth is necessary ("Ye must be born again," Jesus said to Nicodemus, John 3:7). That new birth is of the water and of the Spirit (v. 5). If one is saved the moment he believes, he is saved separate and apart from this new birth.

I believe it is necessary to emphasize a major point just here. The commandments of God are not works of man. *They are God's commandments and they must be obeyed.* We all will readily agree that faith is essential (Heb. 11:1, 6). Next we believe one must fully repent. "I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). (If salvation is by faith only, there is no need to repent.) Confession is also a necessity. "Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 10:32). In Rom. 10:9-10 Paul said "confession is made unto salvation." He said unto, and not into. Confession does not put one into Christ, only in the direction of—another step toward attaining. Next comes the act of baptism, the consummating act of obedience which brings about completion or perfection. This completes the acts of obedience which puts one into Christ. All of these steps are the Lord's commandments, and not works of human merit.

But there are several more verses to consider. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized INTO Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with

him, that the body of *sin* might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:3-6).

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but have *obeyed* from the heart that form of doctrine (commandments) which was delivered you” (Rom. 6:17). Next notice verse 18. “Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Question: What brought about this obedience? FAITH, without doubt.

“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us. Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21). We agree that faith is necessary to salvation because it is clearly demanded as a condition of salvation. “He that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16).

The next question arises; How about “faith AND works”? James 2:14-26 should enlighten us as we study faith and works. I readily admit there is a lot of controversy on this subject. Many seem to see a contradiction between James and Paul. I shall endeavor to clarify what seems to be the contradiction. Notice the following observation about Paul’s and James’ use of faith. We introduced the importance of faith in the beginning of this writing. Paul also starts at the very beginning with who becomes a Christian and strongly stresses that “works” cannot earn salvation. “Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us, through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:5-9).

Next, we see James beginning later in the Christian’s life and showing that faith must be active in doing good deeds, not for

initial salvation, but because of salvation. Paul uses faith in the sense that it includes all that is involved in responding to the cross (the gospel). "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17; see also Rom. 6:1-6). James speaks of faith in a sense to show it to be active. Both Paul and James agree that faith is an ACTIVE term. Paul's writings were addressed to those who denied that an active faith in Christ was enough. They were saying one had to have the WORKS of the LAW OF MOSES too. Paul was combatting Judaism, while James is addressing those who had concluded that one does not have to do anything after becoming a Christian. They were saying simply that they believed. James refuted "faith only," while Paul's emphasis is against works of the Mosaical Law.

Notice: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the *deeds of the Law*" (Rom. 3:28; note also vs. 29-31). "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the *yoke of bondage*" (Gal. 5:1). Again we see that James' emphasis is pointed toward works of love, compassion and obedience. Paul agrees with James. Hear him: "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6). "Faith only" would certainly demerit love, a very essential element of Christianity.

So, to clarify the issue, Paul refers to initial justification while James refers to a continual walk in the light as a Christian. Paul states his argument in Rom. 6:1-17 and the apostle John supports James' argument in 1 John 1:7: "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." Thus we have a contrast—*active faith vs. inactive faith . . . live faith vs. dead faith*. Paul deals with "how to become a Christian," James deals with "how to live as a Christian." In both cases, faith is active. James very pointedly stressed that

Christians must be creative doers of the Word (James 1:20-27), and openly rebukes those who claim to have faith but refuse to show it by their conduct. There is no advantage in saying we have faith, but denying such profession with a life void of action. Jesus said in Matt. 16:27, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works." This implies that each Christian must be a doer of the Word to stay in good standing with the Lord and save his soul. It will require more than a verbal assent. Again, Jesus said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" "Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead." This pronounces the true condition of faith illustrated in verses 14-16 of James 2. It is dead. "Yea, a man will say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: show me thy faith without thy works, and I will show you my faith by my works" (v. 18).

We have numerous examples to prove faith by works. Abraham was justified by faith and works. Abraham had faith in God. He believed, and later offered up Isaac, and thus was justified. His faith was active—he obeyed. His work was activity. This was not merely merits of Abraham, but works of obedience. The same is true in our lives. We ourselves have never merited our own salvation, but by the GRACE of God we have been redeemed from sin by complying with God's commands. The necessary steps in obedience to the gospel are commandments of God and are not works of man. Faith must be coupled with action, and action in Christianity must be habitual. Contending that one would inherit salvation by his own merits would come under the heading of meritocracy, which means making one's own way by his own ability and talent, instead of faith and works of simple obedience.

In my concluding remarks, I shall present again the scriptures used previously which refute the argument of salvation by faith only.

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But

as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:11-12). Here John said he gave believers the right to become the children of God. If one is saved the moment he believes, he is saved before he becomes a child of God, for the believer is but given the right or privilege to become a child.

Again, to obtain salvation one must be born again (John 3:5-7). If salvation is by "faith only" one would be saved without being born again. Jesus said, "Ye MUST be born again." This is imperative. In James 2:22 James said, "Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect." The proper application would be that faith without works would be an imperfect faith. We all agree that faith must exist before it can work, but until it works (becomes active) it is imperfect. We know we cannot obtain salvation by an imperfect faith.

Repentance is also a must. "I tell you nay, except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). "Repent and be baptized every one of you" (Acts 2:38). "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). Another step that is necessary is confession. If one is saved the moment he believes, he is saved without confessing the sweet name of Jesus. Jesus said, "If you will confess me before men, I will also confess you before my Father which is in heaven." The eunuch confessed that Jesus was the Son of God.

The consummating act that puts one into Christ is baptism (Acts 16:30-33). The jailor heard and asked what he must do. Paul instructed him what to do and he obeyed. He completed the final act by being baptized. The eunuch "went on his way rejoicing" after he was baptized (Acts 8:26-39). "And they that gladly received his word were baptized, and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls . . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (Acts 2:41, 47)." They were not saved, neither were they added to

the church until after baptism. True they had faith. Their faith prompted them to obey. They asked Peter what they should do. They were told and they did it. This is faith proved by works of obedience. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered unto you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). They were never free from sin until they obeyed God's commands. Faith (active) prompted them to obey. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (1 Pet. 3:21). Surely this should prove without doubt that salvation by faith only is unsafe. God requires faith, repentance, confession and baptism. These are Bible truths. And then, our faith must continue to be active. "Be thou faithful until death and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

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The Possibility of Apostasy

by Randy Deems

When it seems that all is well, we sometimes shrink from subjects like the one that has now come to our attention. It is with joy that lifts us beyond this present plain of ephemeral existence that we contemplate such phrases as those uttered in Rev. 2:10 by our Saviour; “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Yet, even contained in such great and precious promises as this, there springs to mind the thought, but what of those who are not faithful unto death? What shall be their reward?

In order for one to become apostate, one must first have been faithful, for of course, this is part of the meaning of the word apostasy—a falling away from the truth.

What does it mean to be apostate? Does the possibility of a child of God falling from a position of grace exist as a real possibility for us today? Very much so. But in order for us to determine the validity of our answer, we will first be forced to resolve just what is meant by a position of grace with God.

The Bible teaches that after reaching the age of accountability, a man will sin. Thus, we learn that it is necessary for one to have these sins washed away by the blood of Christ. After this is accomplished (and it cannot be unless one comes to a realization of the truth and obeys that same truth), one is said to be in a state of grace to God.

To be in such a state of grace is to walk in the light (1 John 1:7). John says, “Hereby do we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments” (1 John 2:3). It is by this that we know we are in a state of fellowship with God. If we keep His commandments we know that we are in the light of God’s

grace. This being true; we know that the opposite can also be true. If we (Christians) fail to keep God's commandments, we do not know Him. Our fellowship with God is broken and we are, in effect, fallen from grace or apostate.

John further states that "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:5-7). Dr. Kenneth S. Wuest, in his *Word Studies, In These Last Days*, says, "Walk is again present subjunctive, stressing habitual action. It is the *habitual* actions of a person that are an index to his behavior. Thus, if within the sphere of the light we are habitually ordering our behavior as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with God and our Saviour." Christians are those who habitually order their lives as God would have them to. But if the Christian forsakes this walk in the light and still claims to be one upon whom the approval and grace of God rests, John says that "he is a liar and does not the truth." To be faithful, or in a state of grace is to walk in, or habitually obey the commandments of God.

It would be pleasant for us to be able to say that once one has come in contact with the blood of Christ he is no longer in any danger of apostasy, but those who make such statements are, I fear, deceiving themselves. Brethren, let us constantly be on our guard against sin. The devil is such a subtle being, and ourselves, such as are easily led astray, that it is not to be wondered at that we sometimes find ourselves caught up in some odious sin. We seem to have that quality inherent within us that causes us to rationalize our misdeeds away as something that, "maybe isn't so bad after all." God however, is a God who expects strict adherence to His plans. Even such innocent acts as picking up sticks on the Sabbath day, and

putting forth the hand to steady the ark of the covenant in former days, was so serious in the eyes of God that those who did so were put to death.

Paul speaks not only of the *possibility* of apostasy, but of *punishment* for such. "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:26-29). No warning on the part of this writer should be considered too strong. The thought of apostasy is a terrible thought to contemplate. We who have once known Christ and have acknowledged him as the Lord of our lives, to turn again as the sow to wallowing in the mire of sin, or as the dog returning again to the putrefaction of his own vomit, is a thought too hideous to contemplate. What can be thought to be the end of such an one? What awful wretchedness will be his to endure through the endless ages that stretch before us? Indeed, may we be allowed to say, what will be the *deserved* end of one who has crucified again the Son of God afresh? Let us not deceive ourselves into supposing that such a horrible fate cannot overtake us. The Scriptures abound with warnings and examples of those who fell from their exalted state of grace before God. Let us notice a few.

In the fourth and fifth chapters of Acts, we have an account of the members of the church at Jerusalem selling their goods and possessions and distributing them to the other saints as they had need. Evidently several had done this, and after revealing the account of one such man, the story turns to the account of a couple, Ananias and Sapphira by name, who also

sold a piece of ground, but perhaps desiring to look good in the eyes of their fellow Christians, conspired to give only a part while passing it off that they had given all. The apostle Peter being present on the occasion, immediately detected the deception and inquired why they had done such a thing. Perceiving the corruption on the hearts of the couple, he pronounced sentence on them and the Bible says, "they fell down dead at the apostles' feet." The point, mentioned by the apostle, was not that they had not given all, but that they had misrepresented that part which they had given. In doing so, he said they had lied, and not just to men, but they had lied to the Holy Ghost. Their punishment stands as a warning to men of all ages. Not only was it possible for them to apostatize, but they in fact did, and as a result lost their lives and their souls.

The apostle Paul, in speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus, warned them of apostasy even among their own ranks when he said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30). It is evident to the honest mind that the apostle not only believed the possibility of apostasy to be very real, but knew that its coming was a certainty. All through the ages history shows the certainty of apostasy. From the purity of the early church, through the gradual process of apostasy, came the religious confusion we know in our present society. Can one look about at the chaotic condition of the religious world today and deny that the words of the apostle have not borne fruit until the very roots of the tree must groan in agony? Can one look at the church of Christ today with its some fifteen divisions and say that apostasy is not yet present among us? Even when we look back to the last fifty years, or even the last twenty-five years, can we not see that grievous wolves have entered in among us. Have not those to whom we looked for strength in time of need failed us time and again? Some

departing to advocate dangerous doctrines concerning all things from adultery, to dangerous implications concerning a modern age of miracles. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning the second advent, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3). Indeed, that falling away has come, and as we write these words, is yet with us. Before the hands of time shall revolve many more times there may yet be another falling away. Let us gird up our loins against this eventuality, and cease not to warn one another with tears and prayers against that most grievous of woes, the possibility of apostasy.

My friends, if you share with me the hopes and aspirations of a home in heaven in the eternal afterwhile, let us put our faith and trust in Him who has never lost a conflict yet. Let us march under that bloodstained banner of the cross. Let us not turn back to the things of the world, but let us look rather to those glorious scenes we expect to burst upon our enraptured visions in the by and by. And then, with our hand in the wounded palm of the Saviour, walk on until at last the finger of God shall touch us, and we can be at last initiated into the glories of our Father's home, across which the shadows have never been cast. Let us know of a certainty that if we conform our lives to the conditions and requirements that heaven has laid down, trusting Him for guidance and direction evermore, at last He will guide our footsteps up the glittering strand into the heights sublime, into the joys which alone can satisfy the anxieties and longings of the human heart.

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*TRUTH is the supreme thing—
Its greatest friend is time and reason;
Its greatest enemy, prejudice.*

Hereditary Total Depravity

by Hubert Laney

Are we guilty of sins that we ourselves never committed? Many say we are. Major religions and denominations espouse this doctrine. To name a few: Roman Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists, Church of the Nazarene, and others. This doctrine would have us believe that we are born sinners.

Adam's Sin

Let's see what one man writes about the belief of the Seventh Day Adventists. "When Adam sinned, he brought sin to everyone. Sin is an inheritance. Men are born sinners."¹ This belief would trace our sin all the way back to father Adam in the very beginning, and be inherited by every child born. My friends, if this were true, our Lord Jesus Christ was also a sinner, for he was also born in the flesh.

But where do they get such a notion? One passage used is Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Because the Bible states that Adam's death was a direct result of his sin and that death passed upon all men, they conclude that the sin that caused Adam's death was also passed upon all men. But Paul says the *effect*, or curse of sin (death) has passed upon all men, not sin itself. Men die because they sin.

Sin brings death to the one who sins. The Bible says, "And so death passed upon all men." Why? "For that ALL have sinned" (Romans 5:12). It is our own sin that brings us death. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to

obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16). We each yield ourselves to sin or to God—we have the choice.

Man's Innocence

Paul simply states that by Adam, sin entered into the world. Therefore, before Adam's transgression there was no sin. Compare the similitude of mankind's immaturity and man's individual infancy. Mankind was created in innocence, not knowing right from wrong. God only withheld one thing from man. "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" (Gen. 2:17). "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die" (Gen. 3:3).

They were guiltless until they partook of the forbidden fruit. In eating, they gained the ability to judge between good and evil. "And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Gen. 3:7). "And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?" (Gen. 3:11). Now that they could comprehend the difference of good and evil, they took upon themselves the responsibility for *all* their actions toward God. They now had to account for even their very nakedness. A child is much the same way. It is born pure; without guilt, not knowing good and evil. But, when he is able to discern good from evil, he becomes accountable for his conduct to God. He then either disobeys God, by lack of obedience or by direct defiance, or obeys Him. So we each have the same chance as father Adam.

What Is Sin?

What constitutes sin? We are told in 1 John 3:4, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the

transgression of the law.” Thus, one has to transgress the law to sin. Also in 1 John 5:17, “All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.” James explains how one commits sin. He states, “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:14-15). So our lust has to germinate (or be harbored) to become sin. Germination necessitates a coupling of lust with something such as *intent* or *action*. Sin is what alienates us from God. “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:2).

Innocence of Infants

Now, let us apply these scriptures and see if indeed infants sin. Where is infant lust and the fulfillment thereof? How do they transgress the law? What unrighteousness do they commit? If sin is a transgression of law, and they do not fulfill the requirement of transgressing, where is infant sin?

Jesus proclaims the purity of little children in Matt. 19:14, “But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” Then we are admonished in Matt. 18:3, “Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.” So we can safely conclude that little children are free from sin because Jesus said, “If you die in your sins, you will not come where I am” (John 8:21, paraphrased). So, if infants die, and they have sinned, they cannot be heirs of heaven as Jesus says in Matt. 19:14.

Let’s follow those who teach man is born in sin to Rom. 5:19, “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.” What does Paul tell us here? That man is a sinner because Adam was? No. Is he not rather saying, if we pattern our lives after Adam we sin? But, if we pattern after Christ, we

become righteous?

Next, we go to 1 Cor. 15:22, "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Paul is talking in this chapter about physical death and resurrection from the dead. By the sin of Adam, man has to face bodily death. In the garden of Eden was the tree of life. Adam could have taken of it and not died. But after his sin, God took from him the privilege of its fruit. "And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever: therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:22-24). The fruit of that tree is promised to those who overcome. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; to him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God" (Rev. 2:7). Therefore, until then, we all die but those in Christ shall all be made alive.

Can Sin Be Inherited?

What does the Bible say about inherited sin? God addresses this thought in Ezk. 18:14-20; "Now, lo, if he beget a son, that seeth all his father's sins which he hath done, and considereth, and doeth not such like, that hath not eaten upon the mountains, neither hath lifted up his eyes to the idols of the house of Israel, hath not defiled his neighbor's wife, neither hath oppressed any, hath not withholden the pledge, neither hath spoiled by violence, but hath given his bread to the hungry, and hath covered the naked with a garment, that hath taken off his hand from the poor, that hath not received usury nor increase, hath executed my judgments, hath walked in my statutes; he shall not die for the iniquity of his father, he shall

surely live. As for his father, because he cruelly oppressed, spoiled his brother by violence, and did that which is not good among his people, lo, even he shall die in his iniquity. Yet say ye, Why? Doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father? When the son hath done that which is lawful and right, and hath kept all my statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.” Does this sound like we will die for the sins of our forefathers?

Man’s Nature

Again, those teaching hereditary total depravity go to Eph. 2:3, “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were *by nature* the children of wrath, even as others.” The nature of man has not changed from the beginning. His desires may grow to lust even to the point of sin. The devil always tries to get us to satisfy our desires in the wrong way and bring out the lust in man. “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world” (1 John 2:16). Then we find what happens when we *intend* to fulfill, or actually fulfill our lustful desires. “When lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (James 1:15). This verse does not teach a man is born a sinner; it only speaks of our fallible flesh nature.

Is God Responsible for Our Sin?

We see that lust and sin is not of the Father, but we find that our spirit is. “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Eccl. 12:7). Are we going to accuse God of giving us a sinful spirit? If infants

are born with sin, who put it there? Certainly not God!! The spirit of man is as pure as when God gave it *until he sins*. God gives us a way to fulfill the needs of the flesh, but when we violate God's natural way (as in Rom. 1:26), we sin. But God gives us a choice in the matter as we learn in His Word. "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). So, even though we have natural desires, it is our responsibility that they only be fulfilled lawfully.

Another passage used to "prove" the false doctrine under study is Psa. 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." This is perverted to mean that David was born a sinner. The Bible did not say that. His mother *conceived* him in sin. Thus, it was his mother's sin, not David's. Some even go to Job 14:4, "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one." Here Job is talking and asking questions of things he does not understand and even asks, "If a man die shall he live again?" (v. 14). Is this the voice of authority that we will base our doctrine on? Surely not. Finally, we read, "So then every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God" (Rom. 14:12). So, what sin does an infant give account of? I believe that we can see there is no such thing as inherited sin.

Are Infants Subject To God's Plan of Salvation?

If I were to believe in such a doctrine, I would also have to, as the Catholics, believe in some form of salvation for infants. Here is what Mr. Winfrid Herbst says, "Yes, every child born into this world has the guilt of original sin upon its soul. Original sin is the sin that we inherit from our first parents . . . original sin excludes from heaven unless forgiven. It is forgiven only by baptism. Hence, when an unbaptized child dies it cannot enter the kingdom of heaven."² Also, "Now He tells us in His Gospel that baptism is the essential means established for washing away the stain of original sin and the door by which we find admittance into his church . . . the church teaches that baptism is

necessary for all, for infants as well as adults . . . ”³ Let’s see how this correlates with the Bible. “And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). Therefore, salvation is offered to those who obey. Turning over to Rom. 6:17 we read, “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.” What doctrine? Believe (Mark 16:16, Acts 8:37), repent (Acts 2:38, Luke 13:3), confess (Matt. 10:32, Rom. 10:9, Acts 8:37), be baptized (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38) . . . How can infants believe? Obey? For what do they repent and change from? “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:4,6). Verse 4 pictures baptism as a burial. Can this be satisfied in “christening” or sprinkling? I think not. Infant baptism, where sprinkling or pouring is invariably used, is almost exclusively practiced by those who believe in inherited sin. Let’s look at some of the arguments for infant baptism.

Household Baptism

Some think that when Paul baptized whole households, the word “household” infers infants were included. “There is no express mention of the baptizing of infants in the New Testament, but it is at least probable that there were infants among the whole families that were baptized by Paul (Acts 16:15, 1 Cor. 1:16)”⁴ They admit no mentioning of infant baptism, but say it is “probable.” But is it necessarily inferred? To be necessarily inferred we would be forced to come to that conclusion from the language of the text. Let’s go to Acts 16:14-15, “And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the

things which were spoken of Paul. And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us." The Lord opened her heart and she attended unto the things Paul spoke of, one of which was baptism. Could an infant do the same? Questions: Was Lydia even married? Could she have been too old to have infants; or incapable of bearing children? The Bible does not necessarily infer the presence of infants. Acts 16:32-34, "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." We find here they *believed* and were *baptized*. This would necessarily infer there were NOT infants here. Infants could not believe. Again, 1 Cor. 1:16, "And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other." Here there is no inference at all of infants. This argument is founded only on supposition, and that the Bible condemns. Paul tells us, "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes" (2 Tim. 2:23). Webster says unlearned equals uneducated (or not informed, ignorant). Infant baptism is certainly not learned from the Bible. Therefore, those who practice it have no authority from above. We conclude that infants are sinless and have no need of God's plan of salvation, and that only those capable of obedience are subjects of belief and repentance as well as baptism. Infants are not "saved" as a result of baptism, they are "safe" as a result of innocence.

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1. Branson, *Drama of the Ages*. p. 43

2. *Questions of Catholics Answered*

3. Gibbons, pp. 219, 220

4. *Question Box*, p. 243, Catholic

