WHY STUDY DOCTRINE?

Doctrine just means "teaching." It is a word synonymous with "truth," "scripture," and "the word." All these and similar words will apply to our study of doctrine.

WHY SOUND DOCTRINE IS GOOD

Paul said, "Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the **sound doctrine**; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts" (2 Tim. 4:2,3). The words *sound doctrine* can be translated "healthful teaching." Paul says sound doctrine is an urgent matter. He had taught this: "All scripture is God-breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Scripture came out of God and does all those things that make a man complete and furnish him for all things. From doctrine, he gets reproof and rebukes which help him to change. He gets instruction, and where else could he get it? Jesus said, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32). The "freedom" spoken of here is freedom from sin. So healthy doctrine is important. Let's notice what else the word of God does.

WHAT THE WORD DOES

Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Mat. 4:4). He said truth makes saints, that it sanctifies: "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). So the word sets one apart for God's use. And the word also edifies or builds up: "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). So there is no way to minimize the word of God or healthy doctrine. And more than what we have already seen, the word of God saves.

Paul said, “For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God’s good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (I Cor. 1:21). And again Paul said, “Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:1,2). This is said by Paul in a different way in Romans. He said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). And James corroborates all this saying, “wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21). So the sound doctrine of the word sanctifies, edifies, and saves. It will reprove, rebuke, and instruct.

And the word of God directs us in all matters religious. Jeremiah said, “O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23). And David added, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105). So Isaiah could say, “For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, and giveth seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isa. 55:10,11).

And the sound doctrine of the word is powerful. Paul said, “For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). God put it this way through Jeremiah: “Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces” (Jer. 23:29).

Sound doctrine is alive, powerful, and like fire. It sanctifies, edifies, and saves. So, it is vital that one has sound doctrine because of what it will do. But there is more.

FALSE PROPHETS AND TEACHERS

Jesus warned, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:15,16). He said, “For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect” (Mat. 24:24).

Paul said to the Ephesian elders, “I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them” (Acts 20:30). To the Romans he said, “Now I beseech you brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine ye learned: and turn away from them” (Rom. 16:17). If nothing else, we can see in these verses that false doctrine causes divisions and occasions of stumbling. And we ask why there is so much division in the world today. I blame it on false doctrine.

Paul warned the Corinthians about trouble in their midst. He said, “For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light. It is no great thing therefore if his ministers fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness, whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor. 11:13-15). These false teachers and prophets with whom we must contend do not announce themselves as false teachers. They are subtle and sly. For all the world, they try to pass themselves off as ministers of righteousness. Jesus said they had on sheep’s clothing. They put on a fine front, and who can detect them? Someone may ask, “Do they know that they are false teachers?” I doubt it in most cases. Paul said, “But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13). See, they even deceive themselves. Though they are impostors, they do not see the evil in themselves, for there is nothing good in them to detect it for what it is. Notice the words of Jesus, “And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall in no wise perceive: For this people’s heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and

hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should turn again, and I should heal them" (Mat. 13:14,15). So, it is possible that one's sensitivity to truth and right can be clouded by dull ears, blind eyes, and a thick heart. Would not those cause such spiritual ignorance that such teachers should even deceive themselves. And notice Paul said, "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, **branded in their own conscience** as with a hot iron" (1 Tim. 4:1,2).

No wonder John could say, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). Of such, John said, "They went out from us, but they are not of us; for it they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us" (1 John 2:19).

IS FALSE DOCTRINE DANGEROUS?

Paul said this to Titus regarding the elders: "holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers. For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped; men who **overthrow whole houses**, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit. 1:9-11). To overthrow houses, regarding Christianity, is serious business. How serious is seen further in Paul. He said, "But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:16- 18). False doctrine eats as does gangrene. It rots the soul. It overthrows faith. One must have his faith intact to go to heaven (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24). To destroy faith is to destroy a soul. Jesus said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

Peter put it this way: "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that

bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not" (2 Pet. 2:1-3). Notice the language Peter uses, "destructive heresies," and regarding those who bring such false doctrine, "swift destruction," and "destruction slumbereth not" Yes, false doctrine is "destructive heresies" for it will destroy your soul. So, false teachers will partake in the destruction which they have caused. It is serious business.

WHAT TO DO?

First, you must make sure you have found truth. Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Mat. 7:7). You can do it with God's help, but don't take the task lightly. Paul said, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). And notice what is said of the Bereans: "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). Do you hold truth in all the doctrines you hold? Your eternal salvation may depend on what the facts are. I wish there were some easy way to make people crave truth and search it out, not satisfied until one was certain. But love of truth must come from way down deep inside the human heart. One must always be searching, studying, comparing scripture with scripture, making sure that the doctrines one holds are truly, without twisting, clearly found in God's word, the Bible.

Once, a denominational preacher was challenged to debate. He kind of wanted to do it, but his brethren held him back. They couldn't help him, they said, because they did not know the Bible. "When it comes to doctrine," they said to that denominational pastor, "we leave that up to you." I have never seen a more certain prescription for damnation than that attitude. How would you ever explain such an attitude to the Lord on judgment day? Does His truth count for that little? He died for us; shouldn't we abide in His word (John 8:31)?

First, you must find truth. Then you must defend it. Jude said, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our

common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 3,4). Apollos was praised for having confuted the Jews, "and that publicly, showing by die scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:28).

We have been talking of matters as high as heaven and as deep as hell. I plead with you to find truth, and make the offer of eternal salvation open to you.

PURITY OF DOCTRINE

Surprisingly I want to go to the book of Revelation. The book is like a drama. It shows the church victorious after attack by Satan and his henchmen. They come on the scene one by one: first the great dragon (the devil who is behind it all). Then comes (in Revelation 13) the beast of the sea which represents persecuting power. Then in the same chapter comes the beast of the earth, later called the false prophet, symbolizing false teaching. He has horns like a lamb, but he speaks like a dragon (Rev. 13:11). Then we see the great harlot who symbolizes seduction and worldliness, in chapter 17. So the church is attacked by persecution, false teaching, and worldliness. Behind it all is the great red dragon. They all go down in defeat in the reverse order they come on the scene. But if you will individually lose your soul it will be by the devil using persecution, false doctrine, or worldly seduction. Since false doctrine is one of the big three, we should consider it. Did not Jesus say, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them" (Mat. 7:15, 16).

1 TIMOTHY 4:1,2 AND EPHESIANS 6:11-13

So let's highlight the importance of purity of doctrine by the investigation of certain passages. First, let's view the link between false doctrine and Satan. Notice the language of Paul. He says, "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron" (I Tim. 4:1,2). The phrase I want to look at is "doctrines of demons." Men shall fall away from the faith due to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. That reminds us of James talking about wisdom that is demonical (Jas. 3:15). But if the phrase "doctrine of demons" were in the original Greek language in which the New Testament was written, objective genitive, then it would be speaking about doctrine which was about demons. However, if

"doctrine of demons" is considered to be genitive of source, it would be talking of doctrines that originate with and emanate from demons. Many Greek scholars argue it is "genitive of source": Vine, Alford, Nicoll, Vincent, etc. Many commentaries take that view and I do also. We don't know how demons pass such doctrines on to man, but we would be surprised if false teachers were aware that it happened. Keep in mind, when it comes to demons, that Satan is their prince (Mat. 9:34). Notice also what Paul said, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 12 For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:11-13). Anything other than the truth of God is of the devil.

COLOSSIANS 2:8,9

Notice another passage that demonstrates the purity of doctrine. Paul said, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:8,9). False doctrine is demon-inspired, but since it is used by men it is called "tradition of men." It is the haughty holding of a man's personal philosophy. But the key word here is the word "spoil." It is *sulagogeo*. It means "spoil" in the sense of "booty." The war of Armageddon is a spiritual war and it is now being fought.

It is a great conflict of light and darkness. You are the spoils of war. You can follow Christ our Warrior King (Rev. 19:11-16), or you can be taken as booty for Satan, demons, and false teachers. Again: "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). You are up for grabs in a horrible way. Hell fire hangs in the balance. You must determine to be influenced only by the word of God in truth and to settle for nothing less than purity of doctrine.

COLOSSIANS 2:18

A man who is a false teacher can rob you of your prize of heaven through false doctrine. Paul said, "Let no man rob you of your prize

by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2:18). Paul never adopted the idea, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere." He said erroneous doctrine would rob you of your heavenly prize. You could have a voluntary humbling of your body like an ascetic and reverence paid to angels and you could be lost You can lose the prize of heaven, the most wonderful thing in the universe (Rev. 22:1-5).

DIVISION

But another reason to avoid false doctrine is that it divides. David said, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psa. 133:1). But Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing die divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned; and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and by their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent" (Rom. 16:17, 18). A false teacher comes in and ruins everything. He speaks contrary to truth causes people to stumble in their walk toward heaven, and he divides. They must be marked, Paul says. In the original that means we should make them as a mark or target in the sense that we fasten our eyes on them. "Mark them," Paul says.

JUDE 3

Further, we must strive for pure doctrine for there is no end false doctrine will not go to in order to defeat the truth of God. What's a little false doctrine? Well, it is like a kid running downhill. False doctrine won't stop. Notice what Jude says: "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of beforehand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 3,4). So Jude tells us what the end of false teaching is. And notice; they "crept in privily." The word in the original means "they stole in from the side." They, so Jude says, slipped in the side

door into the kingdom to cause trouble. And Jude says they were written of beforehand, evidently in the Old Testament and in the earlier writings of the apostles and prophets. The word for "written of beforehand" is *progegrammenoi* in the Greek. We get placards and programs from it. You go to a banquet and they have a program so that you can see what is coming. These false teachers were written of in advance as in a program. We should expect them to come. Too, notice the results. They turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, or lewdness. How? Well, we can just hear them say things like, "If you really understood God's grace you wouldn't be so 'holy, holy.' You wouldn't be so Victorian, so prudish, so prim, so holyish. If you understand grace," they say, "you are above do's and dont's and legalism, and rules, and commandments." Yes, we hear them all the time, but we recall that Jesus said, "If ye love me ye will keep my **commandments**" (John 14:15). And again he said, "ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14). So, they turn the grace of God into lewdness. Not only that, they eventually deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. The word for master in the original is despots. It speaks of one who has absolute ownership; one who has uncontrolled power over us. He is our benevolent despot. False doctrine gets us to deny Him. There is no end to the blasphemy of false doctrine.

Finally, notice these. 2 John 9-11 says if you go beyond the doctrine of Christ you lose God. You can't add traditions of men without losing God (Mat. 15:7-9; 13). Next, we can be destroyed by impure doctrine. Peter said, "But there arose false prophets among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, **denying even the Master that bought them,** bringing upon themselves swift **destruction** (2 Pet. 2:1,2).

Paul said false doctrine would eat away and overthrow you. Notice, "and their word will **eat as doth a gangrene**: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and **overthrow the faith** of some" (2 Tim. 2:17,18).

We could go on and on. Such language regarding the work of false doctrine is the type language used when a soul is lost. Long for pure doctrine which will save your soul.

TRUTH

Concerned with religious division, there are some who say we are divided because truth is unattainable. Let's look at what the Bible says about knowing truth. The main question is, can we **know** truth?

In John chapter 8 we find Jesus speaking to the multitudes. John 8:30 says many believed. Then we read: "Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are you truly my disciples; and ye **shall know the truth**, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31, 32). Now there you have the emphatic statement that one can know truth, and that ought to settle things. If we cannot know truth, then we can't be free. Too, to abide in His word one would have to understand it. Only then could you be a disciple. So again, notice Jesus said to those Jews that had believed Him, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32).

Yet, notice another passage. Paul said, "whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4). Paul says to the Ephesians that we can perceive Paul's understanding in the mysteries of the Christian religion. Paul was an apostle. He understood the mysteries of Christ. He said they could understand the mysteries of Jesus Christ. Jesus prayed, as recorded in John 17:17, "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Why would God give us truth if we could not understand it? Cannot God communicate to His creatures?

Those who want to hurt our faith in the Bible want us to understand them when they tell us we cannot understand the Bible. One man said, “Let’s get this understood at the very beginning, we can be absolutely certain about nothing.” A man replied, “are you absolutely certain?” So again, Paul said, “Whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ” (Eph. 3:4).

But again, Paul made another emphatic statement to the Ephesians. He said, “Wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). God’s will is nowhere but in the Bible. We can understand that will, so we must be able to understand the Bible. We may make mistakes and misinterpret, but if our heart is right and we do it right, we can understand the Bible.

Let’s notice the apostle Paul in another emphatic statement He said, “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Paul, in context, says evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse. Due to their problem, they cannot come to the knowledge of the truth. Paul rebukes them and implies they should come to a knowledge of the truth. If they can’t, why rebuke them?! Again Paul says, “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

Let’s briefly notice a few passages. Jesus said, “If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of die teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself” (John 7:17). This shows the will is involved in understanding Scripture. Paul said, “Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (I Cor. 1:10). If we can’t know truth, how could we ever speak the same thing and be perfected in unity as Paul says we should do? And again Paul said, “Hold the pattern of sound words which thou hast heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 1:13). How can we hold the pattern if we can’t know truth? And notice

another: “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). This passage implies learning is possible. So the clear teaching of Scripture is that knowing truth and understanding Scripture is possible. So what is the problem? Let’s at least touch the hem of the garment regarding why men don’t understand the Bible alike.

WHY MEN DON’T UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE ALIKE

Sometimes we don’t understand the Bible alike due to a heart problem. Notice Jesus said, “The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 13:41-42). So there is such a thing as hypocrites in the church. Then Jeremiah said, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). So part of the problem is the corruptness of the human heart. A person may be pretty religious and even write commentaries, but if his heart is not right, he will not see truth accurately. Sometimes a hard heart may lead to ignorance. Paul talked of some who lived in the vanity of their mind, “being darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, **because of the hardening of their heart”** (Eph. 4:18). A hard heart can lead to ignorance. That is why ignorance is condemned in the Bible. When a hard heart works ignorance, notice what ignorance can do. Peter said of Paul, “as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest as they do the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16). All this stems from a hard heart, according to God’s word.

Next, there is the problem of false teachers teaching things contrary to the Bible. They have a seared conscience and deceive, and they themselves are also deceived. Paul said, “But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, 2 through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them

that believe and know the truth" (I Tim. 4:1-3). Paul, says false prophets are actually seducing spirits. He uses words like "seared" and "hypocrisy," and "lies." We learn that they are crafty and wiley. Paul, somewhere else said, "that we may be no longer children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error" (Eph. 4:14). Remember, they are mere tools of a great plotting mind who orchestrates all our troubles as we try to learn and do God's will. Again the apostle to the Gentiles said, "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12). So Paul could say, "But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). So due to false teachers, we don't understand the Bible alike.

Then there is the problem of carnality. In I Corinthians 3:2,3 we read, "I fed you with milk, not with meat; for ye were not yet able to bear it: nay, not even now are ye able; for ye are yet carnal" (I Cor. 3:2, 3). The carnal are easy prey for a false teacher, and he can mess up their understanding of the Bible. Paul said, "For of these are they that creep into houses, and take captive silly women laden with sins, led away by divers lusts, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:6,7). So carnality sets one up to be led astray by a false teacher. Thus the warning "take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

No, the problem is not God and certainly not His word. The problem is the evil one, the human heart, false teachers, ignorance, carnality and such like. Regarding the honest and good heart, we know it can understand, know and delight in truth!

WHAT DOES THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BELIEVE?

The churches of Christ are sincerely trying to be that church we read about in the Bible. Using the Bible as a blueprint, we are honestly trying to model ourselves after that church by adhering to the doctrines of that New Testament Church. Here we want to give a representative list of those doctrines we see in the New Testament.

One, we believe there is one God in three persons (I Tim. 2:5; Col. 2:9). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Two, we believe Jesus is God (John 1:1,2; Heb. 1:8). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Three, we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Mat. 16:13-19). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Four, we believe that the kingdom is the church and that the church was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Five, we believe that Premillennialism is wrong in waiting for a future kingdom, that the kingdom has already come in the world from the time of the first century (Col. 1:13; I Thess. 2:12; Rev. 1:9). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Six, we believe that we are saved by grace through faith, but not through grace alone (Eph. 2:8-10; Jas. 2:24; Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:12). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Seven, we believe we are justified by faith, but that we are not justified by faith alone (Jas. 2:18-26; Gal. 5:6; Heb. 3:12). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Eight, we believe instrumental music was never used by the New Testament church and that only singing was authorized by God's word (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Deu. 4:2; 12:32; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Nine, we believe high moral standards are essential to entering the kingdom of heaven, that the way is strait and narrow, that few will find it (I Cor. 6:9-11; Mat. 7:13,14; Mat. 22:14; Luke 13:24; Col. 3:5-11). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Ten, we believe that because the early church did so, we should partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week (Acts 20:7). We believe the Lord's Supper is not the actual body and blood of Christ but that it represents or symbolizes the body and the blood of Christ (Mat. 26:26-29). But we are not the only ones who believe all that.

Eleven, we believe that in conviction, conversion, and sanctification, the Holy Spirit works when He will and how He wills, but only through the word of God (Neh. 9:30; Eph. 6:17). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Twelve, we believe the Christian is not only under grace, but he is also under law (I Cor. 9:21). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Thirteen, we believe the Bible is the verbally inspired, inerrant word of God (I Cor. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; John 10:35). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Fourteen, we believe there is one scriptural ground for divorce and remarriage, adultery or fornication (Mat 19:9). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Fifteen, we believe that miracles were temporary, to prove and authenticate that Jesus came from God and to confirm that the word spoken by the apostles and prophets came from God (Acts 2:22; Mark 16:20). We believe that today God heals the sick without miracles, through providential grace in answer to prayer, in a way that involves faith, not sight (Mat. 7:7-11; Jas. 5:16-18; Heb. 4:16; 2 Cor. 5:7). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Sixteen, we believe that besides faith, repentance, and confession, baptism is essential to salvation from sin (John 3:3-5; Mark 16:15,16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; I Pet. 3:21). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Seventeen, we believe that the law of pardon for the Christian is repentance and confession (Acts 8:22; I John 1:9). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Eighteen, we believe that we will spend eternity in heaven with God and Jesus, not on a renovated earth (John 14:1,2; I The. 4:16-18; Rev. 7:13-17). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Nineteen, we believe in using a scriptural name for the church (Rom. 16:16). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Twenty, we believe the scriptural founder of the church we read about in the Bible is Jesus Christ (Mat. 16:13-19), that He founded it in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after His resurrection (Acts 1:8; 2:1-4; 2:40,41), and that there is only one church (Eph. 1:22,23; 4:4; Mat. 16:18). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Twenty-one, we believe that the Old Testament is true, but that it has been superseded by the New Testament, and that we are only under the law of the New Testament today (Col. 2:14; 2 Cor. 3:14; Heb. 7:12; 7:18; 8:6; 9:16,17; 10:9). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Twenty-two, we believe that the organization the church should have is all found in the word of God (Eph. 4:11; Titus 1; I Tim.3; Phil. 1:1). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Twenty-three, we believe Christ is now reigning over the kingdom (Dan. 7:13,14; Acts 1:10,11; Rev. 17:14). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Twenty-four, we believe that man is saved from his sins by the blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5). But we are not the only people who believe that.

Twenty-five, we believe that God hears and answers prayer, providentially intervening in this life (I Thes. 5:17; Mat. 7:7-11; Heb. 4:15,16). But we are not the only people who believe that.

Twenty-six, we believe baptism is an immersion in water, that baptism never was sprinkling or pouring (Rom. 6:3-5; Mat. 3:16; Acts 8:38,39). But we are not the only group which believes that.

Twenty-seven, we believe that infants are born pure and innocent, without original sin, and that without faith they are not candidates for baptism (Ezek. 18:20; Mat 18:3). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Twenty-eight, we believe that sin is transgressing or violating the law of God (I John 3:4), and as such it is never inherited from Adam or any father (Ezek. 18:20; Jas. 4:17). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Twenty-nine, we believe that the Spirit of God dwells in the church and in the individual Christian (I Cor. 3:16; I Cor. 6:19; Rom. 8:9), but that the miraculous measures of the Spirit and the baptism of the Spirit has ceased (Acts 8:18; Rom. 1:11; 2 Tim. 1:6; John 20:30,31). But we are not the only people who believe that.

Thirty, we not only believe that there is one church (Eph. 4:4,5), we believe salvation is only found in that one church (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18; John 10:9). But we are not the only religious group that believes that.

Thirty-one, we believe that the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3,4). But we are not the only people who believe that.

Thirty-two, we believe the Holy Spirit is a Personage, not a mere substance (John 14:16-26). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

Thirty-three, we believe man has an immortal soul (Deut. 6:5; 2 Kin. 4:27; Mat. 10:28; Mat. 26:38). But we are not the only people who believe that.

Thirty-four, we believe there is a place of eternal punishment, a lake of fire called hell (Mat. 5:29; Mat. 25:46). But we are not the only people who believe that.

Thirty-five, we believe there is a future coming of Christ which will usher in the end of the world (Rev. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:8- 13). But we are not the only people who believe that.

Thirty-six, we believe that at the second coming the devil, who has been busy tempting us, will be cast into that lake of fire (I Pet. 5:8; Rev. 20:10). But we are not the only ones who believe that.

We could go on and on. We are not the only people who believe those items, but we are the only people who believe all those items. You also can take your Bible and find truth, the true doctrines of the church you read about in the Bible. It is a long and arduous study.

WHAT WE BELIEVE

First, know something about us, what we believe, practice, and teach. We have no creed but Jesus, that He is the Christ, the Son of God. We have no rule of faith but the Bible. So, in this volume, I will just select a few various religious subjects and briefly tell you how we believe on them. We are not a cult. If, as most define it, a cult is a church which denies one or more of the basic doctrines which historically, for around 2,000 years, have been a part of Christianity, we are not a cult. We accept all the usual basic doctrines of Christianity regarding God, Christ, heaven, hell, and the word of God.

Regarding the church, we might be different from most because we do not claim to be, nor do we want to be, a cult, sect, or denomination. It is our aim to be simply the church we read about in the Bible (Mat. 16:18; Rom. 16:16). Individually we want nothing else but to be Christians (I Pet. 4:16). We feel that in this regard the Bible is a blueprint, and we can be simply Christians without being Catholic, Protestant, or Jew.

Regarding God, we believe there is one God (I Tim. 2:5), but that there are three distinct Persons in that one Godhead (Col. 2:9; Matt. 3:16,17). He is the God of the Bible.

Regarding Jesus, we believe He is Deity, part of that Godhead (Jn. 1:1), and as the apostle John described Him, He is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30,31). He died for our sins (I Pet 2:24), was resurrected (I Pet. 1:3), ascended to heaven (Acts 1), and we await His coming which will bring with it the end of this world (Rev. 1:7; I Thess. 4:16-18).

We are not premillennial. We believe the kingdom came in the first century (Mark 9:1; Col. 1:13; Heb. 12:22-29). Too, we believe the Bible teaches the kingdom is a spiritual kingdom, not a physical kingdom (Luke 17:20, 21), that it takes a spiritual birth to get into it (John 3:3-5), that it is the reign of God over the hearts of men through the truth (John 18:33-38).

Regarding the Holy Spirit, we believe He is the third member of the Godhead. He descended on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and today works through the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (Eph. 6:17).

We believe all the miracles of the Bible, but we do not believe the Bible teaches God works miracles today. The purpose for which God worked miracles was to authenticate that Jesus was from God (Acts 2:22; John 3:1,2), and to demonstrate that the message of the apostles and prophets also came from God (Mk. 16:20). All that, having now been authenticated, there is no need for miracles in our day. Here we are thinking of miracles as being signs or powers which violate natural law. We do not—when we say miracles have ceased—mean to say that God has ceased working in our day. We believe He now works, but through natural law, rather than in violation of it. Working through natural law is what some call the Providence of God. It is daily grace (Heb. 4:16). So God answers prayers (Matt. 7:7-11). He intervenes, and does something after prayer that he might very well not have done had we not prayed. Working in a providential way, we believe God heals the sick and provides us all with showers of blessings.

Along that line, we believe in the spiritual gifts mentioned in the Bible in I Corinthians 12. However, their purpose being served, we believe these gifts have passed away (I Cor. 13:8-10). Their purpose

is now served by the Bible, the word of God (I Cor. 13:10; II Tim. 3:16,17).

So as Paul said, we believe the Bible will make the man of God "Complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Tim. 3:16,17). The word of God will convert (Ps. 19:7), guide us to heaven (Ps. 73:24), set us free from sin (Jn. 8:31,32), give us the new birth (Jas. 1:18), sanctify us (Jn. 17:17), edify us (Acts 20:32), and save us (Jas. 1:21). It, not human reason, is our authority (I Pet 4:11; I Cor. 1:18-31). Traditions of men are held in horror by Christ (Matt. 15:7-9). We are warned against philosophy and crude notions of the world (Col. 2:8,9). We are, by God, put on guard against false teachers (Matt. 7:15,16; I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim. 3:13; n Cor. 11:13-15). Thus we put more stock in what the Bible says rather than feelings (Jer. 17:9), or even religious experiences (Matt. 24:24; Rev. 13:13). Jesus said that everyone who hath heard from the father and hath learned would come to Him (John 6:44,45). Man is to live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4). The Author of the Bible is the giver of life (Acts 17:28; Ps. 104:29). There are no untruths in the Bible because it is the word of God and God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2; Heb.6:18; I Jn.2:12). So it is called truth (2 Sam. 7:28), and it cannot be broken (Jn. 10:35). No wonder It claims authority (Heb. 2:1-4); I Pet 3:15; I Pet. 4:11). Its histories are true, and it will judge us in the last days (John 12:48). We won't be judged by what I write, the Talmud, Confucius, the Koran, Lao Tzu, the Dhammapada, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Epic of Gilgamesh, or the Code of Hammurabi.

The Bible clearly tells us man's part in salvation. So we believe we are saved by faith, but that we are not saved by faith-only (Jas. 2:24). The Bible teaches one needs to believe (Jn. 3:16), repent of his sins (Acts 3:19), confess his faith that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9,10), and be baptized into Christ for the remission of his sins (Gal.3:27; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Mk. 16:16; I Pet. 3:21). Then, only at that point is he saved, and at that point God adds him to the church (Acts 2:36-47).

In the Bible, also, we find the acts of worship for that church. There is the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7), prayer (I Thess. 5:17), preaching (Acts 20:7), giving (I Cor. 16:1,2), and singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). We do not have instrumental music because it, in the New

Testament, was never authorized. The early Christians only sang, though Judaism and Pagan worship did have instrumental music.

Thus, as God helps us and as much as we are able, we want to follow the blueprint in the Bible. We sincerely strive to restore, in our own day, pure undefiled New Testament Christianity, without addition and without subtraction. We would heartily enjoy investigating all this and all else with you. We only want to follow the Bible, and in tribute to it may we close with what some anonymous poet said.

"There's just one Book," cried the dying sage.

"Read me the old, old story."

And the winged words that can never age

Wafted him home to Glory.

There's just one book for the tender years,

One Book alone for guiding

The little feet through the joys and fears

The unknown days are hiding.

There's just one book for the bridal hour,

One book of love's own coining;

Its truths alone lend beauty and power,

To vows that lives are joining.

There's just one Book for life's gladness,

One Book for the toilsome days,

One Book that can cure life's madness,

One Book that can voice life's praise.

There's just one Book for the dying**,** **Anonymous**

INSPIRATION

How do we consider the Bible? One person said, “The Bible is a good book, next to Shakespeare.” Of course, we believe it is much more than that. We believe it is the inspired word of God. I briefly want to present for your thinking some facts concerning inspiration.

First, let’s look at a definition of the word inspiration. The word inspiration is found in 2 Timothy 3:16,17: “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work.” The word translated from the original Greek which the Bible was written in is the word *theopneustos.* The word means literally “to breathe out.” Scripture is breathed out by God; it is God-breathed. Lest one think that is weak, we would go to Psalm 33:6: “By the word of Jehovah

were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth." The universe was created by the breath of Jehovah's mouth. So the breath of God is a very forceful energetic, power-filled expression.

Secondly, let's look at the biblical view of inspiration much closer. The type inspiration the Bible presents is what is called "verbal, plenary, inspiration." Why would we say it is verbal? By that we mean the very words are inspired. Paul said, "But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Cor. 2:12,13). We can see that the Holy Spirit even gave the words. I believe He chose them out of the prophet's own vocabulary and left them under the arrangement of the prophet's own personality. Nevertheless, the very words of scripture are supervised by the Holy Spirit.

When we say we believe in plenary inspiration we simply mean that the whole Bible is inspired. One person said, "I only believe the parts which are written in red." But that is not the attitude of God. We noticed in 2 Timothy 3:16,17 that Paul said all scripture is God breathed. There is not a part of the original writings of the apostles and prophets which is not inspired. So we see why we say it is verbal inspiration (I Cor. 2:13). We see also why we say it is plenary or full or total inspiration (2 Tim. 3:16,17). And we have already seen that the word inspiration means "God breathed." So there we have it, "Verbal, plenary inspiration."

Another fact about inspiration is that the Bible claims inspiration. We have seen that in 2 Timothy 3:16,17. Another such passage is 2 Peter 1:19-21. Peter had just been talking about the transfiguration of Jesus on the mount where Peter, James, and John saw Jesus change. His body and clothes glittered and glistened. But regarding all that, Peter said, "and we have the word of prophecy made more sure; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day-star arise in your hearts: knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men

spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:19-21). In inspiration the prophet is passive. The prophet does not make a private interpretation of events. Peter says prophecy does not come by the will of the prophet. Rather, the prophet is moved by the Spirit of God. The word "moved," in the prophet being "moved by the spirit of God," is from a Greek word often used in sailing. In sailing the wind catches a sail and carries the ship along. The ship is passive.

It is borne along. And Peter uses that same word to talk about the prophet of scripture. He is carried along. He is passive. He is borne along by the Spirit as the Spirit has the prophet utter the words and the message the Spirit wants. In all that, Peter, and the Bible itself, is claiming inspiration.

Another passage along that line which claims inspiration is John 10:35. Jesus is defending Himself with the Jews who criticize Him for calling Himself the Son of God. Jesus quotes a passage in the Old Testament where God even calls Old Testament judges elohim or gods. So why should they object to His use of "Son of God." But in the midst of His argument, as He quotes the verse, He stops and reminds them that "the scripture cannot be broken." Why? Because it is not man's word. My words can be broken, for I am human. God is all-knowing or omniscient. His word cannot be broken. This passage forcefully argues, therefore, that the Bible is inspired. For notice, Jesus did not say "this scripture cannot be broken" or "this part of scripture cannot be broken," but rather, "scripture cannot be broken." All the scripture cannot be broken, for it is from God.

Notice another place where the scripture claims inspiration. Paul was telling the Corinthian church how to direct their worship service. In the midst of all that he says, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37). Every once in a while you hear someone say, "Oh, that's just Paul's opinion," or "Paul made a mistake" or "Paul didn't see things like Jesus." The truth is, however, Paul was simply writing the inspired word of God. Not only that, Paul knew it was the word of God, and further, he wanted his readers to know that what he wrote was not of Paul, it was the "commandment of the Lord."

Take another example. Paul is writing to the church of Thessalonica. They had received him well, and had an important understanding. Paul put it this way. He said, “and for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe” (I Thess. 2:13). What Paul spoke was not Paul. The Thessalonians heard not Paul. They heard, received and acknowledged that they recognized it as the word of God Himself, and Paul was very glad of that fact

The Bible also claims that scripture is God’s word in very subtle ways. For example, in a discussion regarding marriage and divorce, Jesus says God who from the beginning made them male and female, said, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.” Jesus quoted Genesis 2:24. When we turn to Genesis 2:24 it is not a quote of God. It is simply scripture, Moses writing. Yet since it is scripture, Jesus says God said it Again notice Hebrews 3:7. Paul says, ‘Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, today if ye shall hear his voice harden not your hearts, as in the provocation ...” Paul said the Holy Spirit said it. When we turn and look, it is Psalm 95:7, a Psalm of David. Yet Paul understood that in writing it, David was borne along by the Holy Spirit. Hence it is inspired.

Again, in Acts 4:25 the saints say that the Holy Spirit by the mouth of David said, “Why did the Gentiles rage, and the people imagine vain things.” True enough, when we turn to read the place from which the quote was taken we find a Psalm of David. But early Christians understood that the Holy Spirit used David’s mouth. So again, that’s what we mean when we say the Bible is inspired.

Further, inspiration is a cohesion of effort on the part of God and man. It comes from God (2 Tim. 3:16,17; I Thess. 2:13), through the Spirit (Jn. 14:26; Jn. 16:13; I Cor. 2:13), through chosen men (2 Pet. 1:19-21), who finally wrote it down to become the Bible (I Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet 3:16). It is 66 books written by forty men, over a period of 1600 years, and it meshes together into one central theme and a complete unity, and we can call it the Bible, the inspired word of God.

INERRANCY (1)

ARGUMENTS AGAINST INERRANCY

You know, before people reason together, it is always good to establish common authority. The Christian religion is a reasoning religion, and having discussed the existence of God, we now want to deal with our authority in religion. Later we will argue that the Bible is the sole authority in religion, but we felt we needed to establish a basis regarding why we believe that. In the last chapter we answered in part. It is because the Bible is inspired. We are now going to go even further. The Bible is not only inspired of God, it is inerrant or

free from error. As such, it is not only our authority, it is a perfectly reliable authority.

This is important to know and teach because when people believe the Bible may have mistakes, no doctrine is safe. People will think they may pick and choose their way through the Bible. Oh, they don't start off by attacking major doctrines in the Bible. They begin by arguing that there are errors of history, numbers, science, place-names, and minor details. But we believe this is the camel getting its nose under the tent, the thin edge of the knife blade in the crack of the door. Therefore, I want to deal with the best arguments I can find which are used to establish an **errant** Bible. I will speak in the next chapter on why the Bible actually is **inerrant** Then later we will talk of it being our sole authority. Let's look at the best I have found against the Bible.

First, some say there are contradictions in the Bible. I deny that. There are difficulties, but I would be surprised if all of them have not already been answered. If any more are put forth they will be easily answered. I now invite you to send any Bible difficulty or alleged contradiction, or call it in and I promise you I will immediately answer it. I am not cocky about my ability; I just have the courage of conviction that the Bible is free from error. By Bible I mean as it was originally written. But now let's look at one of these so-called contradictions, a good one. It concerns the blind men at Jericho (Matt. 20:29-34; Mk. 10:46-52; Lk. 18:35-43). Matthew says there were two blind men healed of blindness as Jesus left Jericho. The other gospels say there was one blind man cured, Bartimaeus, as they entered Jericho. Now without a little research, such would seem like a clear contradiction in the Bible, in fact, an occasion of two contradictions! However, such is not the case. For example, there were two blind men. Matthew says so. The others just mention one, evidently the prominent one who did most of the crying out and talking. The gospels, other than Matthew, say there was a blind man; they do not say there was only one blind man. They do not disagree with Matthew. If there were two, there certainly would be one. Also, there were two Jerichos, one the old city and one the new. The incident probably occurred while they were leaving the one and entering the other. Now these kind of facts are very frustrating to skeptics. Most alleged contradictions fall in just the same way. But let's proceed.

Another argument against the Bible is that it was written by errant human beings. In logical form this argument might go like this:

TO ERR IS HUMAN

SCRIPTURE IS HUMAN

THEREFORE SCRIPTURE ERRS

But this argument claims too much. It indicates that to err is essential to human nature. If that were so, Adam and Eve were not human until they fell and Jesus never was human for He never did err (Heb. 4:15). Later we will view the overwhelming help God gave human writers of the Bible so that they would not make mistakes. For now, just notice these words of Jesus. He said, "and when they lead you to judgment, and deliver you up, be not anxious before hand what ye shall speak: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit." They also did not speak of their own ability when they wrote scripture. The Holy Spirit, we will see, gave them total help.

But it is sometimes argued that even if the very original writings were inerrant, we do not have those original writings today. They no longer exist. That is true. And we only claim inerrancy for the originals. But we have over 5,000 ancient Greek manuscripts to compare to see what the original readings would have been. And Jesus did say, "For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished" (Matt. 5:17). He said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt 24:35). And in a previous chapter we saw that the apostle Paul said scripture was inspired or God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16,17). But all Paul had were copies, and the copies were probably the Septuagint (LXX), Greek version. In the Bible it says the Bereans checked the scriptures daily to see if what was preached was so (Acts 17:11). Yet "scriptures" in that passage spoke only of copies. And it was said that Timothy knew the "sacred writings." Yet those "sacred writings" were mere copies. From the copies the original readings can be determined. There is a complete science of Textual Criticism which has as its sole purpose the aim to determine what the originals exactly say. Listen to such a critic: "We possess the text of the Bible today, in a form which is

substantially identical with the [original] autographs" (Vos, Textual Critic). They add that not one doctrine of Christianity is in question due to any variant readings, and that we may have complete confidence in the Bible.

But it is next argued that New Testament writers quote the Old Testament too loosely for the Old Testament to be inspired, and that they also make mistakes in their quoting for they are not verbatim quotes. But we would ask, "Why do we need verbatim quotes?" Often writers quote merely the sense, not the exact words. We often paraphrase and quote that very same way. Too, such quoting is really a mark of inspiration rather than a problem. For who but an author feels free to take from, add to, or change his own writing? The Holy Spirit, as He inspires His own writing, feels most comfortable to be free with His own words and works. We uninspired men take great pains not to change things at all, simply because we are uninspired.

Another argument against inerrancy is the notion that some, higher critics they are called, have proved that the Bible was not written by the people long claimed to have written their book of the Bible. For example, Isaiah, they say, didn't really write Isaiah. Two or three or more different people wrote it. From a short work like that, they make inward judgments regarding what they figure the author's style and vocabulary is. Then they look in various parts of the book and see what they imagine is a different style and vocabulary. Then they exclaim that it must have been written by at least two different authors. They do not seem to take into account that when subject matter changes, style and vocabulary change also. To show the error of their approach, one writer used their arguments to prove "Little Bo Peep" was written by two different authors, and I had little difficulty, by their reasoning, in proving "Rock-a-Bye Baby" was definitely written by two writers. The more one studies how higher criticism works, the less confidence he has in Higher Criticism.

After all that, you sometimes hear that we believe in verbal dictation, the foolish notion that God dictated to the prophets word for word. No, we do not believe that. We believe the very words were supervised, not dictated. God prompted the prophet to say what God wanted that prophet to say in the prophet's own words and with the apostle or prophet's own personality coming through. For example,

when all the people are going after Jesus, the Pharisees gather to see what they can do about it. Finally, Caiaphas says, “ye know nothing at all, nor do ye take account that it is expedient for that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not” (John 11:49-51). He meant that if they don’t kill Jesus there will be such an insurrection that the Romans will come and destroy their nation. However, without him knowing it, God had the High Priest, Caiaphas, really prophesying that Jesus would lay down His life for the sins of the nation, that they might not spiritually perish. How does God do it? We don’t know, but one thing we do know: it is easy and simple for Him to do. And it makes, after all is done, an inerrant Bible which we rejoice to defend.

INERRANCY (2)

ARGUMENTS FOR INERRANCY

In the last chapter we contradicted several of the best arguments which are used to attempt to show that the Bible has errors in it. We affirm that the Bible has no errors, and today I want to discuss a few of the reasons why we take that stance.

Our **first argument** would be this: God cannot lie, and scripture is His word. Notice a few scriptures:

"God is not man, that he should lie, neither the son of man, that he should repent" (Num. 23:19).

"in hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before times eternal" (Tit. 1:2).

"That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement" (Heb. 6:18).

Another: "and also the Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent" (I Sam. 15:29).

To lie is to do evil, and God cannot even be tempted to do evil (James 1:13). God is true, and His prophets rejoiced in His faithfulness (Jer. 23:28). Yet remember, even though God used humans, the final product of inspiration is called "the word of God" (Genesis 15:4; Numbers4:45; Deuteronomy 5:5; Joshua 8:27; I Samuel 3:1, etc.). Scripture is breathed out by God (II Timothy 3:16,17), so the finished product is called His word. Scripture, being His word, must partake of His character, so there can be no lies, no deceit, no mistakes, slips or flaws.

Notice: "The words of Jehovah are pure words; as silver tried in a furnace on the earth, purified seven times" (Psalm 12:6). His word is called "holy scriptures" (Romans 1:2), "truth," (Psalm 119:14; Psalm 119:160; John 17:17; II Samuel 7:28). If scripture contained error, all this could not be said.

It is truth, also because the Holy Spirit speaks truth and cannot speak error (John 16:13). Jesus said the Son was truth, and He contained no error. If He had the least sin or error Jesus could not call Himself Truth (John 14:6). The same is true of Scripture. So again, argument one: God cannot lie, and Scripture is His word.

Argument two: Jesus assumed that the Scripture was inerrant. We have noticed before that in an argument with the Jews Jesus quoted a passage of Scripture, Psalm 82:6, but then stopped and reminded them, "and the scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). He did not say, "This Scripture cannot be broken," or "this portion of Scripture

cannot be broken" but, "Scripture cannot be broken" (John 10:35). If any part of Scripture can be broken the argument fails. My words can be broken for I am fallible. But the Bible possesses an authority so great it cannot be broken. Jesus is saying the Scripture **cannot** be set aside by proving it is in error. Jesus' statement would embrace the words and even the forms of the words. So in Jesus' mind the Scriptures are perfect, irrefragable, or cannot be broken. He said, "till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law till all things be accomplished" (Matthew 5:17-19). And He said, "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). But there is more:

Our **third argument** is the fact that Peter and Paul believed in the inerrancy of the Bible. Paul said, "which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth; but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Corinthians 2:13). Here Paul says the very words he uttered were under the supervision of the Spirit, and the Spirit of truth does not make mistakes. In fact, His words are so completely supervised that Paul could state this: "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (I Corinthians 14:37). And again, let Paul speak in this matter: "All scripture is God- breathed, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (II Timothy 3:16,17). Let us make several points:

1. Can anything breathed out of God be laced with error?

2. In saying Scripture is God-breathed, Paul makes nov qualifications. It is God-breathed and it makes one perfect.

3. The passage is an emphatic statement that scripture originates with God and not with man.

4. By the omission of man's part, the passage explicitly asserts that Scripture is totally of divine origin.

Regarding content, man is on a par with ink, quill, and paper, all being merely instruments for God's use.

But let's notice the attitude Peter had toward Scripture. He said, "knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (II Peter 1:19-21). Prophecies of Scripture did not originate with or involve the will of man! In fact, men did not even decide what to write. They had no choice. They did a very positive and unique thing: they "spake from God." But Peter says it was more than that. He says the "were moved by the Holy Spirit." The original Greek word means they were carried along while they were passive. The Spirit bore them along. That insured that what they wrote came from God without human contamination. Modem theories emphasize man's part, and neglects the overriding presence of God through the Holy Spirit.

But let's proceed. I want, for our **fourth argument**, to notice a very subtle and fascinating fact. The words of Scripture are often equated with God Himself. We are saying a little more than the mere fact that Scripture is God's word. We are talking about the curious way the prophet can be speaking to the people and suddenly we notice the prophet is not speaking; God is the one speaking (Isaiah 5:3). But it is more than that. Scripture is given characteristics of God Himself.

Notice: "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, For this very purpose did I raise thee up, that I might show in thee my power, and that my name might be published abroad in all the earth (Rom. 9:17).

Whose power and name was to be demonstrated in the earth? Paul said "scripture," but it was really God. And notice God really spoke to Pharaoh, but our text actually says," for the scripture saith unto Pharaoh." God is called "Scripture," their relationship being so much the same.

Notice again: "And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed" (Galatians 3:8).

Can Scripture foresee? No, it was God who foresaw and preached to Abraham (Genesis 12:3). But again, there is such a unity between God and Scripture that Paul calls God by the name "Scripture." So Scripture is as inerrant as God. Scripture is thought of as God for Scripture is completely the voice of God.

Now, for our **fifth argument**, we would like to point out that God gave sufficient help to insure inerrancy. Could the prophets make mistakes and commit errors? How much were they involved in the selection of the message?

Notice:

> "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth" (Deut.18:18).

"And thou shalt speak unto him, and put the words in his mouth: and I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do" (Exodus 4:15).

"Then Jehovah put forth his hand, and touched my mouth; and Jehovah said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth" (Jeremiah 1:9).

In all this, God describes His involvement as overwhelming. He chooses words out of the prophet's vocabulary and personality and then puts them in the prophet's mouth so that the prophet can make no mistake. If we had space, we would explore John 14:26 and John 16:13. We would see in Acts 28:25, 26 that the Spirit spake through Isaiah, and in Acts 1:16 that the Spirit borrowed David's mouth. We would notice that God chose the prophets even before they were born (Galatians 1:15; Jeremiah 1:5). We, if we had space, would demonstrate the uncanny and awesome providence God used to make His word inerrant. And we would explore much more. There is no doubt, God inspired His word in such a way as to make it inerrant.

AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE (1)

WHAT WE REJECT AS AN AUTHORITY

We have looked at inspiration and at the inerrancy of the Bible. Now we will begin to look specifically at why, since it is inspired and inerrant, it must serve us as the only authority in religion. Here we will attempt to answer why the Bible is that which ought to settle religious controversy, and why it is our standard of faith, doctrine, and morals. Specifically, we will review things which we reject as an authority.

First, surprising to some, we must reject the church as an authority. The church did not give us the Word, but the Word gave us the church. The seed which produced the church or the kingdom of God was the word of God. In the parable of the sower, Jesus said the seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Lk. 8:11). From the seed the church sprang forth. Paul said to Timothy the evangelist, "but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). The church is to support the truth; it does not determine what truth is. So we would not suppose that the church has authority to set doctrine, rules, precepts, and laws. God does that, and the church is to support the truth of God.

Next, as an authority in religion, I would reject any denomination, ecclesiastical body, presidency, or synod. Peter said, "if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11). These type bodies and boards are appointed by men. They are not found in the "oracles of God." Jesus once asked the Pharisees if the baptism of John the immerser were from heaven or from men. He implies, in context with the rest of His teaching, that there is a difference. Things from heaven are from God. Things from men are mere traditions of men. And, listen to what he says about precepts of men: "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Matthew 15:7-9). To say you honor Him and teach the precepts of men is hypocritical, vain worship, and having one's heart far away from God. In fact, one should not do it, but more, he should oppose such traditions. Jesus continued, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13). One should root up doctrines and precepts of men. Long ago Moses said for God, "ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that

ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). So in the churches of Christ, we strive, with a good degree of effort, to cleanse our notions of religion from human contamination. We reject all rules, decrees, precepts and doctrines of men, and try in sincerity to have the Bible as our sole authority in religion.

We reject human wisdom as an authority in religion. Jeremiah pointed out our personal inability to make our own way. To us Scripture must make sense and also serve to guide us. He said, "O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps," (Jeremiah 10:23). The apostle Paul was a highly educated individual. But under the direction of the Spirit of God, listen to what he had to say: "For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe. Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

"For behold your calling brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called; but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God" (I Corinthians 1:18-29).

God's word, not human wisdom, reason, and philosophy is what has real significance in the saving of souls from death. So Paul, highly educated and intellectual, could say, "and I, brethren, when I came unto you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom,

proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (I Corinthians 2:1,2).

Human reason or wisdom has its place, but when it comes to human wisdom in the realm of religion, notice the attitude of Jesus. The Bible says, "at that season Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou dids't hide these things from the wise and understanding, and dids't reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in thy sight" (Matthew 11:25,26). But let's go further.

Besides human reason, we even have to reject conscience as our authority in religion. The word conscience in the original Greek in which the Bible was written, is Suneidesis. It means "joint knowledge." The Latin conscientia means, "a knowing with oneself." It is true we must give attention to our conscience. It must be pure. Paul said, "But the end of the charge is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned" (I Timothy 1:5). And again he said, "holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith" (I Timothy 1:19). But Paul demonstrates something else. He said to the Jewish council, "Brethren, I have lived before God in all good conscience until this day" (Acts 23:1). But with that good conscience years earlier he was killing Christians (Acts 22:4). Further, elsewhere Paul pointedly said these can happen to the conscience. It can be weak (I Corinthians 8:10). It can even be defiled (Titus 1:15). It can become evil (Hebrews 10:22), and it can become seared (I Timothy 4:2). One of the saddest times in the history of man is the period of the judges. The Bible says, "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). That will be the precise state of man today, if we make the conscience our guide in religion.

We must reject as our guide in religion the rudiments of the world, those crude, natural sentiments in every age, which have a tendency to influence the Christian religion. To be specific, in large part they will be the current philosophy of the world, given a religious veneer. Paul said, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in

him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:8,9). What happens when we get into this kind of earthly stuff? John said, "whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11). Yes, the Bible is clear, we must not add to or take away from the Bible, God's word (Deut. 4:2; Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:6; I Cor. 4:6; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19).

Finally, men themselves must be rejected in religion. Jesus warned us, "Beware of false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7:15,16). One fruit is whether they speak according to God's word. Only then are men useful and worthy of our listening ear. We find that same sentiment throughout God's word. Peter said we would be faced with false teachers (2 Peter 2:1-4). John called them false prophets (I John 4:1). So Jude commanded us to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3). Paul said false teachers would be deceitful and that they would fashion themselves as ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians 11:13-15). And they are accursed of God (Galatians 1:8,9). See also Matthew 24:24; and Revelation 13:13. Now notice the next chapter.

AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE (2)

MORE ITEMS WE REJECT AS AN AUTHORITY

We have seen why the Bible must be inspired and why it is inerrant, or has no error in it. Specifically we have moved into an area of discussion regarding the authority of the Bible, and we mentioned several things we rejected as an authority: the church, denominations, Ecclesiastical bodies and Presidencies, and such like. We gave reasons why we must reject human reason, conscience, traditions of men, and men themselves. We will give reasons why other items must be rejected as our authority in religion.

First, we will take a look at angels. I have had several people tell me of occasions where they have seen angels, and some even who said the angels spoke with them. Yet I always recall what the apostle Paul said, "For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for even Satan fashioneth himself into an angel of light It is no great thing therefore if his ministers also fashion themselves as ministers of righteous-ness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). And again, speaking to the churches of Galatia Paul said, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, if any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8,9). We don't know the occasion where Satan appeared as an angel of light, but it did happen, and there should be a warning in that. Secondly, Paul puts the words of angels on a level of that of man. The words are not to be different from that spoken by Paul and described in the Bible. So, in any case, again, Scripture has to be the authority and angels rejected.

Next I would reject visionary states of the mind. One woman, when I was in Austin, Texas, called because she had to talk to a minister. She told me she was walking her dog and saw a vision of Jesus. She was bewildered. After several conversations she called to

tell me what was at the bottom of it. She had changed her medicine and was, evidently according to the doctor, hallucinating. The mind is very tricky and the subconscious very powerful. It is startling what can be done under hypnosis. There is such a thing as hysteria, dissociation, waking hallucinations, sleeping briefly and dreaming while one thinks he is awake. Yet regardless, Paul said of such visionary states of the mind, "Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshiping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind" (Col. 2:18).

Another thing which must be rejected as our authority in religion is a multitude. Have you ever heard the statement "If I go to hell, I won't be alone." But when you think of it, that is not a very consoling thought. Plentiful company won't cool the fires of hell. Almost thirty-five hundred years ago the Prophet Moses said, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to turn aside after a multitude to wrest justice" (Exo. 23:2). Also, Jesus said, "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it" (Matt. 7:13,14). The way of light, truth, and purity is not in the wide, broad, easy way the majority of people go. A man once listened to Jesus preach. Then he received some kind of impression from the Lord that made him ask a very wise question. We read, "And one said unto him, Lord, are they few that are saved? And he said unto them, Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:23,24). We don't want to find ourselves saying, "I'm right, for our church is forty million strong world-wide." Such a statement may truly say one is in a group 40 million strong. It does not prove one is right religiously. It may only prove that that church offers a wide gate and a broad way to induce very many to join them. It may go slack on the original disciplines of Christianity just to get numbers. At times, Jesus seemed so suspicious of numbers that He came across as if He was determined to run them off, thin them down, and weed them out He took vast numbers and refined them with the fires of warnings, denial, and high challenges. Vast multitudes followed him and he turned to say unto them, "If any man cometh unto me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters,

yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple... So therefore whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26,27,33). Again we read, "And he called unto him the multitude with his disciples, and said unto them, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it" (Mark 8:34,35). Now such language is not intended to gather quantity but rather quality. These are the original disciplines of Christianity. They are such as to weed out vast multitudes and to seek that core of individuals who truly desire light, truth, holiness, rather than darkness, pleasure, and sensuousness. He was not interested in numbers, so how could numbers be our authority? Numbers might alert us that we are really possibly on the wrong side. In truth, in biblical history, the vast majority of people were on the wrong side. They were either lost or wrong and usually both. Take the time of the flood, Sodom and Gomorrah, the 7,000 in the time of Elijah, or the vast majority who ended up denying Christ. Numbers cannot be our authority in religion.

Next, we must reject religious experiences as our authority in religion. I have witnessed some strange things in religion, and apart from religion, which contradicted not only the Bible but principles of the Christian religion. Jesus said, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Matt. 24:24). John said of the false prophet of Revelation, "And he doeth great signs, that he should even make fire to come down out of heaven upon the earth in the sight of men" (Rev. 13:13). Evil has lying wonders and power to deceive if one does not know the Bible and have an honest and good heart. In this vein, I'm afraid that a lot of the so-called charismatic movement is a tapping of the emotions with a lot of what seems like religious hocus pocus. A speaker puts a holy whine in his voice and stirs up nothing more than glorified emotion. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (John 6:44,45). The Christian religion is a

religion which is sober. It is heard, taught, and learned. It is not gibberish and mumbo jumbo. It is decent and in order (I Cor. 14:40). A Christian would rather have a gospel feast rather than a religious spree any day.

Lastly on our list of things which must be rejected as our authority in religion are feelings. We all have feelings, but feelings do not always reflect the true situation. Mary Magdalene felt Jesus was dead. Her tears, to some, might have proved it. She heard a voice ask her, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?" She replied, because the tomb was empty, "Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away." Finally the voice came again; it was familiar. "Mary." She replied, "Rabboni!" Her feelings were dead wrong. He was alive, not dead. Jeremiah said, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it" (Jer. 17:9).

So we have rejected eleven things as our authority in religion: the church, religious bodies, human reason, conscience, traditions of men, men themselves, angels, visionary states of the mind, a multitude, religious experiences, and feelings.

AUTHORITY OF THE BIBLE (3)

WHY THE BIBLE IS OUR SOLE AUTHORITY

In the past two chapters we have noticed things which, according to the Bible, must be rejected as our authority in religion. Now we will begin to see reasons why we must accept the Bible as our authority in the Christian religion. Let us look at six reasons why we must have the Bible as our sole authority in religion.

First, it is our sole authority in religion because it is God's Word. Liberals deny it, but I believe God's creation can know His voice when they hear it. Jesus said, "It is written, man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). God said to Moses, "I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him" (Deu. 18:18). So the apostle Paul could say, "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (I Thes. 2:13). And again, Paul could write, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37). So the Bible is our authority for it is God's voice. If you want to hear Him in this life there is only one place to go, the Bible. Besides, God is the Giver of our life (Psa. 24:1; Ecc. 12:7). In Him we live and move (Acts 17:28). And He will call us out of this life when He desires (Psa. 104:29). We recognize the Bible as our authority, because it is where God speaks.

Second, the Bible is our authority because it is there God gives His commands and exercises His authority. Notice there is a progression in the delegation of God's authority. One, God spoke to

us, but specifically He spoke through Jesus. Hebrew's 1:1,2 says, "God, having of old times spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds." God speaks to mankind through Christ (John 3:32; 3:34; 17:8; 17:16). So, one, God delegated his authority to Jesus. But, two, Jesus delegated it to the apostles. Notice Paul says of the apostles, "For though I should glory somewhat abundantly concerning our authority (which the Lord gave for building you up, and not for casting you down), I shall not be put to shame" (2 Cor. 10:8). See also 2 Corinthians 5:20. But, three, the apostles wrote it down, so the authority and commands of God are now in the book. We saw that Paul said the commands he wrote were those of the Lord (I Cor. 14:37). Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16,17). And Paul began to talk of epistles he wrote (2 The. 2:1-3). There are twenty-one of them in the Bible. Paul wrote about fourteen of them. So, second, the Bible is our authority because it is there that God speaks with authority for us. And, as we have seen, it is reliable since it is God's word. There are no untruths in it. Remember, it is God's word and God cannot lie (Tit. 1:2; Heb. 6:18; I John 2:12). The Bible is called truth (2 Sam. 7:28). And it cannot be broken as can man's word (John 10:35). Fallible men had help from the Holy Spirit so that they could not make even one mistake (John 14:26; 16:13; 2Pet. 1:19-21). Two thousand six hundred times writers of the Bible used some formula to show they were speaking by inspiration. Did those who gave us the greatest moral system ever known to man lie 2,600 times? No, it is our authority for it is there God exercises His authority.

Third, it is our authority for it claims to be our authority. A skeptic might say you can't have the Bible testify of itself. Yes, we can, for if it did not claim to be an authority they would say the main reason it can't be our authority is that it doesn't claim to be our authority. Paul said, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was con-firmed unto us by

them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:1-4). By it we are able to give answer to all who question us regarding the Christian religion (2 Pet. 2:15). So all who speak ought to speak as the Oracles of God (I Pet. 4:11). The greatest curse we have in religion today is that most take their religion haphazard, careless, willy-nilly, reject nothing, swallow everything. We must make God's word the foundation of all we believe. Jesus did. When Satan tried to tempt Him he quoted Deuteronomy 8:3 and more. When asked a question on divorce He quoted Genesis 1:27 and Genesis 2:24. When asked about survival after death he quoted Exodus 3:6. They charged Him with blasphemy and He quoted Psalm 82:6. On and on we could go. The Bible claims authority and Jesus proved it.

Four, it is our authority for so claimed the apostles. Paul said, "But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Cor. 2:12,13). If someone would not obey what the apostles wrote they were to be withdrawn from (2 The. 3:14). How did Paul settle that Jews and Gentiles were all sinners? He quoted five passages in Psalms and one in Isaiah (Rom. 3:9-18). So the Bible is our authority for not only Jesus claimed such, so did His apostles.

Five, the Bible is our authority for therein are the words of Jesus and they will judge us in the last day. Jesus said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). Now I want you to trust that I do not wish to offend you. However, I want to be absolutely clear on this point and also be bold and biblical. You will not be judged by what Jerry Moffitt or anyone in the Churches of Christ wrote. Nor will we be judged by the Book of Mormon, the Baptist Manual, the Methodist Discipline, the Talmud, the writings of Confucius, the Koran, or the Zend Avesta. We will be judged by the words of Jesus and those words are only found in the Bible.

Six, the Bible is our authority for it is indestructible. Once a man in Arkansas found some pretty stones and thought he would round

them up and beautify them on his grindstone. He couldn't; they cut a groove in the stone. Taking them to a gemologist he verified that they were diamonds, and he discovered the only diamond field in America. It is at Murfreesboro, Arkansas. But like a diamond, the Bible is indestructible. It has been viciously attacked by Voltaire, Thomas Pain, Renan, and others. Voltaire, who lived from 1694-1778 said that within one hundred years there would not be one copy of the Bible found anywhere. After his death his printing presses were used to crank off one copy of the Bible after another. Today it is still the number one best seller. It has gone into over two thousand languages and dialects. Did not Jesus say, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mat. 24:35). It will convert you (Psa. 19:7), guide you to heaven (Psa. 73:24), set you free from sin (John 8:31,32), give you the new birth (Jam. 1:18), sanctify you (John 17:17), edify you (Acts 20:32), and save you (Jam. 1:21). So may we ever accept the Bible as our authority in religion.

WHAT GOD DID TO SAVE US

We have previously seen that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant word of God and as such it claims to be our sole authority in religion. But all that is not an end in and of itself. The end of religion is the eternal salvation of the human soul, making it possible for one to live in heaven, in God's presence for all eternity.

Before we consider what God did to make that possible, I want to point out that often we are blind to important moments. Jesus went up into the mountain and sat down. His disciples came to him and He opened His mouth and preached what came to be called the "Sermon on the Mount." I wonder what man said, "If I go and hear this young Galilean prophet I may be late for supper." He missed out on one of the most significant moments in human history. Today, these few moments you spend with the Bible may seem ordinary and even insignificant. But when the Lord returns from heaven with ten thousand and thousands of angels, you may look back and say that they were incredible intervals of time which should have arrested your most careful attention. In this section we are going to study what

God's word says regarding the question, "What must I do to be saved?" Actually, we will specifically view what God and Christ did to save us. However, let's begin from the beginning.

We believe the Bible is God speaking. It is God's word. The apostle Paul said, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16,17). I believe that. The Bible is not the word of men. Paul said, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37).

But we all know that the Bible can be misused. A preacher who carried a gun was asked by a news reporter if it was right for a minister to do so. He replied, "The Bible says 'be ye ready,' and I'm ready." Actually he used Luke 12:40 out of context. It was saying be ready for the coming of the Lord. But another way to misuse or mishandle the Bible is to not make a division in the covenants. Should we obey commands from the Old Testament as well as the New Covenant? Notice the Bible says this of the two wills: "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." When did God take away the first? Colossians 2:14 says, "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross." Well, how was the Old Testament taken away? We read, "For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth" (Heb. 9:16,17). So the Old Testament, though it contains truth for us, was taken away as a law for us. And today we are all bound under the New Testament. But let's go further.

What is our great problem today? We may not know that we have a problem. Belshazzar was celebrating and making merry, drinking wine out of the vessels used in the temple of God. He thought life was good and the moment fun, until a hand appeared and wrote on the wall that he had been weighed in the balances and found wanting. He lost

the kingdom that night. Jeremiah said, “The heart is deceitful above all things, and itis exceedingly corrupt: Who can know it?” (Jeremiah 17:9). We need God’s law to reveal the problem of sin. By God’s word we can discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14). We learn to hate the false way (Ps. 119:104). It is a light unto our path and a lamp unto our feet (Ps. 119:105). And the law of God in the New Covenant reveals sin is breaking God’s law. John put it this way, “Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (I John 3:4). So sin is breaking God’s law.

But what is so bad about sin? The answer is, it will kill. Many warn about the danger of dressing out and eating the Japanese Blow Fish. Unskilled in dressing it out, they don’t heed the warning and they prick the poison gland and when they eat it they die. None of them believed it could happen to them. But in a far worse way, sin kills. James says, “but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed. Then the lust, when it hath conceived, beareth sin: and the sin, when it is full grown, bringeth forth death" (Jam. 1:14,15).

What is this death? In Revelation Jesus said, “But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with Ere and brimstone; which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8). Jesus said it was a most terrible language used in the Bible is used to describe hell. Shriek and howl are used of those who merely contemplate it (Jam. 5:1). The truth is, justice must be done; all who sinned must be punished. In fact, you have sinned, that terrible death awaits you; and you are helpless in and of yourself to do anything about it.

That leads us to this next question. Why did Christ die? They bent Him over a low post, as the custom was, and scourged Him with a Roman flagrum. They drove the nails through each hand and each foot. Why did it happen? Once He said, “Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father” (John 10:17,18). When Peter tried to defend Jesus with the sword Jesus said, “Put up again thy sword into

its place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Or thinkest thou that I cannot beseech my Father, and he shall even now send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Mat. 26:52,53). No, He did not have to die. He allowed it to happen. Why!? He put it this way: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:12,13). He died because He loved your soul. He wanted to save you from that great death. And not only did He love you. The Father loved you! Paul said, "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: for peradventure for the good man some one would even dare to die. But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:6- 8). You know, we tend to sometimes think He died for very bad people. Maybe in a vague way we admit he died for all. But it would be worth a great deal of effort if we could realize how close we are to eternal punishment, and that He truly died for us individually. Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: And that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Truly, He is in heaven now. The Holy Spirit said, "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11). Revelation 1:7 says, "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, amen."

All this that God and Christ did to save us has comfort and joy for us not only regarding the next life. It has momentous implications for us in this life. For notice Paul again says, "what then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not also with him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:31,32).

GOD MADE A PLAN

Jeremiah said, “Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls: but they said, we will not walk therein” (Jer. 6:16). Today, let’s try to go back to the old paths through use of scripture.

First we understand God had a perfect plan for man, because man needed a plan to save his soul. In Genesis three we read that man fell. He continued to fall for Paul said, “for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). Notice how Paul put it: “There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God; they have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not so much as one” (Rom. 3:10-12). Spiritual death was the result of man’s fall. Jesus had said, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). So Paul said, “for the wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). As a matter of fact, you were or are now lost, and God had to devise a way to save you. So He made a perfect plan.

It was prophesied about way back in Genesis 3:15. God said one day he would bring forth a kingdom, a church which was part of that plan. God said about 500 years before it happened, “And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever” (Dan. 2:44). Yet this church or kingdom was in the mind of God for long ages. It was called “the dispensation of the mystery,” and it was hid in God. God was going to make known his manifold wisdom unto the heavenly places through the church, according to His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:9-11).

This eternal plan came through Noah and Shem his son, until we get to a person named Abraham. God said to him, “and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed” (Gen. 12:3). So Abraham begat Isaac, and there followed Jacob and Joseph. Under Joseph a

nation was formed down in Egypt. Moses led them out of Egypt, but he said, "Jehovah thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15). That was, according to scripture, a prophesy of Jesus who would come through Abraham.

Joshua led this nation into the promised land and they were there about 305 years before they had a king. Then they had Saul, David, and Solomon about 120 years. The kingdom was divided about 975 B.C. That Jewish nation was carried away in bondage by Babylon about 586 B. C. About 536 B. C. Cyrus of Persia let them go back to their homeland and to Jerusalem.

Then we notice what Galatians 4:4-5 said, "but when the fulness of the time came, God sent forth his son, born of a woman, born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4,5). An angel appeared to an old priest named Zechariah. He told him he would have a son named John who would prepare the way for another. This same angel, Gabriel, was sent to Mary about six months later. Mary would give birth to the Son of the Most High. Jesus was born. His name meant "Saviour." Shepherds and wise men announced the birth, along with angels and a star seen in the east. Joseph the father and Mary with the Son fled to Egypt. They came back to Galilee. At around age thirty, John started his ministry by preaching, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 3:2). At about that time Jesus began to preach the same message (Mat. 4:17). He gathered to Him disciples and apostles and one day announced to them, "upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:18). He said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Toward the end of His life He said, "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself' (John 12:31,32).

He was crucified, but was resurrected from the dead with a perfect plan of salvation, a flawless scheme of redemption. The apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, said, "but as it is written, things which eye saw not, and ear heard not, and which entered not into the heart of man,

whatsoever things God prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. 2:9). Again he said of this scheme, "and we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose" (Rom. 8:28).

In His own words Jesus told His part, "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mat. 20:28). He said, "Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment received I from my Father" (John 10:17,18).

Man's part in this plan of salvation was simple. It included faith. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believest thou this?" (John 11:25,26). So that plan included faith that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. The apostle John said, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31).

But it included more than faith alone on man's part. This scheme of redemption included repentance. Repentance is a change of mind regarding sin with a view to amend one's life. Jesus said, "I tell you Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish" (Luke 13:3). Peter preached, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Yet it included more. Jesus said, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 10:32). So Paul could teach, "for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). This grand plan of salvation included confession of Jesus. See also I Timothy 6:12.

But there was more. This scheme of redemption included water baptism. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the

kingdom of God" (John 3:5). After His resurrection Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). Also see Acts 22:16; I Peter 3:21; and Romans 6:3-5.

In the above manner, man can now be saved from his sins. And also, God created an institution to help man live and work until he can receive heaven. That is the church. God made it part of His plan. Its work, organization, worship, and doctrines are all given in the New Testament. Next we will see that man fell from this perfect plan. But man also has attempted to restore God's perfect plan.

MAN FELL FROM GOD'S PLAN

We have seen that God made a plan to redeem the world by the blood of Jesus. We traced that plan in prophecy back through Adam, Abraham, Noah, down through the kingdom of David until the fullness of the times when God sent forth his Son to reconcile man back to God (Gal. 4:4). We saw that God's plan involved a kingdom or church, the death of God's Son, and on man's part, a plan of salvation which involved faith, repentance, confession of Christ, and water baptism for the remission of sins. So God gave a perfect plan to redeem man from his sins. But something happened. Man departed from that plan.

THE DEPARTURE IN PROPHECY

Nothing happens without the prior knowledge of God, so God warned the church to expect a departure. Through the apostle Paul God said, "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth" (I Tim. 4:1-3).

Again Paul said, “I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables” (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

The falling away was at work in Paul’s day (2 The. 2:3, 7). Paul said, to the elders at Ephesus, ‘Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears. And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:28- 32).

ITEMS OF THE DEPARTURE

The first departure from God’s plan seemed to be in the organization God gave His church. In the Bible we learn that God appointed a plurality of elders, also called bishops. But to combat false teaching men changed that. They exalted one elder over the others, and called him the bishop of the congregation. Eventually such departures and changes led to the universal bishop or Pope.

There were other and numerous departures. There was the worship of Mary, which the Bible would condemn. There were unauthorized and unscriptural practices such as instrumental music, the lighting of candles, burning of incense, and other shades of Judaism. There were unbiblical rituals such as the sign of the cross, bowing down to images, and the selling of indulgences.

Strange doctrines arose such as purgatory, the perpetual virginity of Mary, though the brothers of Jesus are even named in Matthew

13:55: James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas. Mention is made of Jesus' sisters in the next verse.

In the departure it became acceptable to appoint human, man-made traditions for the teaching and worship of the church. But remember the words of Jesus, "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat 15:7-9). There was the use of religious titles, though Jesus had said, "and call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven" (Mat. 23:9). There came to be the veneration of saints, though in the Bible all Christians are called saints (Rom. 1:7). Baptism was turned into sprinkling, though Paul said, "We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death" (Rom. 6:4). There arose infant baptism though infants can't believe and Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

MAN SOUGHT TO RETURN TO THAT PLAN

We could go on and on, but eventually men sought to return to that plan. They attempted to reform what was then called the Roman Catholic Church. These efforts came from 800 A.D. through 1500 A.D. There was Claudius of Turin in 839 and Peter of Bruys in 1126. A more popular effort, known as the Protestant Reformation began with John Huss in Bohemia in 1415. There was Jerome Savanarola in Italy in 1498, and Erasmus In Holland in 1536.

THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

So then came what was called the Protestant Reformation. Pope Leo X needed money to build St. Peter's Church in Rome. He authorized a man by the name of Tetzel to sell indulgences which would take care of sins. That angered a priest by the name of Martin Luther. He wrote 95 debate propositions and nailed them to the church door at Whittenburg. He was excommunicated in 1520. On December the 10th he burned the bull of excommunication and finally made a complete renunciation of the Roman Catholic Church. He saw that the Bible taught we were saved by grace, and not by indulgences or works.

It was by faith. Paul said, “for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory” (Eph. 2:8,9).

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

Reformation failed. To reform apostasy is fruitless. Someone asked, “If a house has defects, must you demolish it?” Another replied, “If the foundation is rotten, you tear the house down and start over.”

Men arose who wanted to return to the Divine plan. But they had the idea of restoration, not reformation. They saw that the seed of the kingdom was the word of God (Luke 8:11). By the word of God they could return to the Divine pattern. So they wanted to reform nothing, but rather to restore pure New Testament Christianity. Did not God say His word was sufficient? Scripture said, “all scripture is God-breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16,17). The Bible is all we need in order to restore the church we read about in the Bible. Peter said, “If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God” (I Peter 4:11). And the apostle John warned, “whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9-11).

There was a man among the Baptists named Abner Jones, and Elias Smith among the Methodists, and Barton W. Stone among the Presbyterians. Their approach was to follow the Bible pattern for the church. They wanted to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. They wanted to call Bible things by Bible names. They wanted to duplicate in their day the organization of the original church along with its original doctrines. They strove to tell people how to be saved the Bible way by hearing, repenting, confessing Christ, and being baptized in water for the remission of sins (John 3:16; Luke 13:3; Mat 10:32; Mark 16:16). They found that the faith that saved was not faith only, but an obedient faith (Rom. 1:5; Jas. 2:26).

That movement is alive today in the churches of Christ and you can be a part of it, if you desire pure, simple, New Testament

Christianity. All we want is ancient Christianity, as it was first founded by Christ and the apostles.

FAITH ONLY (I)

THE NATURE OF SAVING FAITH

We need to have a look at the doctrine of faith. Most denominations believe that a person is saved when he only believes that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God. At the point of faith he is saved before water baptism. The doctrine is called saved by "faith only," or "faith alone." In the Churches of Christ we sincerely believe that faith alone is not enough, that one must go on and repent (Acts 3:19), confess his faith (Rom. 10:9,10), and be baptized for remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). In this chapter we want to see the nature of saving faith. We cheerfully admit that the Churches of Christ are somewhat distinctive from the denominational world because we simply do not believe the doctrine of "faith only," or "salvation by faith alone." Let's look at the question.

Some argue for the doctrine of "faith only" because they sincerely believe the Bible teaches it. After all, Jesus said, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). And again Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die. Believeth thou this?” (John 11:25,26). And years later when the Philippian jailor asked what he must do to be saved Paul said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shall be saved, thou and thy house” (Acts 16:31). But did you notice, and we always point it out, none of those passages say “faith only” or “faith alone.” Faith is the principle of all action. If one is led by his faith to do a series of steps to obtain a gift, it can rightly be said that he obtained that gift by faith. But that is not to say that he obtained it by faith alone. To fight a war with bombs, and to fight a war with bombs only, are two different things. And to be saved by faith, and to be saved by faith alone are two different things. Sometimes a man will agree to defend in debate that a man is saved by “faith only.” Then when he gets in the debate, he uses passages which say one is saved by faith. That won’t do. We all believe that one is saved by faith. But in the Churches of Christ we do not believe one is saved by faith alone. We believe faith is the principle of all action, that it motivates us to do the conditions God gave us in order to obtain the promise of eternal life.

Others say we are saved by faith alone because the Bible teaches the reward is “not of works.” Notice Romans 4:4,5: “Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness." But Romans 4:4-5 are talking of works of sinlessness, of keeping law perfectly whereby God owes you salvation as a debt. Notice Paul said, “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified” (Rom. 2:13). But you could not keep part of the law perfectly and be justified. You had to keep it all perfectly. Paul said, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Gal. 3:10). You had to keep the whole law perfectly to be saved by works of law. But again Paul said, “For

all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). No one except Christ ever was sinless (Heb. 4:15). So no one can be saved by works of law or works of sinlessness.

But baptism is not a work of law, which done renders a person perfect in the sense of having never sinned. In fact, baptism is just the opposite. It proves one has sinned. It is in order to obtain remission, cleansing, washing away of sins. It is a cry for help, an admission of failure. Peter said, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). So baptism is not doing everything in the law so one will be perfect and sinless. It is cleansing of sin because one has stumbled. So when Paul says we are saved, "not of works," he is not talking of faith, repentance, confession, or baptism. He is talking of works of law whereby we would remain utterly sinless and God would owe us salvation as a debt. But let's take a better look at saving faith.

The Scriptures actually teach that faith is inclusive of such works of obedience as repentance, confession, and baptism. For example notice Galatians 5:6: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love." The faith which saves is an active, working faith. It is not faith alone or dead faith (James 2:26). Notice that the faith Paul writes about in Romans is not some kind of mental faith. It is the type faith which has in its possession works of obedience. Paul said, "through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake" (Rom. 1:5). There faith possesses something — obedience. The faith Paul speaks of is mi "obedience of faith." He uses the same phrase when talking about the Gentile's response to God's scheme of redemption (Rom. 16:26). Notice James gets most clear. Listen to James 2:26: "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead." So, faith plus baptism, repentance, and confession is living faith. Without them one is seeking salvation by a dead faith, faith only.

In all this, therefore, we believe every passage which says we are saved by faith. We believe and preach passages such as Romans 5:1, "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Now as an example of all this, look at Luke 8:43-48. A woman had an issue of blood twelve years. Physicians could not heal her. She came behind Jesus and touched the hem of his garment and was healed. Jesus felt power proceeding from Him and asked who touched Him. When she knew He was aware she confessed all. And He said to her, "Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 8:48). When did her faith make her whole? Was it when she had faith alone, or when it was joined with works and became no longer dead faith but became alive faith? It made her whole when it expressed itself in action. Take baptism again. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved "(Mark 16:16). We obey, and go down into the water because we believe. We arise from the waters of baptism and say we are saved by faith, but not faith only.

Now consider a friendly biblical challenge. Find anywhere in the Bible where it ever says any individual was ever blessed on account of faith before that faith expressed itself in action. You send me any such example and I will deal with it and write you back. Again, listen to this challenge: Find an example of any man blessed on account of faith, before that faith expresses itself in action. Now some are blessed, in the Bible, not on account of faith at all. But we want to see an example of a person blessed on account of faith before that faith expressed itself in some kind of action.

Now someone might say, "well the phrase 'by faith' means 'faith only.'" Does it? Take Hebrews 11:7: "By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." Now if the phrase "by faith" in that passage means "faith only," let's substitute it and see if it makes sense. It would read "By faith only...Noah...prepared an ark." Did he really? Without tools, without working with the tools? Who can for one instant believe such? No, the phrase, "by faith" doesn't mean "faith only."

I believe that what James said about faith being dead without works is becoming obvious. The notion that faith alone saved was spawned by the Protestant Reformation. It was an extreme reaction against the meritorious "work salvation" of the Catholic church of the 1500's. It is as gross a false doctrine as that which it tried to refute.

FAITH ONLY (2)

MORE ARGUMENTS WHY WE ARE NOT SAVED BY FAITH ALONE

We contended that man is not saved by faith alone, but that obedience was required. In fact, in the Bible when it says faith saves or justifies it is talking of a faith inclusive of works of obedience. Romans 1:5 and Romans 16:26 talk of the "obedience of faith." But let us continue on to other arguments.

Notice John 12:42,43: "Nevertheless even of the rulers many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the glory that is of men more than the glory that is of God." Now this passage says they believed. Was it enough? Faith only, in their case stopped short of confessing Christ. The enormity of that situation is seen in the following teaching of Jesus: "Every one therefore who shall confess

me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 10:32,33). No, according to Jesus, faith only is not enough. One must go on and confess Jesus. Here in John 12 is an example of some who only believe, and they are lost.

Notice another passage. John 1:12 says, "But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name...." Can words be more clear? If you believe in Christ you have the right or power to become a child of God. You are not a child of God by faith alone; you have the right to become one. No wonder Paul could say, "But thanks be to God, that whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17,18). But let's go further.

The Bible clearly refutes the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. Notice this rather long portion of Scripture. James says, "What doth it profit my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but have not works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Go in peace, be ye warmed and filled; and yet ye give them not the things needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead in itself. Yea, a man will say, thou hast faith, and I have works; show me thy faith apart from thy works, and I by my works will show thee my faith. Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and shudder. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith apart from works is barren? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, in that he offered up Isaac his son upon the altar? Thou seest that faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness; and he was called the friend of God. Ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith. And in like manner was not also Rahab the harlot justified by works, in that she received the messengers, and sent them out another way? For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead" (Jam. 2:14-26). Now it seems to me that no

passage can be more clear than that. Let's let it speak for itself a second time by breaking it down into parts. Verse 17 says faith without works is dead in itself. Verse 19 says the demons have faith alone and shudder. Verse 20 says faith only is barren. Verse 22 says that by works faith is made perfect. Then in verse 24 James expressly says that one is justified by works and not by faith alone. And finally he concludes by saying faith without works is just as dead as a body without a spirit. This passage is so hard to twist that a false teacher must read things into it to ever get another meaning. But let's proceed further by looking at a major argument used by some to try and establish the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. This is the argument regarding the thief on the cross.

In Luke 23:39-43 we have the crucifixion of Christ At first both thieves rail on Christ. But later one rebukes the other, and then he addresses Jesus: "And he said, Jesus remember me when thou comest in thy kingdom. And he said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:42,43). But let us make several observations. First, how can one assume he was not baptized? He could have been a former thief punished for a former crime. Matthew 3:5,6 says, "Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about the Jordan; and they were baptized of him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." Why could he not have been of that baptized number? The Bible clearly says thieves were sometimes baptized. "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye were washed..." (I Cor. 6:9-11). Second, however, he was under the Old Testament. Christian baptism was not yet required when Jesus gave him forgiveness. Notice Hebrews 9:16,17: "For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth." When Jesus died on the cross the New Testament went into effect. The Old was nailed to the cross and went no further (Col. 2:14). But Jesus gave the promise under the Old Testament, before he died. So actually Christian baptism was not required of the thief. But you and I live under the New Testament, and water baptism for the remission of sins

is required of us today (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). Third, while on earth Jesus often forgave sin. When they brought one sick of the palsy Jesus said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). The scribes questioned in their heart thinking no one could forgive sins but God. They thought Jesus blasphemed. Jesus said to them, "Which is easier, to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins are forgiven; or to say, arise, and take up thy bed, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins (he saith to the sick of the palsy), I say unto thee, Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thy house" (Mark 2:10,11). He had authority on earth to forgive sins. But someone will say, doesn't Christ have even more authority today in heaven to forgive sins? They miss the point. While alive one may give his gifts as he wills. Once dead, they are to be dispensed according to one's last will and testament. Jesus' testament says you are to receive the gift of forgiveness in water baptism. Acts 2:38 says, "and Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins." So before Paul could be saved one had to say to him, "and now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). Once Jesus was dead, we had to follow the directions in His last will and testament in order to obtain the inheritance. No wonder Jesus Himself, after His resurrection, said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). But fourth, we should point out that the thief on the cross is not a model case of conversion by faith alone. He had action. He cried out and begged Jesus to remember him when he came in His kingdom. Someone might say it is true he cried out but that is a very small thing. Small or large, it is more than faith only. And who is prepared to try and prove the thief would have been saved had he not cried out I say he would have been lost and in so saying I agree with Scripture. Remember, James said, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead" (James 2:26). Let's put the thief to rest and go with the Bible on salvation. The Bible says one must believe Jesus is the Christ to be saved (John 8:24). But that is not all. It also says he must repent of his sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 3:19). Repentance is a change of mind regarding sin with a view to amend one's life. But that is not all. The Bible teaches that one must confess his faith that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God (Mat. 10:32; Rom. 10:9,10; I Tim. 6:12). Having done

that, one thing more follows. One must be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins to be saved (Mark 16:16; Gal. 3:27; Acts 2:38).

ETERNAL SECURITY (1)

PASSAGES IT CONTRADICTS

We have been studying about salvation and various doctrines — true and false — which affect salvation. I want to tell you why I reject the doctrine of "Eternal Security," or "Security of the Believer." It is a doctrine which says once you are saved you will always be saved, no matter what you do. Since I believe it is a doctrine which lulls people into a notion that is detrimental to their soul's salvation, I want to be a little blunt and say — without meaning to be rude — that is a

damnable religious error. Let's notice how it contradicts clear passages in the word of God. We shall just sample a few of them.

First, notice John 15:1-6 in context. Jesus said, "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. 2 Every branch in me that beareth not fruit, he taketh it away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he cleanseth it, that it may bear more fruit. 3 Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you. 4 Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. 51 am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." Here Jesus is talking of a man who is in Christ (verse 2). That man does not bear fruit (verse 2). He doesn't remain in Christ, is cast forth, withered, and finally burned (verse 6). The text clearly says he was in Christ, but that his end was to be burned. I think you can see that that does not teach once saved one is always saved. To be in Christ is to be saved. But this man, once in Christ, does not bear fruit and his end is to be burned. No wonder Paul could tell the Philippians, "So then, my beloved, even 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" (Phi. 2:12). But let's look at another.

Peter is talking of the damnable effects of false teachers on the brethren. False teachers promise them liberty but they are themselves bondservants of corruption. Then he says, "For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them then the first. 21 For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from die holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 It has happened unto them according to the true proverb, the dog turning to his own vomit again, and the sow that had washed to wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:20-22). Notice, these brethren had escaped, by the knowledge of Jesus, the defilements of the world (verse 20). They knew the way of righteousness (verse 21). They turned back from the holy

commandment and became like a dog returning to its own vomit, or a washed sow to wallowing in mud (verse 22). In turning back from the right way, their last state was worse than their state before they escaped the defilements of the world through Jesus (verse 20). Again, that does not sound like the doctrine of "Eternal Security" is true. It talks of a person losing Christ and wallowing in the world and becoming worse off than before he had once escaped the world. There is no mention of loss of rewards. The final state of the man himself is under consideration. Sometimes some quibble and say God would never call a Christian a "dog" or a "sow." He doesn't, really. He says that when a Christian goes back to the filthy world he escaped from, he is like a dog returning to his vomit or a sow washed back to wallowing in the mire. But there is no way to rescue the false doctrine of eternal security from that passage. Yet let's view another.

In Hebrews 6:4-8 Paul wants to press on toward matters of full growth and leave behind first principles. He argues that they must do this or they are in danger of falling away as have some. He describes them who have fallen away in these words: "For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit,5 and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, 6 and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and pm him to an open shame. 7 For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God:8 but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned." In this passage Paul uses up expressions to show they were once saved. He says they were enlightened, partakers of the Holy Spirit, tasted the word of God and even the powers of the age to come. Then he clearly says they fell away (verse 6). Finally he says they are like a land that brings not forth herbs but thorns and thistles. As thorns and thistles, those that fall away must be burned. They cannot be renewed to repentance for they have turned away from all God had to offer. If all God has to offer will not keep them in the fold it will be ineffective also in bringing them back. So they are burned, though Paul is persuaded and has confidence that the Hebrews will not go that far. Love believeth all things, when it cannot believe it at least hopes (I

Cor. 13:7). How can one read this passage and believe in “Security of the Believer?" In fact, all throughout Scripture we see that the doctrine is really not true.

Notice Galatians 5:4: “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace” (Gal. 5:4). Now the Galatian Christians were on their way to do that very thing — fall away from grace. The doctrine of “Eternal Security” says one cannot fall from grace, the very thing Paul warns the Galatian Christians that they can do. To be in Christ is to be in the grace of Christ. But what if you fall away from it? You have lost that by which you are saved. Too, though once joined to Christ, this passage says that you may — if you try to be saved by the law of Moses — now be severed from Him. Now that is pretty strong language. To tell a Christian that he will be severed from Christ and that he will fall from grace is the same as telling him he will be saved no more. So the doctrine of “Once Saved Always Saved” is a false and a dangerous doctrine. Those who hold it do not have the attitude of the apostle Paul who said, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12). But let us see more.

Since we mentioned Paul, let us look more at his concept regarding the “Security of the Believer.” Does he believe such a doctrine? He said he wanted to be a joint partaker of the benefits of the gospel he preached. So he continued: “Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain. And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected” (I Cor. 9:23-27). Now Paul uses the strenuous language of the athlete to express how he conducted himself regarding eternal life. It was a prize, a victory crown, and he made it clear he went to the utmost effort as he was still in the process of trying to attain it. He buffeted his body. In the original language it has the flavor of giving himself a black eye. With those he had saved, he wanted to be a joint partaker of the salvation offered by the gospel (verses 22,23). He lived as the athlete who exercised self-control in everything. He says he was

striving for that incorruptible crown (verse 25). Sometimes one trying to defend the doctrine of eternal security will say — with no Scriptural warrant — Oh, Paul was just struggling so that he would not lose his rewards in heaven." That's not true. Notice verse 27 again: "but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (I Cor. 9:27). Paul strove like an athlete not for rewards, but for that incorruptible crown that the Lord would give him in that grand day (2 Tim. 4:8). And he said if he did not, the loss would not be rewards but rather, as he put it, "I myself." He strove not for rewards, but for his own soul.

ETERNAL SECURITY (2)

MORE PASSAGES IT CONTRADICTS

Let's look first at Romans 11:20-22. Talking about the fall of Israel, Paul said, "Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and

thou standeth by thy faith. Be not high- minded, but fear; for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness; otherwise thou also shalt be cut off." This is a pretty graphic passage which tells the Roman Christians they can fall in such a way as to be as lost as Israel was lost when they rejected the Christ. God will break the Roman Christians off just as he did Israel, if Christians get high-minded instead of fearing. God says he will not spare Christians, that He will give them goodness only if they continue in His goodness. If not, they will be cut off. Sometimes one will say, "Oh, Paul is talking of a nation, not individual Christians." But what is a nation if not a long series of individuals? However, Paul is not, in Romans, speaking to nations; he is writing to individual Christians, the church at Rome. To them he gave the severe warning of being cut off from God and from His promises. But let us look further.

Notice Hebrews 3:5-6: "And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken; but Christ as a son, over His house; whose house are we if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end." Christ is a son over His house. We are that house, we who are Christians (I Tim. 3:15). But Paul says we may not remain so. We must hold fast boldness and hope all the way to the end of our life. The word if is used. We are Christ's house if we hold firm to the end. It is conditional. One cannot be saved outside the church or the house of God (Acts 20:28,29; I Tim. 3:15). The church, as those references show, is purchased by the blood of Christ. But Paul says we are the house of God if we hold fast to the end. Then in the third chapter Paul goes on and tells them not to harden their hearts, or they could be like Israel who lost the promised land and could not enter into God's rest (Heb. 3:7-11). Then he gives the Hebrew Christians this very severe warning. Listen and see if it sounds as if Christians can fall. Paul continues, 'Take heed brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: while it is said, Today if ye shall hear

His voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (Heb. 3:12-15). Notice the Holy Spirit tells them to take heed. These Christians, He says, can develop an evil heart of unbelief which can effect a fall from the living God. They must encourage one another day by day or they can be hardened by an evil heart of unbelief. That all sounds serious enough but the Holy Spirit, through Paul, says more. He says they have become partakers of Christ if — there is that "if' again — they hold fast the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end. They are partakers of Christ, He says. The Holy Spirit is not talking to people out in the world. Through Paul He is speaking to Christians who partake of Christ, but He says they must hold fast firm to the end to do so. This passage in Hebrews, alone, is enough to prove the doctrine of "eternal security" is a false doctrine. But the Spirit goes on and says, through the apostle Paul, "Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it" (Heb. 4:1). And becoming even more bold Paul says, "For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged 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? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:26-31). Paul tells these Hebrew Christians that sin can bring about a condition where there is no more a sacrifice for sins, rather an expectation of judgment and a fierceness of fire. If these Christians trod under foot the son of God and treat the blood wherewith they were sanctified as an unholy thing, they will be worthy of sorer punishment than the man who died because he set aside the law of Moses. So he is to expect a recompense of vengeance. And finally Paul warns them that it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Coupled with all else Paul has said by way of warning in Hebrews, the doctrine of "eternal security" is the fartherest thing from truth. No wonder Peter could say, "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if

ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:10-11). But let's go on and notice more of God's word.

Christianity is not all fun and games and consisting of what we can get. There is a strenuous, challenging side of Christianity, and that side is involved or connected with eternal salvation. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21). On being asked who should enter the kingdom of heaven Jesus said, "Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Luke 13:24). Paul connected this strenuous side of Christianity with eternal life. He said, "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him" (Rom. 8:16,17). Some will not suffer with Christ. So they turn back. Thus they cannot be glorified with Christ. That's why Jesus said to count the cost (Luke 14:28). Some taste the rigorous side of true Christianity and then draw back to perdition. Thus, again, the Holy Spirit says through Paul, "For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry. But my righteous one shall live by faith: And if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:37-39). So one must be willing to suffer with Christ. If a righteous one shrink back from it all, God has no pleasure in him. That same righteous one shrinks back unto perdition, while others have faith enough to save their soul. The doctrine of "eternal security" does not steel one and arm one for the righteous conflict. It lulls one into complacency, then cowardice, then spiritual death. Paul saw us as having our own individual effort to be a way of reaching out and cleaving to the grace of God by which we are saved. So he said, "Faithful is the saying: For if we died with him, we shall also live with him: if we endure, we shall also reign with him: if we shall deny him, he also will deny us: if we are faithless, he abideth faithful; for he cannot deny himself" (2 Tim. 2:11-13). No, God and Jesus are always faithful to keep their commitments. We fail to keep ours, sometimes, and so we must die with Him. After we are

Christians we must endure with Him. If we quit we cannot live with Him. If we deny Him, He will deny us.

So there is a sense in which we strive for life eternal. We must not shrink back, fall away, or deny Him Who died for us. Jesus said to the church at Sardis, "But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy. He that overcometh shall thus be arrayed in white garments; and I will in no wise blot his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels" (Rev. 3:4,5).

Learn how to become a Christian God's way and be saved. Then continue in the word of Christ faithfully so that He will never blot your name out of the Book of Life, but rather you may have eternal glory.

ETERNAL SECURITY (3)

ARGUMENTS USED TO

PROVE "ETERNAL SECURITY"

We have looked at many scriptures which refute the doctrine of "Eternal Security" or "Once Saved Always Saved." Now let us notice some arguments which are used to try to prove the doctrine true rather than false.

First, an argument is sometimes made on Psalm 37:23, 24. It says, "a man's goings are established of Jehovah; and he delighteth in his way. Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down; For Jehovah upholdeth him with his hand" (Psa. 37:23, 24). However, notice verse 17 of Psalm 37. It says, "For the arms of the wicked shall be broken; But Jehovah upholdeth the righteous" (Psa. 37:17). If a man turns from his righteousness to wickedness, he will not be upheld. The one who falls but is not cast down is the righteous man in whom Jehovah delights. If a man becomes wicked, Jehovah has no delight in him. Verse 37 says God will, rather, break his arm. Along that line some try Psalm 37:28: "For Jehovah loveth justice, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off" (Psa. 37:28). Yet right in the verse it says the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. If a righteous man becomes wicked then he shall be cut off. It is only the righteous that are held up. Verse 29, the very next verse, says, "The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever" (Psa. 37:29). Well, some might say that if a man turns out wicked, he never would have been saved in the first place. It thus would be argued that righteous people never do turn to wickedness. But is that what the Bible says? Notice Ezekiel 18:26-28: "When the righteous man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth therein; in his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wicked-ness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die." We notice right off that a righteous man can turn away from his righteousness and a wicked man can turn from wickedness unto righteousness. Not only that, they can die in that state whereunto they made the change. This passage once for all time refutes the false belief that if one turns and begins to sin and dies

therein that he never was saved to begin with. No, God, through Ezekiel, says the righteous can actually turn to wickedness, and then he can die therein. Isn't it nice that one can get his beliefs straight from the Bible? And where is the passage which says that if one dies in sin he never really was saved to begin with? Somehow, it is never found. I would hate to hold a belief of which I could not find a Bible passage which said it. But more!

The argument is sometimes made on this statement: "To be saved means to be safe; so if he is saved he can never be lost." The only problem with that is that as they are used "saved" and "safe" do not mean the same thing. For example, a baseball runner tries to steal second base. He runs, the catcher throws the ball, the umpire says he is safe. Then he tries to steal third and he is thrown out. No, once safe, not always safe, just like once saved, not always saved. But let's go farther.

Some try to use the words of Jesus as found in John 10:27,28. Jesus said, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (John 10:27,28). But I believe everything Jesus said in that passage very strongly. The verbs in that passage are all present indicatives. The Greek verbs all carry with them a kind of action. Present tense carries with it the idea of action in progress, continuing action. Aorist tense in Greek not only means past time it means action over and done with, completed action. But as we said, in John 10:27 and 28 we are dealing with present tense, continuing action. Thus a fair translation might well be made thusly: "My sheep continue to hear my voice and keep on following me and I keep on giving them eternal life." There is nothing which precludes or denies that they might cease to hear and turn back from following. In other words there is no guarantee in the passage against ourselves. We have already seen that a righteous man can turn from his righteousness and do wickedness and even die therein (Ezek. 18:26-28). On this very point, read about Simon the sorcerer. Philip preached in Samaria. He did miracles. The Samaritans were baptized. Simon who used sorcery also believed and was baptized (Acts 8:13). They sent for the apostles who would lay hands on them and give them that temporary measure of Spirit which would allow them to work signs and authenticate that

their message came from God (Acts 8:18; Mark 16:20). They get this gift from Peter and John when those apostles laid hands on them. Simon, who had believed and was baptized, tried to buy from the apostles the power to transmit such gifts. We then read, "But Peter said unto him, Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee. For I see that thou art in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity" (Acts 8:20-23). There is no doubt that Simon both believed and was baptized. The text simply says it in verse 13. There is no doubt that Simon sinned. Peter clearly told him his heart was not right before God and that he needed to repent of his wickedness (Acts 8:21,22). Finally, there is no doubt that Simon is lost. Peter told him he would perish (Acts 8:20), and that he was under the bond of iniquity (Acts 8:23). He was told to repent and one that does not repent will perish (Luke 13:3,5). So, everywhere we look, the saved can turn to wickedness and be lost though they were once saved in righteousness. It is hard to hold on to a doctrine which is refuted so often in Scripture. Similar to all that we have answered, to support "security of the believer" some use the words of Jesus to Martha before he raised up her brother Lazarus from the dead. Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John 11:25, 26). But again, the present tense is used. The verbs "liveth" and "believeth" are both present tense with continuing action. As long as they continue to believe they will never die. The question is, can trust or faith turn into a lack of trust or faith? The answer is yes, and such a change is effected by sin. For when one begins to walk in darkness, he no longer has the light of life. Notice Psalm 106:12: 'Then believed they his words; they sang his praise" (Psa. 106:12). This speaks of Israel after they watched the waters of the Red Sea cover the Egyptians after the Exodus from Egypt. Then they lusted in the wilderness, tempted God in the desert, envied Moses and Aaron, made a calf in Horeb, worshipped a molten image, forgot God, and despised the pleasant land of Canaan (Psa. 106:13-23). Then David says under inspiration, "Yea, they despised the pleasant land, THEY BELIEVED NOT HIS WORD" (Psa. 106:24). So what happened to these who once believed God's words? They sinned, then

they eventually ceased to believe His words. Belief can turn into unbelief. Psalm 106:12, and 24 proves it. So they who once believed cease to believe and miss out on their promised rest in the promised land. One can cease to believe. That's why Paul could say, "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain" (I Cor. 15:1,2). Yes, the gospel can save. When received, one can stand by it. But one can cease to hold it fast, and finally, it has become true that he has truly believed, but in vain! So again, Paul says, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12). And again he says, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12). And Jude could say, "Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21). And John could say, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God" (2 John 9). Finally Peter could plead, "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:10,11).

ETERNAL SECURITY (4)

MORE REPLIES TO THEIR ARGUMENTS

We are going to look at a sampling of passages most often used by denominationalists to try to sustain the doctrine of "Eternal Security" or "Once Saved Always Saved." We will reply to their use of the passages. Then in further chapters, we will look at clear passages which teach vigilance, that we can fall from grace once saved.

The first passage we shall look at which is abused is I John5:11, 12: "And the witness is this, that God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life." The argument is made that if one can lose the life then it is not eternal. The text says God gave unto us eternal life. It says you can have the life. But if the life can be relinquished it could not have been eternal to start with. But, we ask, why not? Why must it cease to be eternal just because we let go our grip on it. The life is eternal, though our grip on it is conditional. For example, Paul had eternal life. He had "laid hold on it" (I Tim. 6:12). Demas, let's say, also laid hold on eternal life (Col. 4:14). But let's say Demas lets go, falls away, and forsakes Paul because he loves this present world (2 Tim. 4:10). Has the life ceased to be eternal because Demas let go? Would not Paul still have eternal life and be able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:7,8)? Yes, John said we have eternal life. He also said, "As for you, let that abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father" (I John 2:24). No, the life will always remain eternal. However, our grip on it is contingent; it is dependent on our actions, our life, our morals, our devotion, and especially our endurance and patience in the grand race.

Another often misused passage is I Peter 1:3, 4. It says, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” It is pointed out that the passage says the final inheritance from God is reserved for Christians. Yes, it is reserved for those who obey the gospel. But a reservation can surely be forfeited. We call to a town we will stop at on a trip. We ask them to reserve a room for us. We tell them approximately what time we will arrive. They often tell us the room will be reserved until 9:00 P.M. If we are not there by that time they feel free to give it unto another. Two, we can change our mind and cancel the reservation our self. Yes, Peter said the inheritance was reserved (I Pet. 1:3,4). Later he said, “Wherefore brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:10,11).

Another misused passage is Ephesians 4:30. It reads, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption.” “See,” some say, “you are sealed unto the day of redemption.” “Yes,” we reply, “if you remain steadfast, every Christian is sealed, protected, unto the day of redemption." We are sealed by the Holy Spirit. But some may later turn on the Spirit. Hebrews 10:29 says, “of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged 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?” This is in a passage where Paul warns Christians that if they sin willfully there is no more a sacrifice for sins. Those sealed by the Spirit can despitefully turn on the Spirit just as truly as they can count the blood of the covenant an unholy thing and trod under foot the very Son of God. So Paul could warn, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life” (Gal. 6:7,8). Paul reveals to the Galatian Christians that a man, be he Christian or not, can sow to the flesh and of the flesh reap corruption. This is in contrast

with the Christian who sows unto the Spirit and by that reaps eternal life. Why address such warnings to Christians if the threat to them is not real? No, we are sealed by the Spirit if we do not turn on the Spirit and do despite to Him. But let's proceed to look at another.

Sometimes we point to a man who obviously believed in Christ. He repents of his sins, confesses Christ, and at that point is baptized. All will agree that he is saved. But he becomes a drunkard, a fornicator, an adulterer, an extortioner, and a thief. All admit he is such. And regarding that Paul says, "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (I Cor. 6:9,10). Obviously this is a great problem for those who advocate eternal security for all have known believers who have turned and become great sinners. And it is obvious that Paul says such sinners cannot enter into or inherit the Kingdom of God. To get around that, the assertion is made that they never really were saved to start with. I guess it would have to also be assumed that they never really believed to begin with. Nevertheless, I John 2:19 is used to support such an assumption. It says: "They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they all are not of us." However, one must read an assumption into this passage to twist out the notion that since they are fallen in sin they never were in truth and light. The passage does not say, "They never were of us." It just says that at the time they left, they were not of John and the Christians to whom he wrote. At one time Benedict Arnold was a great patriot and a Revolutionary War hero. But he changed. And after he had gone over to the British it could have been said of him: "He went out from us, for he was not of us." But does the Bible teach that such a change is really possible? Yes it does. In the parable of the sower, Jesus talks about how the word of God fairs in various types of hearts. He tells a parable regarding how the seed (the word of God) produces in different kinds of hearts (soils). In that parable he says, "and those on the rock [seed that when sowed falls on stoney ground] are they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away.

And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection" (Luke 8:13,14). It is evident that some can fall and remain no longer in truth. They go out, for they no longer are of them who remain in truth. They only believe for a while.

But finally there is the argument that once one is a son he is always a son. One is made a child of God by being born of the water and the Spirit, and once he is a son he is always a son. In other words, "you can't be unborn," they say. Well, there are many differences in spiritual birth and physical birth. Nevertheless, a child can certainly be disinherited. God calls Israel, when they come out of Egypt, a son (Hos. 11:1). But when they rebel after the ten spies bring a discouraging report about the promised land God says, "I will smite them with the pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they" (Num. 14:12). This actually happened in a sense for we read in Rom. 11:20,21: "Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee." So everywhere one turns in scripture the doctrine of eternal security is a false doctrine.

ETERNAL SECURITY (5)

MORE REFUTATION OF THEIR ARGUMENTS

The first passage we want to look at, as we continue to refute the "Eternal Security" doctrine, is John 8:31,32: “Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Now we notice that being free is decided by whether or not one abides in Christ’s words. But some might reply that this verse says nothing about salvation. It refers to discipleship and its conditions. However, the passage says a person, to be a true disciple of Christ, must know the truth, and be made free. Verse 34 shows that the freedom is freedom from sin, for it talks of some not free but rather bondservants of sin. Now when you deal with forgiveness of sins, you deal with the issue of salvation, being saved from sins. And Jesus said that one who died with his sins could not go where Christ went (John 8:21). Who was it that was promised that he should never see death but the one who continued to keep the word (John 8:52b). But it is impossible to ignore that being made free from sin, being a true disciple, and never seeing death is contingent or dependent upon abiding or remaining in Christ’s word. Once saved, you are not always saved, unless you abide in the word of Christ. But let’s see more.

Paul said of God, “who will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 2:7-10). Now this passage says you get according to what you

do, not according to faith alone. So one may be saved by believing and being baptized but at that point he will still, according to Paul, receive according to his works. He must have patience in well-doing to receive glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life. But once saved, if he becomes factious and obeys unrighteousness, he shall receive wrath and indignation. Now some say that Paul is not stating conditions or terms; he is just dividing men into two camps. Well, even if that were so, it does not remove the difficulty faith-only advocates are in. One camp by patient continuance seeks for glory, honor, and peace. The other camp obeys not the truth and receives the wrath of God. Now if one will read chapter one and two Paul is addressing these remarks to anyone who condemns others and practices the same evil as the one who is judged. It would certainly include the Christians to whom Paul is writing. He is certainly and clearly saying that by patient well-doing a Christian must still seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life.

Let's listen to the words of Jesus. A disciple of Christ said he was following Jesus, but he put it this way: "I will follow thee, Lord; but first suffer me to bid farewell to them that are at my house. But Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:61,62). Here a disciple is not only saved, he goes about the work by putting his hand to the plow. But someone might reply that there is nothing said in the passage about salvation. The test of discipleship is merely declared — perseverance. The eternal-security advocate might add that it doesn't say, "will not enter the kingdom of God," but it merely says he is "not fit for the kingdom of God." However, first, one should notice that when we are discussing the kingdom we are discussing salvation for the kingdom on earth shall be delivered up and become the eternal kingdom (I Cor. 15:24). So very definitely salvation is under discussion. Too, would one truly like to take the position that God accepts into the eternal kingdom those not fit for the kingdom? Obedience and blood make us fit. Here is a man that, like Lot's wife, looks back longingly on the old life and is not fit for the kingdom but goes in anyway. Who can believe it? The language of Jesus should remind us of Paul's statement regarding past heroes of the faith who confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Paul said," For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their

own. And if indeed they had been mindful of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. 11:13-16). God has not prepared a city for those who look back. He is ashamed of them, for they are not fit for the kingdom of God. Yet, there is more.

In talking about the Corinthians who perverted the Lord's supper we find these words: "But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink the cup. For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged (I Cor. 11:28-31). There is no doubt, some, for their abuses at the Lord's table, were chastened to death. Not a few did "sleep," a euphemism — or use of gentler language — of death. But someone might say, "This is talking only of divine discipline. They are chastened to death. It is only a reference to physical death." Well, Let's take another case of divine discipline. Ananias and Sapphira lied to God. They were part of the church at Jerusalem. Peter confronted them with lying to the Holy Spirit and they fell dead at Peter's feet. They died as liars, and this is significant for we read in Revelation 21:8: "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." Like Ananias and Sapphira, those at Corinth were evidently chastened but would not change. Hebrews 10:26 says there is no sacrifice for that kind of sin. Too, I Samuel 15:22-23 says stubbornness is as idolatry and teraphim. In John 8:21 Jesus says, "and [ye] shall die in your sin: wither I go, ye cannot come." If one could die in stubbornness, with unrepented sin, and still go to heaven, he would not need Christ's sacrifice at all.

Similar to the above we have James 5:19, 20: "My brethren, if any among you err from the truth and one convert him; let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins." Here we have a brother among the Christian family who goes astray. One converts this

brother and saves a soul from death, and covers a multitude of sins. But again it is argued that it is only physical death. Well, everything we said just previously regarding dying in sins and stubbornness applies here. Luke 13:3-5 has Jesus emphatically saying if one does not repent he will perish. Acts 11:18 says repentance is unto life. But who says this is physical death? If one errs from truth he has not God (2 John 9-11). The man is called a sinner and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). Physical death is scarcely worth the space for both saint and sinner suffer that. To be born is to commit to physical death. Further, this sounds like a general maxim which James has uttered. You convert a sinner and you save a soul from death. It would be a true maxim regarding spiritual death; but not so regarding physical death. For most sinners do not generally suffer physical death due to sin. No, as it was of the church in the wilderness, they were all baptized unto Moses, but most of them were overthrown in the wilderness (I Cor. 10:1-5).

Let us notice what can happen to the faith which obediently reaches out and catches the grace wherein we are saved. Paul told Timothy that he should be "holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith: of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander" (I Tim. 1:19,20). Once they had faith; then it suffered a shipwreck. Since obedient faith justifies, they would be lost (Rom. 5:1). And Paul clearly taught Timothy that he or Timothy had it in their power to not endure with Christ, to deny him, and to abide faithless. Christ would remain faithful, but he would deny them. That was called a faithful saying (2 Tim. 2:11-13). So "once saved always saved" is a dangerous, false doctrine. It is just the kind of doctrine which would be in the gospel according to Satan.

BAPTISM (1)

WHY BAPTISM PLAYS A PART IN SALVATION

We have been studying doctrine, especially doctrine which relates directly with salvation. We have studied the doctrine of "faith only" and saw that salvation came not through faith alone but through a living faith which contained works of obedience (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Faith is made perfect by works (Jas. 2:22). And James says "ye see that by works a man is justified, and not only by faith" (Jas. 2:24). He added, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead" (Jas. 2:26). Knowing that the faith that saves is a living faith which contains works of obedience, we understand that it must include those acts of obedience which are said to save—repentance, confession, and baptism. Repentance is unto remission of sins and unto life (Acts 2:38; Acts 11:18). Confession is unto salvation (Rom. 10:9, 10). And baptism is said to save (Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21). All together, they make "living faith."

Salvation comes through, therefore, a living faith which contains works of obedience. Salvation is not through law. To be through law one would have to keep law perfectly. Paul said, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Gal. 3:10). You would have to be perfect to be saved by law. Baptism does not enter into the idea of keeping the law perfectly. Baptism is a cry for help, an admission of defeat. It admits you are not perfect, that you have sin, and it is the divinely appointed act to get rid of sin, if one has properly believed, repented,

and confessed his faith in Christ. Baptism is not the type of work as is mentioned in the Bible and condemned in the Bible as having no part in salvation. Baptism is not a work of law; it is a work of faith. In this lesson, I merely want to demonstrate why we believe baptism plays a part in obtaining eternal salvation.

First, let us consider that God has a way of testing us by small, foolish things which when obeyed bring the promised blessing. In 2 Kings 5 we read about Naaman, the captain of the host of Syria. He was a great man of valor, but he was a leper. He had as a servant a little maiden of Israel who waited on his wife. She told them of a prophet in Israel who could heal him of his leprosy. When he heard that, he had the King of Syria write the King of Israel to heal Naaman of his leprosy. The king of Israel was distressed, for he could not do it. He was not God. Elisha heard of it and told the King of Israel to send Naaman to him and he would learn that there was a prophet in Israel. He did and Naaman came to Elisha with ten talents of silver, six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. Naaman and his horses and his chariots stood at the door of the house of Elisha. Elisha just sent a messenger out to tell him to wash in the Jordan seven times and his flesh would come again to him and he would be clean. But Naaman was angry. He thought Elisha would stand and call on the name of Jehovah and wave his hand over the place. Besides, the waters of Abanah and Pharpar were better than the Jordan. So he went away in a rage. But his servants came and said to him, if Elisha had bidden some great thing Naaman would have done it. Why not do the thing that was asked. Persuaded, he dipped in the Jordan seven times and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean. Now someone might question baptism. It is a little act, and what in the world has water on the body have to do with sin on the soul? We would reply, what in the world has dipping in the Jordan have to do with leprosy in the flesh? The power resides in the obedience of the heart to the command of God's word. But before we leave this train of thought, let's look at a New Testament incident. In John nine we have another.

The disciples see a man blind from his birth. Jesus said he was such that the works of God might be manifest in him. Jesus spat on the ground and made clay of the spittle, and anointed the man's eyes with

the clay. He then told him to go and wash in the pool of Siloam. The man did. He washed, and he came seeing, a man born blind. Why? And what can baptism have to do with remission of sins? What can clay have to do with the sight of a man born blind? The power is in the obedience to God's word. Paul said, "though he was a son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8,9). And again he could say, "But thanks be to God, that whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17, 18). Baptism is a command of God which has the promise of forgiveness of sins. When we obey, though it is a simple thing, we receive that promise, remission of sins. Let's now notice a few passages along that line and passages which clearly let us know that baptism saves.

First of all we have the great commission. Jesus put it this way: "And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, all authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:18-20). Here the original Greek is even more forceful than the English. It brings out that you make disciples of Christ by baptizing them into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit. One might say, "Well, in Matthew 28:18-20 it doesn't say you are saved by baptism." But the passage is parallel to Mark 16:15,16. Mark brings out, in his biography, more that was said that day on the subject: "And he said into them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15, 16). Here it says there are two things required to be saved — belief and baptism. Only one thing is required to be lost: unbelief. If one doesn't believe, he won't go on and get baptized. So he will be lost. In Mark 16:15, 16 "believeth" and "is baptized" are joined by a copulative or coordinating conjunction—"and." It joins words, phrases, and clauses of equal rank. So "believeth" and "is baptized" are equal in importance. If you must do

the one, you must do the other. Both are joined together and so both are essential. Too, when you go back and read them you notice both precede salvation. If faith comes before salvation, so does baptism. You can see it in the text. Again, it says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). But again, someone says, "It says he that believeth not shall be damned. Therefore damnation rests on unbelief." We have already explained that if you won't believe you will not go on and be baptized. So to add, "and is not baptized" would be redundant and unnecessary. Too, we noticed that the passage showed that it takes two things to be saved and only one to be lost. But let's make an illustration. Suppose I say to my son, "If you take a defensive driving course and if you pass the driver's license test you can drive the car. But if you don't take the defensive driving course you cannot drive the car." How many sons would say, "I don't have to pass the driver's license test because you only said I couldn't drive unless I took the defensive driving course." Of course, we would say, "no, I said there were two things necessary for you to drive, but only one of them, neglected, and you can't drive. I just wanted to emphasize the first one for my purposes though both are essential." So again, hear Mark 16:16: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned."

Let's notice Acts 22:16. It says, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." Here's the background. Paul was persecuting Christians. The Lord appeared to him on the Damascus road. Jesus told Paul to go into the city and it would be told him what he should do. He goes. He fasts and prays three days. A devout man named Ananias appears to him and, as commanded, he delivers words to Paul. He says, among other things, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). But, notice, Paul was told to be baptized and wash away his sins. We are loosed from our sins, really, by the blood of Christ (Rev. 1:5). Revelation 1:5 says, "Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev. 1:5). The obvious conclusion is that we are cleansed from our sins by the blood of Jesus in the obedience of water baptism. One might say there's blood in baptism. In baptism, done for the right purpose, God applies the blood of Christ by which we are saved from our sins. Someone might say, "Well you are washed from your sins by

calling on his name." Only the text does not say that. However, baptism is a cry for help. It is calling on the name of the Lord to take away one's sins. And we might notice, it is an act of obedience whereby one calls on the name, not where one calls out the name. Jesus earlier said, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21).

But notice one more thing. Some teach you are saved from sin at the point of "faith only." However, Paul saw and believed on the Lord on the Damascus road three days earlier than the time he was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins. If you are saved at the point of faith and without water baptism, why is it that three days after Paul believed he was told to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins? It is because sins are not forgiven until one obeys that little things God requires – water baptism.

BAPTISM (2)

JOHN 3:5; ACTS 2:38; I PETER 3:21; TITUS 3:4,5;

ROMANS 6:3; I CORINTHIANS 1:12,13

As we continue our study on doctrine that directly relates to salvation, let's look at John 3:5. "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." Now we believe of course that water can only be referring to water baptism. In the same chapter we read, "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized" (John 3:22, 23). So water and baptism are firmly linked in this chapter. We will treat objections to this passage interpreted as

talking of water baptism later. But it is obvious that Jesus is talking of a new birth. This new birth consists of water and a work of the Holy Spirit. I feel I need to say a word about the Spirit's part in the new birth. The Spirit is a person of the Godhead. The Bible reveals that in conviction, conversion, and sanctification, the Holy Spirit works through the word of God. We will discuss that in a later chapter. But now let us notice at least one passage which shows that the Spirit of truth (John 16:13) works through the truth to operate as He sees fit. Ephesians 6:17 says, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). Through the word of God the Spirit brings forth faith (John 10:17), and repentance (Acts 2: 38); and he commands us to go into the waters of baptism for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38). That's the Spirit's part. The water plays a part, for sins are washed away in baptism as we saw in Acts 22:16: "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name." So the Spirit's part is truth and what it produces. The water's part is baptism.

But let's look at another: Acts 2:38. Let me give some background to it. Jesus died on the cross but was resurrected. Resurrected, He appeared to the disciples and chosen witnesses over a forty day period, giving them many proofs that He was back from the dead. He told the apostles to wait at Jerusalem, "for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). The apostles go to Jerusalem and when the day of Pentecost came they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. They spake in other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4,8). Peter preaches to a Jewish audience about Jesus and finally says, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36). They cry out asking what they must do and Peter says, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Then he tells these believers, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). Then we read that some did save themselves by doing their part in salvation. It says, "They then that received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:41). At that point the Lord added them to the apostles and saved ones in the church (Acts 2:47). So it is clear that baptism and repentance are in order to obtain

remission of sins (Acts 2:38). We will treat objections later, on this and other passages we use, but there is a very logical progression of events here. First they believe; they are pricked in their hearts because they do believe what Peter said (Acts 2:36). They are told to repent and be baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:38). Then Peter exhorts them to save themselves (Acts 2:41). Those that need are baptized. Then the Lord adds them to the church (Acts 2:47). We have just witnessed a clear, logical case of conversion in the book of Acts, and one that involved baptism for the forgiveness or remission of sins. Enough for now on that. Let's look further.

Let's notice I Peter 3:20-21. The context says Christ in the spirit, I believe in the prophet Noah, preached to the antediluvians or those before the flood, while God patiently waited 120 years before the flood. We will look now at verses 20 and 21: "that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 3:20-21). Now an inspection of this passage reveals at least the following: 1) in the flood, eight souls were saved through water, 2) the antitype of that is baptism saving us, 3) it is not through bodily pollution being washed away, 4) baptism gives you a good conscience toward God. When one is saved, when he obeys God God's way, he has a good conscience. His conscience has answered all God asks of him. But the question is, does baptism save us? Notice how a few versions render it. Some of them are more of a commentary because they are not as literal a rendering as we gave above; nevertheless they show how various translators understand the Greek text. The King James Version has, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh" (I Pet 3:21). Notice Young's Literal Translation:: "Also to which an antitype doth now save us — baptism, (not a putting away of the filth of flesh") (I Pet. 3:21). A Literal Translation of the Bible, edited by Jay P. Green, has, "which figure now also saves us, baptism — not a putting away of the filth of the flesh" (I Pet. 3:21). The New Revised Standard Version has, "and baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you" (I Pet. 3:21). We will

treat objections to this later, but these agree. Baptism saves. As the waters of the flood saved, so now baptism saves. Isn't that clear? One can ask the question: "Does baptism save?" Then he can simply read the answer: "Whereunto even baptism doth also now save us" (I Pet. 3:21). But let's go on.

Titus chapter three verses four and five says, "But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man, appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:4,5). We are not saved by works done in righteousness. Then how are we saved? Through the laver or washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. We listen to the Spirit. Then we go down into the laver where we are washed, and then we are said to be saved by the mercy of God. It is unmistakable that this passage reads like John 3:5. Both talk of regeneration or new birth. One mentions "water" while the other mentions "washing." The Spirit is active in both. The truth is clear, we are born again in baptism as we heed the Holy Spirit through the word of God. There is more.

Sometimes one perceives that what is important to salvation is the act of getting into Christ. But how does one get into Christ? Notice two clear passages. First is Romans 6:3, "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death." Yes it is true; we are baptized into Christ Jesus. When we are, we get into his death where all the benefits of grace and remission are found. But to corroborate all that notice Galatians 3:26,27. This passage says, "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ." Why are we sons of God through faith? The answer is, we were baptized into Christ and did put Him on. However, as clear as that is, it cannot be spoken against that baptism gets us into Christ. We are baptized into Him. In Christ we become a new creature or creation (2 Cor. 5:17).

Finally notice I Corinthians 1:12,13. Alarmed about their contentions and divisions, Paul says to the Corinthians, "Now this I mean, that each 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 into the name of Paul" (I Cor. 1:12,13). They

said they were of Paul. Paul tells them there are at least two essential things before they can say they are of Paul. One, Paul would have to be crucified for them and two, they would need to be baptized in Paul's name. The same is true of Apollos right on down to Christ. Before they can belong to Christ two things are necessary. One, Christ needs to be crucified for them and two, they need to be baptized into the name of Christ. It can mean nothing else and it absolutely shows the essentiality of water baptism.

BAPTISM (3)

WHAT THE EARLY CHURCH BELIEVED ABOUT BAPTISM

I don't want to exaggerate, but our main dispute with the religious world is that the Churches of Christ believe that baptism is for the remission of sins. We sincerely believe that it is an ancient, spiritual act of obedience where the grace of God, which saves us, is obtained. I want you to look at only seven passages of Scripture which make us so believe. See if these passages would make one believe that baptism saves, is in order to obtain remission of sins, or the new birth, or like or similar blessing. Note:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

"And Peter said unto them, repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

"And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

"Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like us Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3- 4).

"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27).

"Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Peter 3:21).

From those seven verses it is evident that one gets at least seven important things from water baptism: salvation, the new birth, remission of sins, a washing away of sins, a getting into the death of Christ, and a getting into Christ Himself. In general, therefore, baptism is for salvation from sin and like or similar blessing.

But something happened in religious history. A falling away from truth occurred. Paul prophesied of it. He said, "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth" (I Tim. 4:1-3). From church history we learn that after 500 A.D. the Catholic Church was developed, and it developed a system of what could be called "work salvation." One supposedly could get rid of sin by doing various works. Or he could pay or do certain requirements and receive indulgence for sin. Luther and other reformers saw in the Bible that one could get salvation from sin by faith, though I believe they did not understand the nature of

saving faith. Nevertheless, I believe the reformers suffered what could be called "The pendulum effect." Swinging away from work salvation, they swung all the way to the opposite extreme. They began to teach that man could do nothing to save himself. Well, it was asked why some then were lost and others were saved. To answer that, the reformers adopted the doctrine of election and reprobation. God did it all. He simply elected some to salvation and there was absolutely nothing they did to obtain it. Others were reprobated to hell and there was nothing they could ever do about it. So no one could play the least role in saving himself. That being true, he could not be baptized to be saved. I believe there were always those who understood that baptism was for the remission of sins, but in general, all of Protestant denominationalism was affected by reformation thinking so most today deny that obedience in water baptism brings either salvation or remission of sins, and that in spite of the very clear passages which you just read.

Now for a little while, let's ask a question. What did the early church understand about baptism? I'm talking not of those who wrote the Bible. We heard their words. It was clear that Jesus, Mark, John, Peter, and Paul believed that baptism was for the remission of sins, the new birth, salvation, and like blessing. We heard them say so. But if their words are to be interpreted, how did those who knew the apostles and those who were closest in time to the apostles understand Bible writer's words? Fortunately much of what they wrote has survived.

We want to take a look at this historical evidence for the essentiality of water baptism. The only real proof of a doctrine being true is whether it is found in Scripture. But the force of seeing how these men saw the Scripture is that they were close in time to the apostles when the apostle's explanations of what they meant could be had. I think you will see an unanimity or agreement among themselves and also a vigor that there was a direct relationship between baptism and forgiveness of sins. Let's just notice a few:

BARNABUS (probably early second century, near the time when John died). "Let us inquire if the Lord was careful to make a revelation in advance concerning the water and the cross... Blessed are those who placed their hope in his cross and descended into the water... We descend into the water full of sins and uncleanness, and we ascend

bearing reverence in our heart and having hope in Jesus in our spirit" (11:1,8,11).

SHEPHERD OF HERMAS (early second century). "Your life was saved and will be saved through water... 'I have heard, Sir, from some teachers that there is no other repentance except that one when we descended into the water and received the forgiveness of our former sins.' He said to me, "You heard correctly for it is so..." (Mandate, IV. iii, 1). "The seal then is the water. They descend then into the water dead and they ascend alive. The seal itself, then was preached to them also, and they made use of it in order that they might 'enter into the kingdom of God'..." (Similitudes, IX., XVI. 3- 6).

JUSTIN (second century). "Then they are led by us to whence there is water, and in the manner of the regeneration by which we ourselves were regenerated they are regenerated. For at that time they obtain for themselves the washing of water in the name of God the Master of all and Father, and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. For Christ also said, 'unless you are regenerated, you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven'... and might obtain in the water the forgiveness of past sins, there is called upon the one who chooses to be regenerated and who repents of his sins in the name of God the Master of all and Father..."(Apology I, 61).

THEOPHILUS (180 A.D.). "Moreover, the things which come from the waters were blessed by God, in order that this might be a sign that men were going to receive repentance and forgiveness of sins through water and the 'washing of regeneration,' namely all those who come to truth and are born again, and receive blessing from God..." (To Autolycus II, XVI).

IRENAEUS (about 180 A.D. He was a pupil of Polycarp who was a pupil of the apostle John). "First of all, it admonishes us to remember that we have received baptism for remission of sins in the name of God the Father, and in the name of Jesus Christ, the son of God, who became incarnate and died and was raised, and in the Holy Spirit of God; and that this baptism is the seal of eternal life and is rebirth unto God, and we be no more children of mortal men, but of the eternal and everlasting God" (Proof of Apostolic Preaching 3).

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (before 215 A.D.). “This work is variously called a grace gift, illumination, perfection, washing. It is the washing through which we are cleansed of our sins, the grace gift by which the penalties for our sins are removed” (Instructor I. vi. 25.3-26.1,30.2; 32.1).

TERTULLIAN (155-222 A.D.). “We as little fishes, in accordance with our ichthys Jesus Christ, are born in water.” (On Baptism).

“It has assuredly been ordained that no one can attain knowledge of salvation without baptism. This comes especially from the pronouncement of the Lord, who says, “Except one be born of water he does not have life” (Ibid. 12).

Sometimes someone will say, “Oh, then, you believe in baptismal regeneration.” We have to reply by saying no. We do not hold the Catholic view that one can be regenerated in water by baptism alone without faith. The Catholic view would be “He who is baptized is saved.” The Protestant view is “He that believes is saved.” The view of Jesus is, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” (Mark 16:16). Our view is the same, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16).

But someone wonders, if one is saved in part by baptism, then he is saved by law-keeping and works of law. Did not Paul say, “Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness” (Rom. 4:4,5). And again Paul said, “For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, cursed is every one who continued! not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them” (Gal. 3:10). But all that is not talking of baptism. It does not rule out obedience of faith, either. If a man kept the law perfectly he would be just (Romans 2:13). He could work and do that and God would owe him salvation (Rom. 4:4). But man found that it was impossible to keep the law perfectly. He was described as being too weak in the flesh to do that (Rom. 8:3). So Paul argues that Jew and Gentile both sinned and had fallen short of the grace of God (Rom. 3:9; 3:23). Since this is so, a new way of righteousness had to* be found. It was salvation

by grace, through faith. See Ephesians 2:8-10. But the faith was not "faith only." In Romans four Paul talked of walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham (Rom. 4:12). In the same book he spoke of the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; Rom. 16:26). Elsewhere he spoke of "faith working" (Gal. 5:6). This corresponds to James who said we are justified by works and not faith only (James 2:24). And again he said "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26). He is talking of an obedient faith, the same as Paul. No, we are not saved by law or by works of law. But we are saved by the "obedience of faith." We are saved by a living, working faith. Baptism is nothing more than the obedience of faith. It is faith working. When one believes Jesus is the Christ, the son of God (John 20:30,31), repents of his sins (Acts 3:19), confesses his faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9,10), and is baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), he is saved, not by works of law, but by obedience of faith.

BAPTISM (4)

BASIC ARGUMENTS AGAINST BAPTISM PASSAGES

We, in past lessons, have looked at an array of passages which emphatically argue that baptism saves, brings remission of sins, gives the new birth, washes away sin, and among other things gets one into Christ. We want to view some basic arguments used against those baptism passages.

MARK 16:16

Remember Mark 16:16 says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned." Now the

argument is made that the text doesn't say, "and is not baptized shall be condemned." In other words, they say, it doesn't say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth [and is not baptized] is condemned." Since it does not have "he that is not baptized is condemned," therefore condemnation rests solely on disbelief. Condemnation, they argue, rests solely on lack of faith, and hence one is saved by "faith alone." I wrote the English department at Texas University and asked them about it. The head of the English Department said that to add "and is not baptized" to the text would have been redundant, or as he put it "tautology." It would have been saying, in other words, the same thing twice. It clearly says you are lost if you are not baptized, and to say it again is wordy, unnecessary language. Again consider it this way. Suppose I say, "He that comes to my office and brings a can of food for the needy will receive a new Bible, but he that doesn't make it to my office won't get the Bible." How many of you would bring a can of food? Someone might say, "Well, if you didn't come to the office you couldn't very well give up a can of food could you?" No, and if you won't believe you wouldn't very much determine to be baptized would you? So Mark 16:16, as we have said before, just demonstrates that it takes two things to be saved — belief and baptism — and only one thing to be lost - unbelief. Let's look at another.

JOHN 3:5

Jesus told Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of the water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Nicodemus, evidently of the Sanhedrin, came to check Jesus out, and that at night. He knew Jesus could not be doing all those great miracles unless God was with him. Jesus immediately brought up something the Pharisees stumbled on—baptism. Jesus said one must be born again. Nicodemus wondered if one could go back into his mother's womb and be born. Jesus said the new birth was of water and the Spirit, again John 3:5. Now in recent times we have discussed the Spirit's part. Working through the word of the Spirit, through men, the Spirit teaches and admonishes in such a way as to effect faith and repentance. The water's part is baptism for the remission of sins. Now when one believes in "faith only," he must find some way to get around that very clear teaching. The kingdom here on

earth will be delivered up by Jesus to be the eternal kingdom of God who receives it (I Cor. 15:24). So one cannot be saved if he is not in the kingdom. Well, how can one get around John 3:5? One attempt is to say that "water" in John 3:5 is really speaking of the word of God. It is argued that the word of God cleanses. For example, Paul said, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word" (Eph. 5:25,26). The only thing is, that passage doesn't say Christ cleansed the church with the washing of water "which is the word." It says "the washing of water with the word." The washing of water is not the word. The washing of water is baptism and it, as we said, by the Spirit, through teachers, produces faith and repentance. Then John 15:3 is tried. Jesus said to the apostles, "Already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). But the word for "clean" is kathiso which means — when used of vegetation — purge or prune. We should think "snip" rather than "splash" in John 15:3. The word prunes bad habits and bad thoughts away from us. And even if it did refer to water, which the context disproves, it would make the water of John 3:5 refer to the word of God. The work of the word is already in John 3:5; in that the Spirit of truth uses the word of truth in the new birth. So those who oppose water baptism must try something else.

They do. They say water in John 3:5 is talking of the normal fluid of the womb, the amniotic fluid which surround all mammals in the womb. In other words they say John 3:5, when it says "born of water" is simply talking of natural physical birth. One man in a debate said it was the normal name, ancient and modem, for natural birth. I asked him to cite one ancient writer who used it that way. He couldn't do it. I then wrote every obstetrician in the city of Austin and asked if that was a normal phrase in their profession for natural birth. All wrote back and said they never heard of it in their knowledge of their work. But it is a wrong idea anyway. Jesus' term for physical birth is already in the text. It is "born of flesh." Too, we are in a context where Jesus is talking of a new birth. He says one must be born anew. Nicodemus doesn't understand, so Jesus explains the new birth is a birth of water and the Spirit. So one should put verse 3 with verse 5. An old birth or a first birth is not under discussion. A new birth is under discussion. Besides, if one argues that natural birth is under discussion it makes

Jesus look like an idiot, seriously explaining to Nicodemus that one must be born physically before he can be born of the Spirit. Who can believe it? Another attempt must be found. It is.

They say, "water in John 3:5 must really mean the Spirit." As proof they cite John 7:37-39. Jesus said, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scriptures hath said, from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive: for the Spirit was not yet given; because Jesus was not yet glorified." But the first thing we notice is John 7:37-39 is not in a context where it is talking of a birth. He is talking of belief which leads to eternal life, all of which comes by the Spirit's work in preaching the gospel. The second thing we notice is that "Spirit" is already in the text in John 3:5. Jesus says, "Except one be born of the water and the Spirit." "Spirit" is already there. Would you have Jesus saying, "Except one is born of the Spirit and the Spirit"? Too, if water means "Spirit," what does Spirit mean, "water" perhaps? No, words should be taken in their usual way unless there is really something in the context which makes us take them in an unusual way. Only there is nothing in the context which would make us take it in an unusual way, especially since there is such a close association between water and baptism. Notice: "He that sent me to baptize in water" (John 1:33); "and John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there" (John 3:23); "and as they went on the way, they came unto a certain water; and the eunuch saith, Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36); and, "Can any man forbid the water, that these should not be baptized..." (Acts 10:47). So it is natural to think not of natural birth or Spirit or the word, but to simply think of water baptism. To enter the kingdom of God you simply must be baptized for the remission of sins.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:12,13

Now let's look at arguments regarding I Corinthians l:12and 13. Remember Paul said this: "Now this I mean, that each 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 you baptized into the name of Paul?" (I Cor. 1:12,13). Now the Corinthians were carnal. They gloried in men. In essence they were saying, "I am of Paul," or

"I belong to Paul." Others were saying, "I belong to Apollos," while others were saying, "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ." The genitive or possessive case is used, so they were saying they were in a party or schism which belonged to these various religious leaders in the church. Paul knew it was wrong to glory in men. They were to all be one man in Christ. But Paul had to find a way to attack their carnality and show that they could not belong to mere men. They were purchased out of the world by the blood of Christ. So in verse 10 he says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). But regarding their claim that they belonged to men, Paul said that cannot be. Before they belonged to Paul two essential things had to occur. One, Paul had to be crucified for them, and two, they had to be baptized into the name of Paul. He says it would be true of Apollos also. Before they could belong to Apollos those same two things were necessary. Apollos would have to be crucified for them and they would have to be baptized into the name of Apollos. The same was true of Cephas or Peter, right on down to Christ. Before they could belong to Christ two essential things had to happen. One, they had to have Christ crucified for them, and two, they had to be baptized into the name of Christ. To be baptized into the name of Christ is to be baptized into all that name stands for: grace, blood, redemption, sacrifice, ransom, propitiation, mercy, and more. But in this case it is true. They can belong to Christ for Christ was crucified for them and two, they were baptized into His name which in the main stood for salvation from sin. Remember John the baptizer looked on Jesus and said, "Behold, the lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). But before one can belong to Christ, we notice two essential things are required. Christ had to be crucified for them, and He was, and they had to be baptized into His name, and they were. This proves the essentiality of baptism into the name of Jesus Christ. Now I have never seen a refutation of that argument for water baptism attacked directly. Usually a reply to the argument is made by directing attention to two other passages. Let's notice the first.

Appeal is made to I Corinthians 1:14 which says, "I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius." Yet all one has to

do is look at the context to see why Paul would make such a statement. They were saying they belonged to Paul and Apollos, and Paul says no they don't. But they are so carnal and glory in men so much Paul is afraid that if he had baptized them they might actually claim that Paul baptized into his own name. So in the next verse we read that very thing. Paul says he was glad he baptized none but Crispus and Gaius. "Lest any man should say that ye were baptized into my name" (I Cor. 1:15). He didn't want them to abuse baptism.

Next, an appeal is made to verse 17. He says, "For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel" (I Cor. 1:17). "See," it is argued, "Paul was not supposed to baptize." But Paul is not saying that. He did baptize some: Crispus and Gaius and the household of Stephanas. But that was not the essence of his work. Others could do the actual baptizing. He was inspired to evangelize. That was the center of his work, whether men obeyed in water baptism or not. The same is true of me today. The essence of my work is to preach. He who has ears to hear let him hear. Those who hear without obedience are not to be baptized, but they are to be preached to. They are to be taught and what they do about baptism is up to them. All are to be preached to, but not all are to be baptized. So Christ sends us not to baptize, but to preach. Those that heed will be baptized for the remission of their sins. Others who reject the gospel are not to be baptized, though they are to hear the gospel you have heard.

BAPTISM (5)

ARGUMENTS AGAINST ACTS 2:38

In this study we are going to look at some arguments used against Acts 2:38. First, let's study it.

Acts 2:38 says, "And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the

remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Now in this passage Peter is preaching the first gospel sermon. He tells the Jews that they crucified Jesus Whom God had made Lord and Christ (verse 36). Verse 37 says, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Peter replied, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). The context argues that baptism is for remission of sins for it is tied to repentance by a copulative or coordinating conjunction "and," which joins words, phrases, or clauses of equal rank. Peter says repent and be baptized for the remission of sins for verse 40 says, "And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation." And to show that baptism played a role in this salvation, verse 41 has Luke say, "They then that received his word were baptized: and there added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). So you can see why Acts 2:38 is a very important passage. It clearly teaches baptism is as much for remission of sins as repentance, and that to be saved one must be baptized. So, if one is a "faith-only advocate," some attempt must be made to get around Acts 2:38. Here we will look at several attempts.

First is what is called the "Plural-Singular Argument." It is a very unclear argument, and though it is presented in various ways, no way seems able to clearly make an argument out of it. However, it goes something like this. '"Repent ye' is plural in Acts 2:38. 'Be baptized every one of you' is singular. 'For remission of sins' is plural. So 'repent ye' which is plural, should be tied to 'remission of sins' which is plural. So the passage should read: 'Repent ye for remission of sins and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ.' So remission of sins hinges on repentance, and one is merely baptized to fulfill a command. One already has remission of sins by repentance."

Well, it is a good try, but we must point out that no reputable English translation translates the Greek that way. It is so awkward and ungrammatical that none of the reliable translations by hundreds of Greek scholars see it naturally reading that way. Too, if we had time, we could present several Greek scholars who believe in "faith only"

saving, who admit the Greek does not bear out such a translation. Let's notice why. Besides not being the natural way to read the Greek, why do the versions not translate it that way?

First, again, we notice that copulative conjunction "and." It joins words, phrases, and clauses of equal rank. "Repent" and "be baptized" are joined together equally by "and." We know what a coupling pin is on a train. It holds the cars together. If you throw away the coupling pin, as one person said, "you lose your caboose." But that repentance and baptism go together is seen in this question: "How many more people are in the "repent ye" than in the "every one of you"? The same ones who are told to repent are told to be baptized and that before they are promised remission of sins. Further, they believed Peter when he told them they had crucified Jesus whom God made Lord and Christ. They, at that point, believed in Christ. If one is saved by "faith only," why did he still need to go on and repent for remission of sins? Salvation is salvation from sins (Mat. 1:21). You can't be saved by "faith only" while you still are in your sins. So even if "faith only" advocates could get rid of baptism in Acts 2:38 they still have to contend with repentance, so they have not helped themselves at all. So, they may as well leave baptism alone; contorting and torturing the Scriptures does not help them any. But let's go on. Let's look at another attack on Acts 2:38.

An argument is made on the word "for." In the Greek it is eis, pronounced "ace" or "ice," depending on your Greek teacher. Now in Acts 2:38 the Greek preposition is translated "for the remission of sins" in the King James Version and "unto remission of sins" in the American Standard Version. So in the American Standard it would read, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). But some argue thusly. They say, "Eis can mean 'unto' or 'in order to obtain,' but it can also mean 'because of.'" In Acts 2:38 Peter is really saying "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ because of the remission of your sins." In other words they are to be baptized because their sins have been remitted." Well, that's another good try, but it is laced with other problems. Peter not only says be baptized, he says "repent." If their sins have already been removed, why tell them to

repent? How were their sins removed without repentance? Jesus said repentance was necessary or one would perish (Luke 13:3,5). Acts 11:18 says repentance is unto life. Notice Acts 3:19 says, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out..." (Acts 3:19). So one must repent in order that sins may be removed. Evidently they need to repent so their sins may be blotted out. If that is so, how could they be told to be baptized because their sins have already been blotted out? So this view leads one into a clear contradiction. And again, we recall that repentance and baptism are joined together by a copulative conjunction which joins words, phrases and clauses of equal rank. And add to this that most grammars deny that eis ever can mean "because of." Let's look at two passages where some try to say eis means "because of."

The first is Matthew 10:41. It says, "He that receiveth a prophet in (eis) the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward" (Mat. 10:41). They say eis should evidently mean "because of' here because you would not say, "He that receives a prophet unto the name of a prophet." It is more natural to say, "He that receives a prophet because of the name of a prophet." It is true, one can make sense of it if he reads it that way. But Greek scholars say eis is used so often to have forward action — into, unto, in order to obtain — that it should read "unto the name of a prophet" than to think even in this verse that eis would have the unusual meaning of "because of." They would say it means you receive a prophet and get into all that name represents, stands for, and gives. It is the same as being baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20). There you are baptized into all that Their names represent Here when you receive a prophet, you accept all he stands for, and so you receive a prophets reward—all a prophet receives. So eis can have its usual forward look, and not an unusual "because of' meaning.

Another passage they use is Matthew 12:41. Jesus says, 'The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, a greater than Jonah is here" (Mat. 12:41). The preposition eis is used in this phrase, "they repented at (eis) the preaching of Jonah." It would be more natural, they say, if we understood Jesus to say, "they repented because of the preaching of Jonah." But again, that would be

an unusual meaning of eis. And, it is perfectly natural to think of one repenting unto or into conformity with the preaching of Jonah.

Yet again, even if eis could possibly in some unusual way mean "because of" in those two verses, we have showed that it couldn't have that meaning in Acts 2:38. Else it would be telling those Jews to repent of sins because their sins have already been forgiven. This view contradicts the gospel message and so many other scriptures that it cannot be held even for an instant.

Well, there is one more attempt to get around Acts 2:38. Basically this view argues that Jews who publicly renounced Christ at his trial must publicly confess Him by being baptized for the remission of sins as said in Acts 2:38. One problem with this "dispensational view" is that it is not taught anywhere in the Bible. The Bible never comes out and says such a thing. Too, it crashes on several verses, a few of which we have space to mention. Peter, talking of the salvation of Jew and Gentile said, "and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). There was no distinction made. Both are saved alike, by faith — not faith only — and there is no distinction. They are both saved alike. If we had space we would quote several passages which teach God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34,35; Romans 2:10; James 2:9, etc). No, Acts 2:38 is a powerful scripture. If we take it simply as it reads, it fits compatibly with all the other scriptures on baptism. So why let it be twisted?

THE DESIGN, SUBJECT, AND MODE OF BAPTISM

We are going to study baptism, its design, its subjects, and its mode. By design, we mean the purpose for which one is baptized. By subject we mean to ask who is a candidate for baptism? By mode we mean how is it done, by dipping entirely in the water, sprinkling, or pouring water upon the head of a candidate. Let's begin our study.

THE DESIGN OR PURPOSE OF BAPTISM

First we will say flat out that we sincerely believe the design or purpose of baptism is remission of sins. Let's notice what the Bible says. We observe first, a hint regarding such baptism from John the Immerser's baptism. In Mark 1:4 we read, "John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). Then after the resurrection and ascension of Jesus to heaven, Peter preached the first gospel sermon on Pentecost. He told the Jews they had killed the Christ (Acts 2:36). They asked what to do (Acts 2:37). Peter said, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). So Peter said baptism was for the remission or forgiveness of sins. So that is what we teach and preach in our day. This is corroborated by the conversion of the apostle Paul. As you can read in Acts 9 and Acts 22 he saw, talked to, and believed in the risen Christ on the Damascus road. He was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink (Acts 9:9). After those three days, after having believed in the Lord for three days, a devout Christian by the name of Ananias came by the Lord's instructions and said to Paul, "And now why tariest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16). So in these two clear passages of scripture we see baptism is for remission of sins and to wash sins away. Too, we notice that sins were not removed at the point of faith only, for Paul believed in the Lord for three days but was still in his sins and needed them to be washed away.

All this is seen in an entirely different way. Let's look at the concept of being "saved." What does that mean? What are we saved from? The angel told Joseph about Mary's child, "And she shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins" (Mat. 1:21). So when we speak of someone being saved, we mean they are saved from their sins. This

again shows the purpose or design of baptism, for Jesus said in the great commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). So if by baptism one is saved, he is saved from his sins. So again it is another statement that baptism is for remission of sins. And Peter said, "which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21). So Peter flatly says baptism saves. That is its purpose or design.

CONSEQUENTS OF BAPTISM

Besides saving us from sin, there are consequences which occur when someone is baptized for the remission of sins. First, in baptism for the remission of sins one is born again. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). So the water of baptism plays its part in the new birth. Then Paul makes this statement, "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Rom. 6:3). This tells us two consequents of baptism. One, it gets us into Christ and, two, it gets us into His death where the blood was shed which washes us from our sins (Rev. 1:5). It is significant to notice that baptism gets us into Christ. That's important because the Bible says life is in Jesus. Paul told Timothy, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, according to the promise of the life which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:1). So in Christ is life and we get into Christ by water baptism. This is verified again by Paul in Galatians 3:27. He said, "For ye are all sons of God, through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26,27). One becomes a Son of God through faith by being baptized into Christ. So in this verse we see that as a consequence of water baptism one becomes a son or child of God as Jesus said in John 3:5, and at the same time he gets into Christ where life is. But let's notice one more. Paul said, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). Now the body is the church (Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23). So by listening to the voice of

the Spirit in the Bible we are led to the waters of baptism whereby we are baptized into the church which is the body of Jesus Christ. That church, by the way, is no human denomination. It is the kingdom of God (Col. 1:13), not a sect of men. But let's go further. We ask, who is a candidate or subject of water baptism?

THE SUBJECT OR CANDIDATE OF WATER BAPTISM

Along this line we notice that some baptize infants and often parents wonder whether their children should be baptized. But notice again Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Little babies cannot believe, so they should not be baptized. And again, in Acts 8 the Eunuch asked, "Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Philip the evangelist said, "If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest" (Acts 8:37). So again, you have to be old enough to believe. And remember on the day of Pentecost Peter said, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins" (Acts 2:38). One needs not only to have sin before he is baptized, he needs to be old enough and aware enough to repent of sins. This excludes infants on both counts. First they are innocent and have no sin and second they are not old enough to repent of sin or change their mind regarding it.

Little children are innocent and already belong to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 19:14). And Jesus said, "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke 18:17). Of little children Jesus said, "For to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 19:14). So they must be innocent. And how could a little baby sin anyway?

But some point to household baptisms in the book of Acts. Surely, they say, there was a baby in the household and if the whole household were baptized babies were baptized. For example, the household of the Philippian jailer is mentioned. It says, "he [the jailer] took them [Paul and Silas] the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his immediately" (Acts 16:33). Surely, they say, some babies were in the house. But we read

further, “And he brought them up into his house, and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having believed in God” (Acts 16:34). Whoever was in the house was old enough to rejoice. Again that excludes infants. In fact, we have seen that all the evidence excludes infants. Baptism is for believers. They are the subjects and candidates for baptism. Which leads us to our last point. The mode of baptism. In what way is it done and in fact, what is water baptism?

THE MODE OF WATER BAPTISM

Now we want to see how water baptism was done. Was it immersion, sprinkling, or pouring? The word in the original Greek as used in the Bible is not rhantizo which is the word for “sprinkle.” Nor is it cheo, which means “to pour.” The word is baptizo which means “to dip.” Or we find the word baptisma. Vine says in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words (pp. 98,99) that it is “baptism, consisting of the process of immersion, submersion and emergence.” So right off as we study the words, we see that the Lord commanded submersion in water. He never commanded sprinkling or pouring water upon another. That is simply not what they did.

SCRIPTURES ON THE METHOD OF BAPTISM

Notice when John the Immerser baptized Jesus the text says, “And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water” (Mat. 3:16). He came up from the water. That does not sound like sprinkling or pouring. You do not need to go into the water to do those. This agrees with verse 5 which says, “Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about the Jordan; And they were baptized of him in the river Jordon, confessing their sins” (Mat. 3:5,6). Why go into the Jordan river if baptism were merely pouring or sprinkling? And regarding John the Immerser John the apostle said, “And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there” (John 3:23). You don’t need much water for sprinkling or pouring, but you do for immersion. And this all agrees well with Acts 8. When Phillip baptized the Eunuch we read, “And he commanded the chariot to stand still; and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip” Acts 8:38,39). So the New Testament is consistent on all

this. They went down into the water for immersion. If you have not been immersed, you have not been baptized. You have not done what the Lord said. Baptism is immersion. That's why in Romans 6:3-5 it is described as a burial. When you bury someone, they do not have a little dirt sprinkled or poured upon them. They are all the way out of sight (Gen. 23:4). So all this is the design, subject, and mode of baptism.

BAPTISM - OUR BELIEF

MAKES US A CULT?

Our “spute” with religious liberalism, within and without the church, will probably boil down in the future to two or three main points. One of these will certainly be baptism. In a paper of this kind, it will always be helpful to see new arguments and to review old ones, to glean through old material and view new material. So, in this essay, let us look at some of the interesting material which I accumulated while preparing for a debate.

LETTER - J. K. VAN BAALEN

At the end of his booklet "Is Baptism Essential to Salvation?" Tommy Jenkins had these words:

> Where should the Christian draw the line as far as fellowship is concerned...? There are three lines of Biblical truth that should be considered. . . (one is) Soteriology, or what do they believe about salvation? Do they believe salvation is by faith only or by faith plus something else?... If in any of these areas a group errs, it may justly be classed a cult.

Then Tommy lists a quote from J. K. Van Baalen of The Chaos of the Cults where he talks of false religions like Buddhaism which instructed men to work out their own salvation. In other words, Tommy is saying that if you add baptism to salvation instead of faith alone, you ARE ACULTIST. He uses Dr. Van Baalen as a source of proof.

INQUIRY

I wrote to Dr. Van Baalen the following letter to gather material to destroy this wildly prejudicial argument. I said:

> I recently read a booklet where a young man affirmed that one who believed that baptism is essential to salvation is a

cultist. If this is so, we would rightly include in our list of cults the Roman Catholic Church, certain Baptist groups, the churches of Christ, various Pentecostal groups and others... Would you say that belief about baptism being essential in order to obtain salvation, in and of itself, makes one a cultist? Similarly, are the above listed groups to be thought of as cults?

REPLY

I was sorry to learn that he had deceased. His wife, however, also a scholar, gave reply to our inquiry. She replied thusly:

I wish that I knew the name of the author of the booklet you read. And I wish the dictionary were not quite so general in definitions of "sect" and "cult." Sect is defined as "the believers in a particular creed or upholders of a particular practice."... "Historically a sect differs from a religion in that it differs from other sects of the same religion in its interpretation or application of what is recognized by all as the same revelation, while different religions differ as to what is to be taken as revelation." So we use the term for one of the organized bodies of Christians.

A cult is defined as "any religion regarded us unorthodox or even spurious." But the dictionary goes on to say "the body of followers, practitioners, or worshippers of a set of beliefs; a sect." Of course, here it would have been most helpful if the writer had defined his use of the word. My late husband, who was exact in his use of words, often used to say just that – "Let's define the terms." Then you start off at a common base; otherwise you will interpret the word as you have been accustomed to use it, and the other will interpret it in the light of his prejudice.

My late husband defined cults as all of those movements which, however intolerant of each other, are in hearty agreement when it comes to denying the scriptural account of the origin of man and his fall. All of these are attempts to give man the initiative in seeking God by himself; in Christianity it is God who takes the initiative.

As to the need of baptism, we have only to go to the Bible for that. Mark 16:16 – "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."

Acts 2:38 – "Repent ye, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins."

I'm sure my husband, soundly theological that he was, would never put the Baptist groups, churches of Christ, Pentecostals and others, who believe that Christ died for our salvation if we believe in Him, in with the unchristian cults.

A growing tragedy today is that so many people embrace the cults for social reasons and do not know what the cult teaches.

Yours truly.

(Signed😊 Nora M. VanBaalen

LETTER – ROBERT G. BRATCHER

We always like to challenge our opponents to list one passage in the Bible which says that a man is justified by "faith only." There is a difference in being justified by faith, and in being justified by faith alone. Well, it just so happens that the T.E.V. Version by Robert Bratcher translates Romans 1:17 thusly: "For the gospel reveals how God put men right with himself: it is through faith alone, from beginning to end."

INQUIRY

I wrote Dr. Bratcher on January 11,1975 as follows:

The second edition of Today's English Version translates Romans 1:17 with the clause, "it is through faith alone, from beginning to end." Would you understand the phrase "faith alone" to exclude the idea of "faith that works through love" (Galatians 5:6), or "faith perfected through actions" (James

2:22)? By the way, I understand the rendering is different in later editions. Is that so?

REPLY

This is the reply I received. Since he also answered a question I asked about I Corinthians 12:13,1 include his reply to it in case you found it interesting. So here is his letter:

God's Word for a New Age
American Bible Society
4 February 1975

Mr. Jerry Moffitt
P. O. Box 230
San Marcos, Tx 78666
Dear Mr. Moffitt,

In answer to your questions in your January 11 letter about two passages in our TEV New Testament:

In Romans 1:17 I understand that Paul uses the word "faith" in the sense that he always uses it elsewhere, that is, a vital relation to Jesus Christ as Lord which issues in a life of obedience to Him, and not merely an intellectual assent to the truth of certain statements about Him. In the third edition of the TEV New Testament the passage reads, "it is through faith, from beginning to end." I came to the conclusion that the word "alone," while not untrue to what Paul says about faith, adds an explicit nuance to the passage in English which is missing in Greek. Paul is not here contrasting faith and works of the Law; he is simply talking about faith as the way through which God puts us right with himself. As it now reads I believe the passage is more faithfully translated into English.

As for I Corinthians 12:3 and 12:13; in both cases en may certainly be intended instrumentally; it could be argued that they are intended as locatives, but I find it very hard to

conceive of doing something, or having something done, "in" (locative) the Spirit. The instrumental sense seems much more natural to me; and in 12:13 the local sense is expressed in the clause "into the one body."

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Robert G. Bratcher

Anyway, he took the word “alone” out as he should do, and in I Corinthians the Spirit by use of His word baptizes us when we obey His command.

JOHN'S BAPTISM FOR REMISSION?

MARK 1:4 “John came, who baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance unto remission of sins.”

QUESTION:

Now, we can understand Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, telling the Jews to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Christ had recently died on the cross, shedding His blood for all who would appropriate it. But when John the immerser came preaching and baptizing, Christ had not even begun His ministry. How could he baptize for the remission of sins when Christ had not yet poured out His blood for that purpose?

ANSWER:

Baptism before the cross was for remission of sins and baptism after the cross was for remission of sins. However, they were not for remission of sins in precisely the same way, nor having precisely the same particulars. The first was "unto" the remission of sin in prospect of the death of Christ, the other was for the remission of sins in reality, since Christ had truly died.

J. W. McGarvey says, "Pardoning mercy was to be found in Christ, and all rites then looked forward to the cleansing effected by the shedding of His blood, and all rites now look back to it. But in popular estimation, John's baptism was no doubt regarded as consummating an immediate forgiveness" (p. 69, Fourfold Gospel).

I have always held that a person baptized with John's baptism was baptized for remission of sins, and when Christ died he then obtained remission as truly as one baptized today. In other words, he did not need to be baptized again, since he was already baptized for remission. Why then were those who were baptized with John's baptism rebaptized in Acts 19? The answer is simple. The whole context argues that they were baptized with John's baptism after it had been put out

of force by the cross. At the cross Christian baptism came of force and John's baptism was done away.

GRACE AND LAW (1)

THE PROBLEM OF LAW

In studying doctrine which directly affects salvation, we have looked at the erroneous doctrine of faith only and eternal security. We have presented truth regarding water baptism, and have dealt with arguments which try to establish that water baptism is not essential to remission of sins. But part of the problem is what one believes about grace and what one believes about law. The statement is made that we are saved by grace, not by baptism. Or it is often argued that baptism is a work of law and the Bible says we are not saved by works or by law. Well, let's explore these concepts, which directly relate to salvation, in a series of manuscripts regarding grace and law.

Let's look at the beginnings of the problem. We have stated before that the beginning of the extreme views of Calvinism was the reformers reaction to the gross "work salvation" of the Roman Catholic church of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The reformers saw in Scripture that one was not saved by meritorious works, or by law-keeping, that, rather the Bible clearly said one is saved by grace. However, they suffered what some call the pendulum effect; they swung from one extreme to the other extreme. They saw that one was saved by grace, but they, without noticing it, began to say that one was saved by "grace only." In one form or another, that became the Protestant view. Let's explore these concepts.

Notice these definitions: Grace (Greek charis), literally means "gift," or "favor." That's all. Law is from the Greek word nomos. It is from a word that means to "divide out" or "distribute." It has the flavor of "rule," "principle," or something in the "norm."

Let's study law first. Notice a few facts about law. Regardless of what some say about law, or severe remarks regarding "legalism," the Bible argues that law is good and not evil. Paul said, "What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law: for I had not known coveting, except the law

had said, 'thou shalt not covet"' (Rom. 7:7). Again he said, "So that the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and righteous, and good" (Rom. 7:12). And again, "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7:22). So Paul commends law. It tells us what sin is. It is not evil; it is holy, and righteous, and good. Paul, where it counts, down in the spiritual man, delights in the law of God. Of course Paul is talking about the law of Moses, but the same would be true of any law of God. I am not ashamed to say that I believe law-keeping is necessary to salvation and that the law of Christ teaches clearly that we must be submissive to law to be saved. Before this series is over, I believe you will understand how salvation and justification come through adherence to the new law, the Law of Christ. Paul said, "For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin" (Rom. 7:14). He said, "Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8). And again Paul said, "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law" (Rom. 13:10). So, if we have done nothing else, we have showed that Paul did not believe that the law of God was an evil, ugly, or dangerous entity. But more.

There was a problem with law. The problem is stated in Romans 8:3. Paul says, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). The problem with law, therefore, was that we could not keep it. In the flesh we are too weak. We cannot be saved by "law-keeping" for we all fail to keep it perfectly. Law points out sin and thus condemns us all (Rom. 7:7-25). Truly Paul said, "for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). So Paul could add, "wretched man that lam! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 7:24,25).

Of course, surprising to some, theoretically if someone kept the law perfectly he could be saved by law. He would be just. Paul said, "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. 2:13). God would then owe them salvation, as the Scripture says, "Now to him that worketh, the reward is not reckoned as of grace, but as of debt" (Rom. 4:4). Yet if that were

the case, it would be true that that person could not make even one mistake. Paul said, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Gal. 3:10). That being the case, we can see how Paul could say of the law, "And I was alive apart from the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died; and the commandment, which was unto life, this I found to be unto death" (Rom. 7:9, 10). The only sinless Person, therefore, was Jesus Christ. He only could say, "which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John 8:46). We read, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21). The Holy Spirit said, "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). And again, "Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God" (Heb. 9:14). See also I Peter 1:19; 1 Pet. 1:22; and I John 3:5.

So we would say that law as the basis and ground of justification is excluded (Rom. 4:2-5). But works of law as condition to grace is included. Peter said, "of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:34, 35). "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:48).

Again, Paul said, "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). And also we read, "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). So again, law as the basis and ground of justification truly is a curse, for we all fail (Rom. 7:9,10). But think of all this with this illustration. There are two ways to have clean hands. One is to not get them dirty. The second way is to wash them clean. Regarding sin, we all are dirty. It is too late and too difficult to be saved that way. If one relies on that method he has failed, and only death awaits. So this is where grace and the blood of Christ come in. We must wash. We must be saved by grace. Law-keeping with an aim at sinless perfection proved to be fatal. But God made a plan of salvation that included our free will. In it we meet His conditions which according to His will procure or obtain the grace whereby we are saved. We must first hear the gospel about Jesus

Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 10:14-17). Another condition God requires before we can get grace is faith (John 20:30,31). Equally important to go on and receive the grace whereby we are saved are repentance and baptism (Acts 3:19; Acts 2:38). By these we get cleansing from our sin. By these we are saved by grace. We cannot boast for we have failed. Some have said baptism is a work and if you are saved by works you can glory (Rom.4:4). Yet baptism is not a work of law, which if we keep it we attain spiritual perfection. It is a work of faith among other works of faith whereby we are cleansed. It is a reaching out for the grace of God which saves us. It is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). It is the washing away of sins (Acts 22:16). It is not in the category of works whereby one is sinless. In fact, baptism admits sin. It is a cry for help, an admission of defeat. God gave grace to save us. Why are all not saved? If we are saved by grace alone without any conditions attached which we must obey before we can receive that grace, why are all not saved. Well, some say you do have to believe. That's why some are saved and others are lost. They are lost because they do not believe.

Now that is true, for Paul said, "for by grace have ye been saved through faith" (Eph. 2:8). But we already have demonstrated several things in previous lessons. One, the faith that saves is not "faith alone." Too, we have shown that besides faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are also conditions which have to be met in order to receive grace. Looked at in another way, we have Biblically demonstrated that saving faith includes repentance, confession of Jesus, and water baptism. In further lessons we will discuss how one can actually be worthy or not worthy of the grace of God. We will look at passages which say we are under law to Christ, and we will study the nature of law and of grace.

But now, if someone says we are not saved by law we will agree. But we would add we are saved by the obedience of faith. And we would also keep in mind that there is a sense in which we are saved by law.

GRACE AND LAW (2)

GRACE AND WORKS

Some teach that we are saved by grace alone and that we are not under law at all. We believe that is wrong. We saw that grace simply means "gift" or "favor." Regarding law, we saw that it was holy, and righteous and good. We will further argue that we are under law in a Scriptural sense. But we saw that the problem with law, any law as perfect as the law of Moses, is that we cannot keep it perfectly. We have all sinned (Rom. 3:23). Therefore we must be saved by grace. But we noticed that grace has conditions attached to it: faith, repentance, confession of Jesus as the Christ, and also water baptism.

Still law as the basis and ground of our salvation is Biblically excluded. But law as a condition for salvation is included. Law-keeping as a condition to get the grace which is the basis and ground of salvation is included. By keeping the commands Christ requires, we get access to the blood which washes us from our sins. That's why Jesus could say, "But thou hast a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments: and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4). So we are not surprised when Jesus says, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And again, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14). And even more pointed, he said, "If a man keep my word, he shall never see death" (John 8:51). So when we believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30, 31), when we change our mind or repent of our sins (Acts 17:30), when we confess our faith that

Jesus is the Christ the Son of God (Rom. 10:9,10), and when we are baptized in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), we get the grace of God by which we are saved. It is true that we must then walk in the light or we can fall from grace. John said, “but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7). Walking in the light is walking according to the law of Christ, the word of Christ. It is commandment-keeping, or you could even say it is law keeping. When you are doing the best you can do, for James said in many things we all stumble (Jas 3:2), God uses the blood of Jesus to continue to cleanse us from our sins.

To walk in the light is what Paul meant when he said, “to them that are without law, as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law” (I Cor. 9:21).

So, we are not saved by law in one sense, that we keep it perfectly and so are sinless and have no need for grace. But we are saved by law in another sense. In this sense law is a system of conditions whereby we get into and remain in the grace by which we are saved.

Now let’s say a few more words about grace. First, since Jesus was the only sinless person, none of us are saved without grace. Salvation is free in the sense that none of us paid for it. None of us kept the law perfectly whereby we could earn it. We all failed that (Rom. 3:23). If we were sinless we would have earned it But since we sinned, we failed to earn it. If we are to get it at all it must be given as a gift. But though we can’t earn it, there are conditions to get this free gift. It is like a lot of free gifts which are offered to us in the mail. The gift is free, but there are usually conditions to meet to receive it. Regarding Christianity, these conditions take the form of commandments. They make up the law of Christ. Some will say that if there are any conditions attached to getting grace, then it is not grace, it is not a free gift. Oh, then what of the condition of faith? All admit you have to believe to be saved. So to get the grace which saves you one must believe. Paul said," for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works [these works are good works not works of obedience], that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for

good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10). So faith is a condition to get grace. We are saved by grace through faith. But in earlier chapters we showed that the faith that gets us into grace is not faith alone or faith bare of works of obedience. James said faith if it had not works is dead in itself (Jas. 2:17), barren (Jas. 2:20), and described as dead faith (Jas. 2:26).

WORKS

Now let us proceed onward by talking about works. There are several types of works mentioned in the Bible, but only one kind saves — works of obedience. Paul said, "through whom we received grace and apostleship, unto obedience of faith among all the nations, for his name's sake" (Rom. 1:5). We find obedience which belongs to faith also mentioned in Romans 16:26. And Paul said "and the father of circumcision to them who not only are of the circumcision, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham which he had in uncircumcision" (Rom. 4:12). And we see an illustration of all this at the walls of Jericho. God said He gave Jericho to Joshua. Then He told Joshua to march around it. The Hebrew writer says, "By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days" (Heb. 11:30).

This is a very difficult subject. So let us strive to be clear by repeating that works of law do not save in the sense that they make one perfect Paul said, "because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law cometh the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). And Paul said, "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). If one tries to be saved by taking the route of being utterly sinless by law he will be lost for he has sinned. No one had the complete absence of sin but Christ. So as the basis and ground of our salvation we are not under law. I believe that is what Paul meant when he said, "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:23). We are not under law as the basis and ground of our salvation. Grace is the basis and ground of our salvation. Law is merely the condition of salvation. Law is the condition to get the grace by which we are saved. We are not under law as the bottom line of salvation. Since all have sinned, we are under grace as the basic cause of salvation. So Paul said, "we reckon therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from

the works of the law" (Rom. 3:28). Works of law only reach out and accept the grace that saves. And works of the law as a system do not save. Obedient faith justifies. It is not dead faith that justifies, but the obedience of faith (Rom. 1:5; Rom. 16:26).

Such works of obedience admit our failure. So they fit in with the grace route. They acknowledge our own personal wretchedness. The obedience of faith, or faith with works of obedience reach out for grace. These works of obedience are not works of law which strive for salvation by utter perfection. Paul condemns law in that sense. Works of obedience are the condition, though not the basis of salvation. Such is baptism. It is merely part of the obedience of faith which admits failure and wretchedness, and which therefore reaches out in a God-commanded way to accept the free gift of grace which saves, being the basis and ground of salvation. Baptism is only law-keeping as a condition to get the free gift of the grace that saves.

Now to some this is very new. They may pause and wonder, "Could this be?" To help them see it, I want us all to notice how agreeably this fits in with the rest of the Bible. As we turn the pages of the Bible we are growingly aware that it simply does not sound like what we hear taught by the denominational world. We hear "grace only" or "faith only," but doggedly the scriptures sound differently. For all the world they constantly sound as if we have to do something or act in some way to get grace, or salvation, or life eternal, or some such blessing. Let us simply notice a few scriptures.

Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21). Isn't that clear? And on the day of Pentecost Peter said, according to Luke, "and with many other words he testified, and exhorted them saying, Save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received his word were baptized" (Acts 2:40, 41). The denominational world around us says that in no sense can we save ourselves from the fate of a crooked generation. Peter, however, says "Save yourselves." Obviously we save ourselves by obedience which reaches out and takes hold on the grace that saves.

Do we do anything in our search for eternal life? Paul said, God would “render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life: but unto them that are factious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:6-11). In that we notice one seeks eternal life by patience in well-doing. So action is involved. Whether we are good or bad makes the difference. We get grace by obeying the gospel. But we must have patience in well-doing or we will be lost. Similarly if one works evil and obeys unrighteousness he will be lost. Notice another. Paul said, “So then my beloved, even 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). To work out your own salvation with fear and trembling simply does not sound like "grace only" or "faith only." God has left things for us to do. And once we have done them, we must have patience to keep on doing them or we can be lost. Once we are saved we are not always saved.

Notice another scripture. Paul told the Corinthians, “For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the fear of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Cor. 5:10,11). We are not saved by grace alone. We receive judgment day according to what we have done, good or bad. So, as recorded in the Book of Revelation, John could write, “And I heard a voice from heaven saying, Write, Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them” (Rev. 14:13).

GRACE AND LAW (3)

ARE WE UNDER LAW?

We have seen that law is not evil. Paul said it is holy, righteous, and good (Rom. 7:12). Yet it is weak through the flesh (Rom. 8:3). We can't keep it perfectly. If we did we would be justified (Rom. 2:13). But the fact is, all have sinned (Rom. 3:23). So the law as a ground of justification is a curse (Gal. 3:10). However, we must demonstrate that we are worthy of the grace that saves us (Rev. 3:4). When we obey the new law in the way God commands, we receive the grace which saves our souls. What does God command that we do? We must hear the gospel (Rom. 10:14). How could we believe if we could not hear? Two, we must believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 8:24; John 11:25,26; John 20:30,31). Next, we must repent of our sins, or change our mind about them (Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30). Fourth we must confess our faith in Jesus, that He is the Christ, the Son of God (Mat. 10:32; Rom. 10:9,10; I Tim. 6:12). Finally, the Bible says we must be baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins. See Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:27.

Obeying all that, we receive the grace of God which cleanses us of all our sins. But the Bible says in many things the Christian stumbles (Jas. 3:2). But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, the blood of Jesus continues to cleanse us of our sins (I John 1:7). To walk in light is to try as best you can to walk in the commandments of Christ. It is contrasted with walking in darkness where one sets out to willfully sin. Walking in the light includes repenting of sin (Acts 8:22), and it involves confessing sin when you stumble (I John 1:9). Yet all that obedience is law-keeping in order to get into and remain in the grace which saves.

So as we have said, we are not saved by law in one sense, that it is the basis and ground of salvation. But we are saved by law in another sense, law as a condition to get the grace whereby we are saved. Since we have failed to keep a holy law perfectly, we can't earn salvation. But we can meet conditions to obtain grace. These conditions comprise the new law.

Regarding faith we have seen that it is the supreme condition to get grace (Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 5:1,2). But faith is not dead (Jas. 2:26). It contains works of obedience whereby when we do them we get the grace which saves (Rom. 1:5). Works of law do not save in the sense that we keep law perfectly and are saved (Rom. 3:20,23). But works of obedience obtain the grace which saves (Acts 2:40; Rom. 2:7; Phil. 2:12). With all that in mind let's go further.

IS THE CHRISTIAN OR THE WORLD UNDER LAW AT ALL?

Let's notice a few passages. First, notice Jesus spoke of commandment-keeping. He said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him" (John 14:21). Commandment-keeping is not wrong. It is not ugly. It is not base. It is a mark and a badge of one's love for Christ.

John verifies all this. He says, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (I John 2:4). This is very strong language. If you know Christ, it is because you keep His commandments. If you are without knowing and doing the law, you are ignorant of Christ. Knowing and doing His law

is how one begins to see and understand Jesus. If one must obey the commandments, he must also know them. So to experience and encounter Christ one must know the Bible. That's one reason why we must emphasize Bible study.

In the same book, notice I John 3:24: "And he that keepeth his commandments abideth in him, and he in him. And hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he gave us" (I John 3:24). The Holy Spirit was given unto us by Christ (John 14:16,17). He prayed to the Father that the Father would send the Holy Spirit. The Spirit revealed how we would know that Christ abideth with us. It comes when we keep Christ's commandments. If you have commandments you have law. How do some say that in no sense do we have law to which we are responsible? It is by commandment-keeping that we abide in Christ and He in us.

Paul said Jesus had commands for us. As he preached to the philosophers at Athens Paul said, "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30). Repentance is a change of mind regarding sin with a view to amend one's life. It is one of the first commands of John the immerser (Mat. 3:2), and then of Jesus Himself (Mat. 4:17; Luke 13:3,5). Today, now, Jesus issues the command for us to repent. If we must obey the command to repent we must therefore obey law. How can one say we are under law in no sense?

Everywhere we turn in the Bible we see that commandments abound and we must do them. Paul writes to the evangelist Timothy. He gives him all kinds of instructions for the church. He tells them about the necessity of a good conscience (I Tim. 1:5). He tells them how they must have godliness (I Tim. 2:2), and the qualifications of elders (I Tim. 3), and on and on. Then he says, "These things command and teach" (I Tim. 4:11). Are we under law today? Must we keep commandments? Paul clearly says, "These things command and teach." And we have seen that that is not legalism. It is love, for Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). He even said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14).

No wonder Jesus could say, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven (Mat. 7:21). Some say all you must do to be saved is to call out the name Jesus. The Bible does not say it. It says call on the name of Jesus (Acts 2:21). You call on His name to save you when you do His will. No wonder Jesus could say, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46). So salvation is not by grace alone, or faith alone. It is by obedience to Christ in all He says. It is obedience to His law. It is in acting, doing, obeying. It is obeying His word. But still more.

Let’s hear from Peter. He says, “putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation” (I Pet. 2:1,2). There are things to put away as well as attributes to put on. All this smacks of doing something, obedience, law-keeping, commandment-keeping. And we can go on and on.

A FEW VERSES WHICH SHOW WE ARE UNDER COMMANDS AND LAW

“Where then is the glorying? It is excluded. By what manner of law? Of works? Nay: but by a law of faith” (Rom. 3:27). In verse 28 he goes on to show, as we have said, that you are not saved by keeping the law of Moses perfectly.

Then Paul says, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and death” (Rom. 8:2). Along that line he says, “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” Yes we are under law.

And James clearly says, “But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing” (Jas. 1:25). No wonder the Hebrew writer says, quoting Jeremiah 31:33, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them...” (Heb. 8:10).

Are we under law at all? Yes. Everywhere we look in the New Testament we have law, works, commands, doing, obeying.

GRACE AND LAW (4)

MORE ON BEING UNDER LAW

We have studied about grace, about law, the good of law, the problem of law, about faith, about works, and we have noticed many passages which teach one must do something in order to be saved. Let us look at all this afresh, sum up, restate it all in different terms, trying to understand it clearly. Some of this is review, but an old saying is: "Redundancy or repetition combats distortion."

First, are we under law today? Well, the Bible teaches that law was not annulled, only changed. Paul said, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb.

7:12). So notice Paul's language. He clearly says we are under law to Christ. He says, "to them that are without law, [I became] as without law, not being without law to God, but under law to Christ, that I might gain them that are without law" (I Cor. 9:21). So Paul was under law. He said he was under law to Christ and not without law to God.

Through adhering to law as best we can grace is extended. First, the Holy Spirit said in Peter, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Then as a Christian John says, "but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (I John 1:7). So, to walk in the light we have to do His will, keep His word, obey His commands (Mat. 7:21; John 14:23). Jesus said, remember, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And He said, "ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14).

So, again, in what sense are we under law and in what sense are we not under law? Someone might say, "no, it is either one or the other. You are either under law or you are not." But to see that that is not so, answer this question. "Have you ever seen the back of your throat?" In a sense you have, in a mirror. In a sense you have not; you have not gazed directly at it. Now notice again Romans 6:14: "For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under law, but under grace" (Rom. 6:14). Law as the basis, the ground, the principle, the fundamental, is not what we operate under for salvation. Rather, the blood of Christ is the rock-bottom principle we seek to save our souls. In Revelation John said, "unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood" (Rev. 1:5). But we must keep the law of Christ to obtain that blood. Everyone doesn't get it. Those that obey Him receive it (Mat. 7:21; I Pet. 1:22; Heb. 5:8,9; Acts 22:16). So law-keeping is a condition to get the grace of God, the blood of Christ, which directly saves us. That's why Peter could say, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). And Paul could say, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

2 CORINTHIANS 3:6

Now let's look further. Notice some important passages. First, Paul said, "who also made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Cor. 3:6). "Letter" in this context is a synonym for the Old Testament. "Spirit" is a synonym here for the New Testament. The letter of the Old Law killed, for none kept it perfectly. The spirit or the gospel gives life for it contains directions on how to obtain grace. So some who say that "letter" represents law and "spirit" means freedom from the law and that we are under law no more, need to read the whole context of 2 Corinthians 3:6. In context the Old Law is called "letter" (verse 6), "ministration of death" (verse 7), "ministration of condemnation" (verse 9). It is a ministration of death for none could keep it perfectly. It could never be the basis and ground of salvation. We need the "spirit" or the gospel which lays out conditions whereby we can be pure enough to live in God's presence eternally. Those conditions, once more, are spelled out in the "spirit," or the gospel, or the new law. They are "hear" (Rom. 10:14), "believe" (John 3:16), "repent" (Acts 17:30), "confess that Jesus is the Christ" (Rom. 10:9,10; John 20:30,31), and "water baptism" (John 3:3-5; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). But let's go on. Let's look at another important passage.

GALATIANS 5:1

Notice Galatians 5:1. Paul says, "For freedom did Christ set us free: stand fast therefore, and be not entangled again in a yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1). This is another abused passage. Yet if one would think, trying to effect justification by keeping the law perfectly is bondage. We are now free from that demand of the law. But we are not free from law as a condition to justification whereby grace is extended. So law is not the basis or ground for justification, but law is the condition to receive justification.

We may look at this important difference by looking at the difference in the airplane and the ticket. Basically, one may get to his destination by airplane. But the condition to flying on the plane was the ticket. Grace gets us to our destination—heaven. But keeping the New Law gets us into the grace of God which presents us safe in heaven. So by keeping law, we get in and remain in the grace that

saves. In that sense only does law save. In that sense we are saved by law-keeping.

Law doesn't save in this sense, that it tells me what is right and wrong, that I keep it perfectly, that I don't need grace, that I am therefore sinless, that I earned salvation, that God owes it to me as a debt.

CONCLUSION

When God saw we could not be saved by being sinless, He found another way. It was grace through obedient faith. It began back at creation when man fell. God said He would bring forth a seed that would crush the head of the serpent (Genesis 3:15). Through long ages we waited. Finally, in the fullness of the time, God sent forth His Son, born of woman. He was a lowly carpenter. He was not an earthly prince, dressed in fair and soft raiment. He was a rustic, Galilean mechanic of wood. He was poor for our sake, that we might become rich. At about the age of thirty-three he began to preach. Though he was not a doctor of the law, he spoke the pure word of God which he learned in heaven. The world received him not. He was brought before the Sanhedrin trial. Sentenced to death, the Jews began to beseech the Romans to do it for them. Though he was innocent, Pilate gave way to a jealous, rebellious crowd. Sentenced to die they beat him up. They bent him, history says, over a low post; then they scourged him. They would use a Roman flagrum, kind of like our cat-o-nine-tails. At the first lash, they say, blood would spurt into the air. The Romans could beat them to death. They only stopped because they wanted them to suffer on the cross. History describes that the skin and flesh disappeared. More, I will not tell you.

The cross was an instrument of torture. Sometimes the Romans would put a little seat where they could rest slightly. It would prolong their death. They nailed a nail through that part of the hand we are prone to call the wrist. Thus it would not tear loose. One went through each hand. A nail went through each foot. One would usually die by suffocation. Muscles in the upper stomach would cramp so bad that though one could draw in air, he could not expel it. One had to push with his nailed feet and pull with his nailed hand to get up where he could blow out air so that he could get a fresh breath. When they broke

the legs of the thieves they could not push up so they would die quickly. They did. Friends, in every drop of blood, in every cut, in every blow, God was saying to you, "I love you! Won't you come back to me, accept my grace, and live with me forever." Jesus is the grace of God. His blood will wash you clean. To receive it, hear the gospel (Rom. 10:14), believe Jesus is the Christ (John 3:16), repent of your sins (Acts 3:19), confess your faith in Christ (I Tim. 6:12), and be baptized in water for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38).

THE BIBLE IS OUR PATTERN IN RELIGION

We want to talk of something simple, yet foreign to the thinking of many who believe in Christ. Our thesis is 'The Bible is our pattern in religion." By that we mean that the Bible is the model, blueprint, and masterplan of Christianity. We can look at the Bible and answer significant questions such as "How should we worship?" "What is the divine work the Church is to do?" "How should the Church be

organized here on earth?" "What are the doctrines or teachings the Church is to do and hold and teach?" Again, the thesis we hold is that we must follow the Bible for all we believe, do, and practice in the Church Jesus built. All we will say at this time is based on several propositions. They are that the Bible is the Word of God, it is inspired, and it is inerrant.

OLD TESTAMENT EXAMPLES OF THE PATTERN

Noah was given the pattern for the ark. God gave him the pattern to construct the ark with gopher wood, three decks, a window, a door, and pitch within and without. The text then says, "Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he" (Gen. 6:22).

Moses was given the pattern for the Tabernacle in Exodus 25. Hebrews 8:5 says, "See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount." It quoted Exodus 25:40. There was a pattern. Exodus 40:16 says, "Thus did Moses. According to all that the Lord commanded him, so did he."

IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament we have the divine pattern for faith, worship, and life. Matthew 26:28 has Jesus say, "For this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many unto remission of sins." Notice that word "covenant." Hebrews 9:15 says, "For this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant." Hebrews 9:16 and 17 says, "For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it does never avail while he that made it liveth." The word for "covenant" or "testament" is diatheke. It can be used of a vassal treaty where one king imposes terms on another king. Or, it is used, as we have seen, of a last will and testament. A will, such as Christ's last will and testament is conditional. To receive the blessing you must stay within and meet the conditions. The conditions must be met and no one should go beyond them. So it functions with boundaries as a pattern. It is like a pattern for a dress. If you don't follow the pattern the dress won't fit.

A PATTERN SEEN IN OTHER VERSES

That the New Testament is a pattern is seen in 2 John 9-11. It says, “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works” (2 John 9-11). If you go beyond you lose God. If you remain within you have both the Father and the Son. If others go beyond, don’t receive them into your house and give them no greeting.

Too, that the New Testament is a pattern is seen in 1 Corinthians 4:6. Paul says, “Now these things brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written” (1 Cor. 4:6). A pattern has a definite boundary. Here we are told to stay within the bounds of the New Testament, not to go beyond it. The New Testament as a pattern has a boundary. So evidently in Christianity it is not “anything goes.” It is not “design your own religion.” We can’t create our own faith. We can’t make up our own worship. We can’t assume what work the Church is to do if God’s work is specified in the Word of God (1 Cor. 15:58). What God has put in His Word must not be added to.

Notice another passage. Paul is afraid that the Galatian Christians are drifting away from the original Christianity which they had embraced. Paul says, “I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from Him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than what we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema” (Gal. 1:6-9). Out of their own heart, these Judaizers added circumcision and keeping the law of Moses to the gospel. They went beyond. They added to. They didn’t stay within the boundary. They didn’t follow the pattern. Paul said they were anathema or accursed. No, the New Testament is the pattern. It is the gospel pattern and we cannot add to it, take from it, go beyond it, or stop somewhere short of it.

That the New Testament is a pattern is seen in Revelation 22:18,19. The scripture says at that place, “I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book” (Rev. 22:18,19). This, standing at the end of the New Testament, may be providential. If it is true of the book of Revelation, why would it not be true of the whole Bible?

And that the new Testament is an exact copy or pattern is seen in passages such as the following. Jesus said, “If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). And again He said, “If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father’s who sent me” (John 14:23,24). And once again, Jesus said, “Ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you” (John 15:14). So we must do His commands. You cannot keep His word by going off willy-nilly, anything goes, swallow everything. We are not given permission by God to invent doctrine, create worship, or design our own religion.

OLD TESTAMENT SENTIMENT

We were prepared for all this by the Old Testament. Notice a few passages which warn against going beyond God’s word. God said, “ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you” (Deu. 4:2). Again, God said, “What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: you shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deu. 12:32). And in the books of Poetry God said, “Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Prov. 30:6). So even in the Old Testament we find that we must stay within the bounds of the pattern.

WHAT IS THE PATTERN?

Yes, we do find a pattern in the Word of God. First there is a pattern regarding the plan of salvation. It is as follows and to be saved one must:

1. Hear the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ coming to save us from our sins (Rom. 10:17). The gospel, therefore, is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1,2).

2. We must then believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God. See John 8:24; John 11:25,26; John 20:30,31.

3. Next we must repent of our sins. We change our mind about doing sin with a view of amending our life. See Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19 and Acts 17:30.

4. There is according to God's pattern the making of the good confession where we confess that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. That this is part of the pattern is seen in Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:9,10; 1 Tim. 6:12; Acts 8:36,37.

5. The scriptures teach that baptism is essential to salvation (Mark 16:16). It washes away and gets rid of past sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

After these five things, we are saved.

There is a pattern for the organization of the Church. It had elders who ruled the flock (Acts 20:28-32; Heb. 13:17). The qualifications of elders and deacons are seen in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. There was no board, Pope, presidency, or suchlike over the Lord's Church. See Philippians 1:1.

There is a pattern for the worship of the Church. God is specific. The acts of worship are all in the Word of God: prayer (1 The. 5:17), preaching (Acts 20:7), singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), giving (2 Cor. 8:6-11; 1 Cor. 16:1,2) and the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-32).

There is a pattern for the work of the Church. It is to evangelize the lost (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,16), edify or build up the saints in faith (Acts 20:32), and to help the needy (Jas. 2:27).

Too, there is a divine pattern for the doctrines we hold and teach. That is all contained in the Word of God, Scripture, the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

So yes, in all things, the Bible is our pattern, our blueprint, our mold. In it we see the pattern for Christianity as it was in the first century and as it is meant to be in our day. The first century Church under the inspired apostles and prophets are a sure guide to heaven, better in every way than uninspired, inventive, and presumptuous men and women of our day.

THE CHURCH (1)

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

Today there are hundreds of different churches and denominations. Look at the religious pages in the paper and scan the local phone book. There is a problem with that. Ephesians 4:4 says there is one body. Ephesians 1:22,23 says that body is the church. So Biblically there is only one church. Too, Acts 20:28 says only one church, the one we read about in the Bible, was purchased by the blood of Christ. That is the church of which we must all be members. Are you? Then over and over we are warned of false teachers (I John 4:1; Mat. 7:15; 2 Pet 2:1-3). Also, there are various questions which need to be answered. Are the church and the kingdom the same? Has the kingdom come? Why do many in the religious world still look for the kingdom to come? So we are going to begin several lessons on the church. Particularly we will begin to study the establishment of the church.

IN THE MIND OF GOD

We know the church first existed in the mind of God. Notice the language of Ephesians 3:9-11: "And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." This tells us that God from eternity wanted the heavenly places to learn the mystery of salvation from the church. The church was eternally in the mind of God. Premillennialism's shame is the false teaching that Jesus came to set up the kingdom, failed, and as an afterthought, before he went back to heaven, he left the church.

THE CHURCH IN PROPHECY

Next, we see the church in prophecy in the Old Testament. Later we will show how the Bible teaches that the church and the kingdom are the same. For now, let us look at some prophesies which teach that the kingdom, or church, since Old Testament times, was coming. Notice Isaiah 2:1-4: "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that

the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nations shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Isa. 2:1-4). The fulfillment of this passage in the church is seen in Acts 2. Peter said the events on Pentecost were happening in the "last days" (Acts 2:16, 17). John said the Christian dispensation was the last "hour" (I John 2:18). Isaiah said the church would be founded in the top of the mountains. Jerusalem is in the top of the mountains (Acts 15:1). Isaiah said Jehovah's house would be established there. Notice I Timothy 3:14,15: "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Hebrews 3:6 confirms that the church is the house of God. But further, Isaiah said all nations would flow unto it. They did. On the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 we read from Luke these words: "Now there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under heaven" (Acts 2:5). Not only that, the great commission to take the gospel to save men was to include every creature (Mark 16:15, 16). No one is excluded. And they were not. Paul said, "If so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and stedfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard, which was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister" (Col. 1:23). Then Isaiah said the word would go forth out of Zion. It did. The first gospel sermon of the New Testament dispensation was preached in Jerusalem and went forth from Zion (Acts 1:8). Well, what about beating their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning-hooks? That is symbolism for the peace we obtain in Christianity. Did not the angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men in whom he is well pleased" (Luke 2:14). And Paul said of Christ, "For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of partition" (Eph. 2:14). So the church and its

establishment on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ was not only in the mind of God for all eternity, it was predicted in prophecy in the Old Testament. We need only compare Acts 2 with Isaiah 2 to see the points of prophecy and fulfillment match up.

But let's look at another. Daniel 2:44 says, "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." This precisely matches the kings of the Roman empire. The church or kingdom of God was established at that time and it is true that it will stand forever. It is called the eternal kingdom (2 Pet. 1:11).

Next, in prophecy, there is seen an amazing event. Remember after the resurrection of Christ, after he had been on the earth forty days, He ascended and disappeared in the clouds (Acts 1:10, 11). In a prophetic vision, about six hundred years earlier, Daniel saw what happened next. He says, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13,14). Jesus ascended into heaven and received the kingdom. Then we find out in Acts 2 that He sent it to earth by the power of the Holy Spirit on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But before we begin to follow its history further on from that time, let's notice another prophecy.

What a magnificent one it is, also. In a way, it is so subtle that it is awesome. Isaiah, about eight hundred years before Christ, says, "Who hath heard such a thing? who hath seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth at once? for as soon as Zion travailed, she brought forth her children" (Isa. 66:8). What could it be prophesying about? How can a nation be brought forth at once and a territory in one day? Think back to Pentecost for a moment. Jesus told the apostles to tarry at Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4,5). They do wait. Then on the day of Pentecost the Spirit falls on them and they speak in other languages

as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). There was also the sound of a rushing, mighty wind. People ran together to the sound. As the crowd gathers, the apostles speak in other languages. Some marvel and some mock. Peter addresses them. Let's hear the final words of this first gospel sermon of the Christian age, and let us see what happens. Peter finally says, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him. And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying save yourselves from this crooked generation. They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Acts 2:36-42).

Well, that was, as we said, the first gospel sermon of the Christian age. They did what you must do — obey the command to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins. Three thousand of them did just that. They were born again (John 3:3-5). They saved themselves from the fate of an evil generation. But what else happened that day? Probably you will know when you consider this next Scripture. Late in life Peter said this about Christians who obeyed the gospel and were baptized: "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (I Pet. 2:9). Christians are an elect race and a holy nation. Not only that, they were born on one day and came into existence at once. That day was the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus and the Spirit fell on that day. Again, on that day that elect race and royal priesthood and holy nation was born three thousand strong. Not only that, it also happened in Zion where Isaiah predicted it would happen.

THE CHURCH (2)

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH (2)

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CHURCH

In the last chapter we began a study of the church. We saw the problem, that the Bible spoke of one church while there are hundreds of distinct churches around us. So we began a study of that one church with the intention of identifying its features. We began to study the establishment of the church, and we saw it was in the mind of God from creation (Eph. 3:9-11). We saw it was in ancient prophecy called the kingdom or house of God (Isa. 2:1-4; Dan. 2:44; Dan. 7:13,14). We saw an amazing prophecy where it would be established in one day (Isa. 66:8; Acts 2:40,41; I Pet. 2:9). Now we want to go further.

THE KINGDOM COMES CLOSER

Notice Luke 1:31-33. The angel says to Mary about the birth of Jesus: "and behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

Then John the baptizer began to preach, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat 3:2). And we read, "From that time began Jesus to preach, and to say, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 4:17). See also Mark 1:15. In prayer Jesus said, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done" (Mat. 6:10). And constantly, in parables, Jesus spoke of the coming kingdom, in the parables of the sower, the tares, the leaven in the bread, the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price, and the fish caught in the net. See Matthew 13.

But listen to the words of Jesus to see if he thinks the kingdom comes close when he speaks way back in the first century. He said, "Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). It reads this way in Luke's gospel: "But I tell you of a truth; There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27). So from that we know the kingdom of God is at hand.

Jesus showed what kind of kingdom it would be. The Jews thought it would be an earthly, physical kingdom. It would, they supposed, be like the empire of Rome or Babylon, the chief and ruler of all other worldly powers, with a literal rule from Jerusalem. They could not have been more wrong. Listen for yourself. Listen to Jesus. The Scripture says, "And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh, he answered them and said, the kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20,21). Notice it is not external. It is internal. As a matter of fact, it took, and takes, a spiritual birth to get into it. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-5). So it is evident that the kingdom which came in the days of Jesus was no earthly, physical kingdom. You could not see or experience or enter into it without a new birth. And, again, Jesus expresses all this in a different way.

Before Pilate, Pilate asks Jesus if he is king of the Jews. Jesus answered, "my kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence. Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bare witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:36,37). Jesus is king, but it is not an earthly, physical kingdom. It is not of this world. Actually, it is

the reign of God over the hearts of man through the truth. That's why it is within. That's why it takes a spiritual birth to get into it.

THE KINGDOM HAS COME

In the form we have just read about, the kingdom has come. Let's notice a few Scriptures. Paul said, "who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love" (Col. 1:13). Paul says that Christians have been (past tense) translated into the kingdom. If so, in the first century, why do some still wait for the kingdom today?

Notice Paul again. He says to the Thessalonians, "to the end that you should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory" (I The. 2:12). There in the first century, God was calling men into his kingdom. It was happening at that moment and so Paul used the present tense. How do some say the kingdom has not yet come? They were entering into it nineteen hundred years earlier than today, if we take the word of Paul and the clear teaching of Scripture.

But let's notice John. In the book of Revelation he says, "I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1:9). John, in the first century, among other things, had this in common with all Christians: together they partook of the kingdom. He was a partaker with them in the kingdom. But let us notice one more. Paul said to the Romans, "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). At that very moment the kingdom of God existed, and it was composed of righteousness, peace, and joy.

So the kingdom which was prophesied about by Isaiah, Daniel, Jesus and John the baptizer did come. It was the reign of God over the hearts of men through the truth, and it was in place during the first century while the Bible was being written. But when exactly did it come? Can we see it in Scripture as it comes? The answer is yes. Let's notice a sequence of passages.

Remember Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they

see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). A little later, after His resurrection, Jesus said to the apostles, "But ye shall receive power when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). So He told them to wait at Jerusalem until they got the baptism of the Holy Spirit. When they got that baptism they would get power. And remember, the kingdom was to come with power (Mark 9:1). So notice, the Scripture clearly says what happened next. It says, "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

Now notice, while some whom Jesus spoke to were still alive, the kingdom was to come with power. Two, Jesus told the apostles to tarry at Jerusalem until they received power when they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Three, they do, and on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ they receive power when they are baptized in the Holy Spirit. In that way the words of Jesus were fulfilled and the kingdom of God came with power. From that point on, unless heaven or the eternal kingdom is spoken of (2 Peter 1:11), the kingdom is spoken of as existing (Col. 1:13; I The. 2:12; Rev. 1:9; Rom. 14:17).

But more, we learn that this kingdom is the church which was in the mind of God from all eternity.

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

Notice Paul writes to the Hebrew Christians these words: "but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven..." (Heb. 12:22,23). So, he says we have come unto the church. Then a few moments later he writes, "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28,29).

So there you have it as clear as it can be made. When you have come unto the church you have received the kingdom. They are two names for the same institution. That's why Jesus could use them interchangeably in Matthew 16:18,19. He said, "and I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mat. 16:18,19). The church is built on the rock, the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and Peter has the keys to it, the kingdom. And we wonder, if the kingdom was not to come in Peter's days, why was he given the keys to something that didn't exist in his lifetime?

So we have seen the kingdom existed in the mind of God (Eph. 3:9-11). We saw it in prophecy (Isa. 2:1-4; Dan. 2:44; Dan. 7:13,14). We saw it close at hand (Mat. 3:2; Mat. 4:14). We noticed that it was a spiritual kingdom (Luke 17:20,21; John 18:36, 37; John 3:3-5). We saw that in the first century it was spoken of as existing (Col. 1:13; I The. 2:12; Rev. 1:9; Rom. 14:17; Heb. 12:28). We saw it come (Acts 1:4-8; Mark 9:1; Acts 2:1-4). Finally, we saw that it was the church (Heb. 12:23, 24, 28; Mat. 16:18,19).

THE CHURCH (3)

IDENTIFYING MARKS OF THE CHURCH

First, let us say a few words about the human body. What a marvelous thing it is. It is almost unbelievable. The skin has around 2,000 sweat glands. It is the most ingenious air conditioning system known to man. Too, the skin acts as a barrier to germs, and it can even regenerate itself. The body also has 206 bones. They are more durable and longer lasting than steel. They regenerate themselves and produce blood. Each joint lubricates itself, and the bones are connected to 600 muscles. Then there are the ears. A piano has 88 key tones. The ear can hear over 2,500. They can detect sound which flutters the eardrums one-billionth of a centimeter. There are 100,000 hearing receptors. We should mention the human eye. It has 107 million cells. There are 7 million cones whereby we see in color. There are 100 million rods whereby we see in blacks, whites, and grays. They are connected to the brain by 300,000 nerves. They detect light as feeble as 1/1000 trillionth of a watt. And left unsaid is all we could say about the brain.

I have said all that to emphasize that as grand as the human body is, one thing even more wonderful in many ways is that grand body of Christ called the Church.

The church we read about in the Bible is called the body of Christ. Paul said of Jesus, "And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph.1:22,23). Colossians 1:18 says, "And he is the head of the body, the church." We notice with appreciation that Christ is the head of the church. Therefore that church should be subject to him in everything. We

cannot make up our own doctrine, precepts, or traditions. Jesus said, "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, "This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). He added about human teaching, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:13). No, Christ is our head. He is our teacher. We cannot go beyond Him. He said, "whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11).

Now, the Bible teaches that Christians are individually members of that body. I Corinthians 12:20 says, "But now they are many members, but one body." Each joint makes the body strong. Paul said, "from whom all the body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). The body of Christ was never organized by Christ to operate universally. It was organized into local bodies or congregations, though they could cooperate. That local congregation of members had obligations as we read of them in the Bible. They were to obey their elders who were in charge of each congregation. The Holy Spirit said: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you" (Heb. 13:17). That church was to exercise discipline over wayward members. Paul said, "Now we command you brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). That Church was to warn themselves of false teachers. Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17). To Timothy he wrote, "and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus" (2 Tim. 2:17).

So now we will begin to let the Bible describe that church or body under this title: "Identifying marks of the church."

NO CREED BUT CHRIST

The word creed comes from creedo which means "I believe." I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. That is my creed. Notice Jesus asked the apostles who He was. Simon Peter said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art, thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 16:16,17). The apostle John wrote, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). Peter said, "And in none other [name] is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Only Jesus is approved of God (Acts 8:22). He is called to be the Son of God (Heb. 1:5). The Christian religion, therefore, to be right with God, had to in a religious way be exclusive and right. The creed I accept therefore, is the belief found in the Bible that Jesus is the Christ. In God's religion we accept only God's creed. Manmade creeds are for man-made churches.

NO RULE OF FAITH BUT THE BIBLE

In the Christian religion there is no rule of faith but the Bible. God did not turn mankind loose on earth to invent or negotiate the items of faith and doctrine of Christ's religion. Rather, those items of faith were delivered in total to mankind to accept. Jude therefore said, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). The Bible is God's word (I Cor. 14:37; I The. 2:13). Regarding traditions of men and man-made doctrines, Jesus said, "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). And He added, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Mat 15:13). Why? Why does

God tell us to choose His word over man's? Is God's Word sufficient? The Holy Spirit said, "All scripture is God-breathed, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). We don't need anything other than God's Word. It gives us birth as God's son (Jas. 1:18; I Pet. 1:22-25). It gives salvation (Jas. 1:21; Rom. 1:16; I Cor. 15:1, 2). It sanctifies (John 17:17). It edifies (Acts 20:32). And we learn when we start listening unto men who go beyond what is written in the Bible we lose God. The apostle John said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil words" (2 John 9-11). So, so far we have seen, when it comes to identifying marks of the church we read about in the Bible, there is no creed but Christ and no rule of faith but the Bible.

THE CHURCH (4)

IDENTIFYING MARKS OF THE CHURCH (2)

We have seen the establishment of the church as it was recorded in the Bible in Acts chapter 2. We have seen that it is sometimes called the kingdom and that it is a spiritual kingdom, the reign of God over the hearts of men through the truth. We have begun looking at identifying marks of the kingdom or church. First, we saw that it had no creed but Christ (John 20:30,31; Acts 2:22; Mat. 16:17, 18). Next we saw that it had no rule of faith but the Bible (Mat. 15:7-9; Mat. 15:13; Jas. 1:21; John 17:17; Acts 20:32). We shall go on and look at other identifying marks of the New Testament church.

NO FOUNDER BUT JESUS CHRIST

Let us notice what the Bible says about this. We read, "Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Phillippi, he asked his disciples, saying, who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:13-18). Now, it is not my desire to be offensive, but I do want to be clear and make my point. The church's founder is Jesus Christ, not Jerry Moffitt. Nor was the church founded

by Alexander Campbell of the Churches of Christ, nor John Smith of the Baptists, or John Wesley of the Methodists, or Martin Luther or Joseph Smith. As fine as all these gentlemen may be, the church was founded by Jesus Christ and no one else. That is an identifying mark of the true church which we read about in the Bible. But let's look at other identifying marks.

FOUNDED AT JERUSALEM

The church we read about in the Bible was founded at Jerusalem, and that even according to prophesy. Notice again Isaiah 2:1-4: "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem. And he will judge between the nations, and will decide concerning many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isa 2:1-4). We notice a house of God is to be built. However, remember Paul said through the Holy Spirit, "but If I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). So the house of God was to be founded at Jerusalem (Isa. 2:1-4), and that house is the church (I Tim. 3:15). So the church was founded at Jerusalem. Along this line remember Jesus said the kingdom would come with power (Mark9:1). Jesus told the apostles to tarry at Jerusalem (Acts 1:4), and that they would receive power (Acts 1:8). They did receive the Spirit and power (Acts 2:1-4). All that happened in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ. So the church was founded at Jerusalem, not Rome, not Salt Lake City, nowhere in Europe, Britain, or America.

IT HAD GOD-GIVEN NAMES

It was not called the church of Tarot and holy Quabala. It was not called the Church of Jesus Christ of the United States of America. It was called The church, Acts 8:1; The church of God (I Cor. 1:2); The

body of Christ (Eph. 4:4); The church of the living God (I Tim. 3:15); The church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23); The churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16). It never was called by such current denominational names such as you see on the religious page of the newspaper. These Protestant denominational names came fifteen hundred years later and were not given by the Holy Spirit. They are adding to God's word and they are wrong.

IT HAD A GOD-GIVEN ORGANIZATION

The church we read about in the Bible had no central organization here on earth. Universally Christ in heaven is the head of the church. But as we see the church in the Bible, it is composed of a group of autonomous or self-governing churches. They were only connected by their common belief of truth. There is no central organization found anywhere in the Bible. There was no presidency, no synod, no governing board, no Pope, no legislative board or convention. Each local congregation governed itself. Locally each congregation had elders, deacons, evangelists, teachers, and members. The qualifications of elders, or as they are sometimes called, bishops, are found in I Timothy 3 and Titus chapter one. That they are to rule the flock is found in Hebrews 13:17. The word deacon means "servant." They are to serve under the oversight of the elders or bishops. Philippians 1:1 gives the offices of the local church: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Philip. 1:1).

THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE WAS UNDENOMINATIONAL

To denominate means to divide, like you divide money into different denominations. But in the Bible, such division is condemned. The night he was betrayed Jesus prayed, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:20,21). Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgement" (I Cor. 1:10).

There is only one body (Eph. 4:4), and that body is the church (Eph. 1:22,23), and that body of Christ should not be divided. We are not only undenominational; we are anti-denominational. Division and denominationalism is condemned in the Bible.

SINGING, BUT NO INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

The church we read about in the Bible had singing, but one can never find that it engaged in instrumental music. We are told that we should not add to God's word (Deut. 4:2; Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18, 19). What does God's word say? Paul said we should be, "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). If God had said make music, then instrumental music would be all right. But God specified what type of music—singing. To go beyond that is an addition. Again Paul said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16).

THE CHURCH (5)

IDENTIFYING MARKS OF THE CHURCH (3)

We have been looking at identifying marks of the church. We have seen it had no creed except that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30,31). It had no rule of faith but the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16,17). It was founded by Christ (Mat. 16:13-19). It was founded at Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4), and had Spirit-given names (Rom. 16:16). We saw that it had a God-given organization where each congregation was autonomous or self-governing, each congregation ruled solely by elders and served by deacons (Philip. 1:1). It was strictly undenominational (Eph. 4:4), and it had singing but not instrumental music (Eph. 5:19). Let's proceed onward, looking at more identifying marks of the New Testament church.

IT BELIEVED IN OBEDIENCE

The church we read about in the New Testament did not believe in "grace only" or "faith only" to the exclusion of acts of obedience on the part of the believer in order to be saved. Obedience was necessary to salvation. Paul said of Christ, "though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8,9). Jesus, according to Paul, is the author of salvation to them that obey Him. And Peter showed that obedience was required. He said, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one

another from the heart fervently" (I Pet. 1:22). And again, Paul said, "But thanks be to God, that whereas ye were servants of sin, ye became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching whereunto ye were delivered; and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17,18). Everywhere we look in scripture, we find man has to be active in obedience to God and Christ in order to receive eternal life, righteousness, or like blessing. Jesus said, did He not, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21). Yes, the church we read about in the Bible believed obedience was necessary to salvation.

THE PLAN OF SALVATION

The church we read about in the Bible taught there were five things required before one could have the grace of God and remission of sins. There are five conditions, we might say, before one could have the grace of God. First, one had to hear the gospel. Paul said, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed And how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14).

Next, before one could be saved from his sins, he must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). Christianity is narrow and exclusive when it comes to Jesus. Peter said, "And in none other is there salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

But faith in Christ is not enough. The Bible also says one must repent. When the Jewish Christians heard that the Gentiles were converted we read, "And when they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life" (Acts 11:18). Paul said this when he preached to the Athenians, "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30). So Peter could preach, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so

there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

But even repentance was not enough. The New Testament church believed that one must confess his faith in Christ before he could be saved. Jesus started this requirement when He said, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 10:32). And Paul said, "Because if thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved: for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9,10).

And yet we have seen that confession of Christ is not enough. After one believes, repents, and confesses the New Testament reveals that he must be baptized in water for the purpose of obtaining remission of sins before he is saved from his sins. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). Again Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). And so Peter, by the Holy Spirit, preached, "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). One, in the New Testament, was not saved from his sins at the point of faith alone. Paul believed on the Lord on the Damascus road. But still he was not saved from his sins. Three days later Ananias said to him, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

So to be saved, one has to hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. That's the way the early church believed, and to teach and practice those things is an identifying mark of the church.

NO ETERNAL SECURITY

The New Testament church we read about in the Bible believed one had to be steadfast or he could lose his salvation. Once he was saved, he was not always saved. No gross, evil, wicked son of God who turned from light to darkness could be saved and go to heaven. Notice the warning of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews 3:12-14: "Take heed,

brethren, less haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end" (Heb. 3:12-14). It is clear one can fall from the living God. Too, Paul says you are partakers of Christ if you hold fast. It is conditional.

Notice what Paul said in I Corinthians 9:24-27: "Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain. And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (I Cor. 9:23-27).

Notice Paul did not state that he would lose his rewards in heaven. He said, "I myself should be rejected."

The church we read about in the Bible had no creed but Christ, no rule of faith but the Bible. It was founded by Christ, at Jerusalem, and the Holy Spirit gave it names to which we should not add. Each congregation was autonomous or self-governing and had a local organization of elders and deacons.

The church we read of in the Bible was undenominational, and they practiced singing and not instrumental music. They believed in obedience and a plan of salvation: Hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. Finally they believed you had to be steadfast or you could lose your salvation.

THE CHURCH (6)

IDENTIFYING MARKS (4)

WHAT WAS THE EARLY CHURCH LIKE?

Let us open our Bibles and inspect that New Testament Church even more. What was it like? And if we restore it in our day, what will we be like?

NO INFANT BAPTISM

As strange as it may seem, the church we read about in the Bible never baptized infants. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Matthew 28:19 says, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." A little baby cannot be a disciple. The word disciple means "pupil" or "learner." When you turn the pages of the New Testament you never find one example of an infant being baptized.

Sometimes one will try to prove infant baptism from the case of a household baptism such as the Philippian jailor as recorded in Acts 16. The text says he was "baptized, he and all his, immediately" (Acts 16:33). "Surely," they say, "there were infants in the house." But the next verse says, "[he] rejoiced greatly, with all his house, having

believed in God" (Acts 16:34). Those in the house who were baptized were old enough to rejoice and believe.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS WERE TO CEASE

The church we read about in the Bible practiced miraculous spiritual gifts, but they taught that those gifts were to cease when the word of God was put in scripture form. In further chapters we will go into depth on this, but let's take a brief look at what the Bible says. First we notice that miraculous spiritual gifts came through the laying on of the hands of the apostles. Philip the evangelist converted many in Samaria. But he could not give them miraculous spiritual gifts, so he sent for apostles from Jerusalem. Peter and John came down and laid hands on the Samaritans and they received the Holy Spirit. Luke, the inspired writer of Acts, records a truth: "Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money" (Acts 8:18). Simon the Sorcerer saw that spiritual gifts came by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, and he tried to buy the power to do the same. The apostles rebuked him, but still Luke recorded a great truth. These miraculous spiritual gifts came through the laying on of the hands of an apostle. Now to be an apostle, one had at least to be a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:22). There are none who meet that qualification today, so there are no apostles today. If there are no apostles today, there is no laying on of the hands of apostles today. If there is no laying on of the hands of the apostles today, there are no miraculous spiritual gifts today. Too, in further chapters we will show that every purpose of miraculous spiritual gifts is now completely served by the Bible. Remember "all scripture is God-breathed, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). So, if we have Scripture, we are made "complete," and we are not dependent on miraculous spiritual gifts. So John the apostle says that once they were written down the miracles of Jesus would produce faith even though they were not witnessed. He said, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). So they are

written for the same reason they were wrought. We have the Bible; we no longer need miraculous spiritual gifts. God today also answers prayer and helps us by working through natural law in a way that demands faith, not sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

SCRIPTURAL ACTS OF WORSHIP

The church we read about in the Bible not only avoided instrumental music, it had no lighting of lamps, no burning of incense, no ringing of bells, no sign of the cross, no bowing down to images, no giving of grand religious titles, no mass, no dancing, and no reciting of human creeds. The acts of Christian worship are all listed in the word of God. There are five of them.

One, on the first day of each week the early church assembled to keep the Lord's supper. In remembrance of Christ they ate the bread and drank the fruit of the vine which represented Christ's body and blood (Acts 20:7; I Cor. 11:20- 34). It was not the actual body of Christ or His blood; it symbolized His body and blood.

Two, the early church had singing. Paul said, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16). We find the same in Ephesians 5:19. Never was instrumental music used and never do we see instrumental music used in worship in the New Testament.

Three, the early church had prayers (Acts 4:24). We read, "pray without ceasing" (I Thess. 5:17). So the word of God specifically authorizes prayer.

Four, they gave back of their means to God. Paul said, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I gave order to the churches of Galatia, so also do ye. Upon the first day of the week let each one of you lay by him in store, as he may prosper, that no collections be made when I come (I Cor. 16:1,2).

Five, they had preaching (Rom. 1:15). We read, "and upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them" (Acts 20:7). So they had preaching.

Now think for a moment. If God had just commanded worship, but He had not stated how, we could worship just any way we choose. But He specified how to worship Him, and we must not go beyond His word (Deu. 4:2; 12:32; Gal. 1:6-11; 2 John 9-11). To specify is to exclude. When Jesus cried "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11), He specified Lazarus and all the rest of the dead were excluded. They stayed down. When God specified what kind of worship He wanted, it excluded all other types. To specify is to exclude. We will have more on this when we discuss instrumental music.

LAW OF PARDON FOR SAINTS

Finally, we might mention that the early church had a law of pardon for Christians when they sinned. The lost, alien sinner had to believe, repent, confess, and be baptized. But once a Christian, what must you do when you sin? Peter said to Simon the Sorcerer, "Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:22). The Christian must repent or change his mind regarding that sin. Then John said, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (I John 1:9). We must confess our sins unto God.

IDENTIFYING MARKS OF THE CHURCH

Let's review what we have seen in our Bibles concerning the New Testament church. We have noticed several things as follows:

1. That church of the Bible had no creed except that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:30, 31).
2. It had no rule of faith but the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16,17).
3. It was founded by Christ (Mat. 16:13-19).
4. It was founded at Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-4; Acts 2:1-4).
5. It had Spirit-given names which are recorded in scripture (Rom. 16:16), and never was called by the denominational names we know today.

6. It had a God-given organization where each congregation was self-governing under the rule of elders who used deacons as servants (I Tim. 3; Tit 1; Phil. 1:1).

7. The church we read about in the Bible was undenominational (Eph. 4:4), even anti-denominational (I Cor. 1:10).

8. It had singing, but not instrumental music (Eph. 5:19).

9. It believed obedience was necessary to salvation (Heb. 5:8,9).

10. It followed a plan of salvation regarding how one could receive the grace of God and the remission of sins: belief (John 8:24), repentance (Acts 3:19), confession of Christ (Mat. 10:32), and water baptism (Acts 2:38).

11. The church we read about in the Bible never taught or believed "eternal security" or "once saved always saved" (Heb. 3:12-14; I Cor. 9:23-27).

12. The church never baptized infants (Mark 16:16; Mat. 28:19).

13. Spiritual gifts ceased when the word of God was put in Scripture form (Acts 8:18; 2 Tim. 3:16,17).

14. The church we read about in the Bible practiced five acts of worship: assembled on the first day of the week to keep the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7,1 Cor. 11:20-34), it had singing (Col. 3:16, Eph. 5:19), it had prayers (Acts 4:24), gave back of their means to God (I Cor. 16:1,2), and they had preaching (Rom. 1:15, Acts 20:7).

15. The early church had a law of pardon for Christians when they sinned (Acts 8:22,1 John 1:9).

IF I'M NOT A MEMBER OF THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST WILL I GO TO HELL?

There is a question occasionally asked which deserves an honest reply. It is, "If I'm not a member of the churches of Christ will I go to hell?"

I want you to know that I'm aware of the seriousness of such a question and that none of us cherish bigotry, narrowmindedness, or false pride. Please believe that I don't want to lose your respect, your attention, or even your friendship. But I am going to answer this question as frankly as I can, and I suspect that you may agree with what I say much more than some might anticipate.

Well, let's begin to answer the question. If I'm not a member of the churches of Christ will I go to hell? Surprisingly the answer is no, if you mean by churches of Christ just another man-made fellowship.

There were some men in this country last century who did not want to reform any churches amidst the confusion of churches around about. They knew such division was wrong, but they had the idea of restoration rather than reformation. They didn't want to create a new church; they wanted to restore the original church which we read about in the Bible, by restoring the same doctrines, the same organization, the same biblical terminology. From the "Parable of the Sower" they noticed that the seed of the kingdom of God was the word of God. Since the book of Genesis says that seed produces after its kind, they reasoned that if one planted New Testament seed of the first century in some other century it would still produce the same fruit. One could take the seed of the kingdom of God and preach it only, in Afghanistan, Scotland, Germany, or America, and it would produce nothing but the kingdom or church one reads about in the Bible.

The word of God is that seed, and it is enough. Peter said, "if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11). Paul said, "all scripture is God breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). If scripture will make one complete and furnish one completely unto every good work, we ought to need nothing else in order to restore, in our generation, the church we read about in the Bible.

Some one might say, "Well, can't we go on beyond scripture and can we not use the old traditions of men?" No, we cannot. Jesus said, "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, this people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). And the apostle John said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11).

So if by churches of Christ you mean some man-made fellowship based on traditions of men which go beyond the doctrine of Christ, no

you will not go to hell if you are not a member of the church. But let me ask the question again.

"If I'm not a member of the churches of Christ will I go to hell?" Again, the answer is no if you mean by churches of Christ some kind of sect or denomination. If the churches of Christ were a sect among sects you would not be lost if you were not of that sect. But the church we read about in the Bible was not a sect. To be a sect you section something off. To be a denomination you divide something off from the whole. God never said anything about doing that, and he said a good deal against it. Paul said, "Now I beseech you brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). He said, "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized into the name of Paul?" (I Cor. 1:13). The answer was no to all that. Can we honestly say, "Go to the church of your choice, when the Lord only built one church (Mat. 16:18)? Ephesians 4:4 says there is one body and Paul says in Ephesians 1:22, 23 that that body is the church. So there is one body or one church. There are many faiths today but Paul said, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism" (Eph. 4:4, 5). These various faiths all contradict each other, even damn each other, and we hear people say, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere." Now we wouldn't say such a thing in law, in medicine, in cooking. Why would it be true in religion? Or is it in religion that our knowledge is weak and our convictions even weaker? No, the Lord built one church and gave it one faith and its pattern is clearly seen in the New Testament. So if by churches of Christ you mean a sect or denomination among many, all of which hold different faiths which contradict each other and the Bible, no, you will not go to hell if you are not a member of that church.

But let us ask the question again. "If I'm not a member of the churches of Christ will I go to hell?" The answer is YES, if you mean as we do that church you read about in the Bible, which church was purchased by the blood of Christ. Paul said to the elders at Ephesus, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops to feed the Church of the Lord which he

purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). If one does not belong to that one church which is purchased by the blood of Christ he will be lost eternally. Again, that church is created and maintained by the pure word of God. It has no traditions of men, no doctrines not contained in Scripture. The seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Luke 8:11). The early church continued in the doctrine of the apostles (Acts 2:42), and we must also if we will be members of that one body or church which we read about in the Bible.

I read that when King Tut's Egyptian tomb was opened they found some wheat seed in a vessel and that seed was almost 1900 years old. They planted it and guess what! It produced wheat. I read that some lotus seed was found in a tomb in China, which seed was over 2,000 years old. It was planted, and it produced the lotus plant. I used to have a sermon I would preach along this line. I would take a couple of boxes up in the pulpit with me. One was marked" apple seed," the other marked "good dirt" I would say I was planting apple seed, that the time passed for it to produce fruit. I would ask, "what kind of fruit would it produce?" All the children would cry out "apples." I would then pull out an apple to confirm it I would say if I waited one hundred years for the fruit to produce, what would it produce? They would cry apples, and each time I would reach in and pull an apple out of the box. Then I stated we waited over 1900 years. What kind of fruit would those apple seeds produce? They cried out "apples," but to their dismay, I took out oranges, potatoes, turnips, and such. They shook their heads in confusion, for even little children know that seed always produces after its kind.

If the seed of the kingdom or church is the word of God, that seed should produce that one church we read about in the Bible. Its doctrine, organization, speech or nomenclature ought to every bit be found in the Bible. Instead, round about us today, we find all kinds of sects, churches, and denominations. They have varied doctrines, different organizations, and they all even talk differently.

Please trust that we don't want to sound haughty or proud. But we believe you can find that one church or restore that one church today. With humility, but with strength and determination, the churches of Christ in your community are trying to simply be that church we read about in the Bible. We want to speak where the Bible

speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. We try to call Bible things by Bible names. We have found that the restoration of the church we read about in the Bible is possible, but it takes a great deal of Bible study. So we emphasize the Bible. We struggle to have pure New Testament Christianity, without addition, without subtraction. Will you investigate all this with us? We encourage you to love truth, to study hard, to search the scriptures whether these things are so (Acts 17:11).

DENOMINATIONAL SLOGANS

FIVE STATEMENTS USED TO

SUPPORT DENOMINATIONALISM

In the churches of Christ we are making a sincere effort to be just the church Christ built We want to be such in doctrine, in organization, in faith, love, and purity. The seed of the kingdom is the Word of God (Luke 8:11). So we turn to it and to it alone for guidance in all things that pertain to the Church of Christ. That, we believe, is right and the way God would have us function. However, it is regrettable that at that point we cross swords with much of the religious world. They feel condemned when it is advertised that we strictly refuse to do traditions

of men when they do so. And when we religiously do Biblical things which they neglect, they feel censored. We are sorry, but we feel we must be utterly true to God, to Christ, the Holy Spirit and His Word. We have said before that the Bible, strictly followed, teaches us to not only be undenominational, but also anti-denominational. When it comes to denominationalism, the Bible teaches us, like Jeremiah of old, to "pluck up and to break down, to destroy, and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10). So today we will investigate various slogans which nourish denominationalism.

First we hear, "Isn't it good that there are so many churches so people with different tastes can pick the church of their choice." Here church selection is on a par with picking political candidates, or on a par with some liking chocolate and some liking vanilla. But the Bible teaches that Jesus only built one church. He said, as recorded in Matthew 16:18, "and I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Mat. 16:18). So one church was built. Denominationalism came into existence fifteen-hundred years later. Ephesians 4:4 says there is one body and Ephesians 1:22,23 says that one body is the church. In Christianity as Christ gave it there was one church and there were no provisions for any human denominations. Too, we are not to go beyond God's word or we will lose God (2 John 9-11). Some will say, "Oh, you are saying your church is better than others!" No, what we are saying is I don't have a church. The Lord's church is right and all human churches are wrong. It is not a matter of taste which confronts us, but a matter of division. To have a denomination you must denominate or divide. But on the night Jesus was betrayed He prayed, "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:21). Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there by no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10). So if Christ only built one church, and the blueprint to be that church is found in Scripture, how can we say "Go to the church of your choice"? No, denominationalism is condemned by Jesus and we cannot tolerate what He condemned. We

cannot concede what Christ restricted. We cannot allow that which adds to God's word.

Another widely used statement is, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere!" Jesus said to the Sadducees, "Is it not for this cause that ye err, that ye know not the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Mark 12:24). But some say, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere." Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17). Yet some say, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere." The apostle John said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house and give him no greeting" (2 John 9-11). Still, some say, "It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you're sincere." Friends, the Bible says it does matter, in the words of Jesus, Paul, John, and everywhere else. The problem is, religious convictions of some are so weak that anything goes. It is a careless attitude which makes the religious world contradict Christ.

Yet, thirdly, we often hear people take refuge in this statement: "So many brilliant people cannot be wrong." Yet the truth of God is a great equalizer. Truth from God is designed very much to penetrate a good and honest heart, but not necessarily a keen intellect Jesus said of the Word of God and the human heart, "And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). When it comes to intellect and truth, notice these words of Jesus: "In the same hour he rejoiced in the Holy Spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father; for so it was well pleasing in thy sight" (Luke 10:21). No matter what a person's intellectual endowments and educational attainments are, which serve him well in other areas and which ought to be honored, as far as truth goes, he will only be as right as his heart allows him to be.

Fourthly, to support denominationalism, some appeal to John 15:5. It reads, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” They teach Jesus is the vine and the various denominations are the branches. All one needs to do to see that such an interpretation is wrong is read all of verse 5 and also verse 6. Jesus said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. 6 If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned” (John 15:5,6). In context, denominations are not the branches. Christians are the branches. They must abide in Him or they are cast forth, withered, and burned. This not only teaches “once saved always saved” is a false doctrine, it teaches one must remain in the teachings of Christ or be cast away, for abiding in His teachings is how one abides in Christ (John 15:1-6; 2 John 9- 11).

Finally, we hear another effort which is used to support denominationalism. It says, “The Bible does not only speak of a church; it speaks of churches!” Yes, it speaks of churches. Notice 2 Corinthians 11:28: “Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches” (2 Cor. 11:28). The word churches in this and every other context, is talking of congregations or local churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16) and not denominations. Denominations did not come into existence until the fifteen hundreds along with the Protestant Reformation. The word for church in the original is ecclesia. It means “called out people.” It is translated “church” in Matthew 16:18, and “assembly” in Acts 19:32. All the redeemed on earth compose the church which Christ built. All the redeemed in a city or area of the city which meet together on the Lord’s day to break bread are the Church of the Lord in that city or area of that city. They are the called out people, the assembly, the congregation of Christ in that area. They are not denominations but congregations of Christ. So we read where Paul says, “And all the brethren that are with me, unto the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2). And again he writes to the church at Rome “Salute one another with a holy kiss. All the Churches of Christ salute you” (Romans 16:16). The redeemed in a given area are the Church of Christ in that area.

Well, we have reviewed five statements used to support denominationalism. They are all unscriptural.

We will close by saying that there are many things which are of such little concern, that we are easy to please, and we feel an unconcerned acceptance. But with a knowledge of heaven and hell, judgment and eternal punishment, we become wary. With Jesus' warnings about false teachers, such as Matthew 7:15 and 16, we are put on guard. When there is heaven and hell, truth and error, we feel we must settle for nothing short of truth so that we may go to heaven. God's love moves us to not only desire truth on the plan of God to save our souls, we are also moved to thirst for truth regarding the church. We learn to hunger and thirst for truth on every doctrine. Jesus urged, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:13).

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT

DENOMINATIONAL CHURCHES

THOU SHALT NOT ADD THERE TO

In Deuteronomy 4:2 we read, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish aught from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you." Essentially the same teaching is found in Deuteronomy 12:32; Proverbs 30:6; Galatians 1:6-10; Revelation 22:19 and many other New Testament passages. To add to the precepts of God is just as rebellious as to diminish aught from them. Both actions are sinful and dangerous.

The history of false teaching is really a history of adding to the commandments and precepts of God. Additions appear small and insignificant at first. They are few in number and mild in the changes they make. When people get used to them others are allowed to creep in. Soon a vibrant colony of destructive organisms take over the body and convert it to their own use. The only way to be immune is to cleanse religion of all that which is human in origin. We want a faith which is pure, undefiled and uncontaminated by even one human innovation, whether it is the name of the church, the organization, the doctrines or the morals which it teaches. In short, we must not add to or diminish aught from that which God has spoken in the Bible.

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS

ABOUT THE LORD'S CHURCH

1. It was in God's mind for ages before it was established (Eph. 3:9). No denomination can make that claim.

2. It was established in A.D. 33 at Jerusalem according to prophecy (Acts 2; Isaiah 2:1-4). There was no denomination founded in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost after the death of Christ.

3. The founder of the church was Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18). No human being built the church of the Lord.

4. Jesus Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 1:11; Col. 1:18). The Lord's church has no pope, no president, no ruling board or council or convention or any other man-made rule.

5. The church of God is organized congregationally (I Cor. 1:2; I Cor. 16:19; Philemon 2; Rom. 16:16). The churches of Christ

never received a universal organization but were to function as local congregations.

6. The internal organization of the local church is found in I Timothy, chapter 3 and Titus, chapter 1. It consists of elders and deacons. The church has no pope, no arch-bishop, no orders or private clubs.

7. The elders (also called bishops) have the oversight of the local congregation (I Pet 5:1-3; Acts 10:28).

8. Members of the church were called brethren, Christians, disciples, and saints (2 Pet. 3:15; I Pet. 4:16; Acts 11:26; Eph. 1:1). They never were called Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Catholics, Pentecostals, Presbyterians, or Jehovah's Witnesses.

9. The various names of the church are church of God, churches of Christ, body of Christ, house of God, etc. (I Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16; Eph. 1:22, 23; I Tim. 3:14, 15). Denominational names are mere human additions.

10. The church was governed only by the New Testament (Heb. 9:16-17; Heb. 10:9; Col. 2:13-14; Acts 2:42). The church Christ built had no Methodist discipline, no Baptist manual, no articles of faith, no creed, no by-laws or any other guide other than the word of God (I Pet. 4:11).

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT

THE DENOMINATIONAL CHURCHES

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CALVINISM (1)

TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY

AND UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

It is everyone's sincere aim to hold only to doctrines which came from Christ and His apostles. But every once in a while a system of doctrine is put forth which we sincerely believe we must oppose. In reacting to the work salvation of the Roman Catholic Church, a movement arose called the Protestant Reformation. John Calvin systematized their doctrines and there came into existence what the religious world called Calvinism. It is generally set forth under the word "Tulip." The "T" in Tulip stands for 'Total Hereditary Depravity." The "U" represents "Unconditional Election." The "L" in "Tulip" conveys the notion of "Limited Atonement," while the'T stands for "Irresistible Grace." Finally the "P" represents "Perseverance of the Saints." Today we are going to begin to look at the "Five Points of Calvinism."

T - TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY

First, there is the "T" which stands for "Total Hereditary Depravity." It teaches that a baby is born a sinner, lost and so depraved that as it grows it can never do one good thing in any way to effect its salvation. A passage used is Psalm 51:5: "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psa. 51:5). From that verse it is taught that the little child is born full of sin, because it says he was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did his mother conceive him. Well, let's fill that language with other terms to see if it really teaches that. We can have, "Behold I was shaped in a potato patch, and in a field of spuds did my mother conceive me." Does that say he was born full of potatoes? Of course not! No, David in Psalm 51:5 is merely saying he was born into a sinful world by parents, like all mankind, who are sinful.

Another passage used to teach "Total Hereditary Depravity" is Psalm 5-8:3: "The wicked are estranged from the womb: They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" (Psa. 58:3). But first we notice they "go astray." They are not "born astray." It says it happens as soon as they are born. How soon is "soon"? Verse six says "break their teeth." Verse three says they speak lies. Do just-born infants speak? Do they have teeth? The verse is using, obviously, the figure

of speech called “hyperbole” or exaggerated language. All it is saying is that man is so sinful that even at a very early age he goes astray so that it is true that “all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23).

Another argument is to say that alien sinners are found dead in their sins, Ephesians 2:1, and the dead can do nothing to save themselves. We reply, see Psalm 119:93: “I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me” (Psa. 119:93). “Quicken” means “to make alive.” The word of God does that. See also Psalm 119:50. So Paul could say: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). When we read the Bible, we do not find that people are born depraved; they turn and become depraved. As Paul said, “They have all turned aside, they are together become unprofitable” (Rom. 3:12). Or as Ezekiel put it regarding the king of Tyre: ‘Thou was perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee” (Eze. 28:15). Or it is as Solomon put it, “Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecc. 7:29). And did not Jesus say of babes, “Suffer the little children to come unto me; forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). Let’s go to another point of Calvinism.

U - UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

Notice Romans 9:15,16: “For he sayeth to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that hath mercy” (Rom. 9:15,26). So the Calvinist would say, “See, God elects whom he will; it is not left up to man.” But we would ask, “On whom does God choose to have mercy?” Notice Titus 3:4,5: “But when the kindness of God our Saviour, and his love toward man appeared, not by works done in righteousness, which we did ourselves, but according to his mercy he saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (Tit. 3:4,5). God chooses those and has mercy on those who accept regeneration. He chooses to save, as a class, all who have an honest and a good heart Jesus showed what a good and productive heart

would consist of, in the parable of the sower. He said, "and that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). Jesus never left the idea that anyone would be chosen by God to salvation against their will. Rather, he left the idea that anyone could be saved if they desired it enough. He said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Mat. 7:7,8).

Sometimes Calvinists will use the statement of Luke as is recorded in Acts 13:48. He says, "And as the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of God: and as many as were **ordained** to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). From this they perceive that some are ordained or appointed to eternal life. Again, we would simply ask the question, "who is ordained to eternal life?" We would find our answer two verses previous which says, "And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you and **judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life**, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). The ones God ordains or appoints to eternal life are those who do not thrust it from them and who do not determine themselves to be unworthy of eternal life. They are pre-chosen as a **class**, not individually. The truth is, man plays a part in accepting or rejecting salvation. Let's notice the words of Jesus. He said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21). John the Baptist said, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). Jesus said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28,29). See, it is according to what we have done, not according to unconditional election. Life or death depends on whether we do good or whether we do evil, whether we obey Jesus, or whether we obey him not.

True, many are lost. Jesus said, “Strive to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24). But Jesus also pointed out the reason they are lost. He said, “ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me: and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life” (John 5:40). The reason people are lost is they have free will to choose their destiny and they make the wrong choice. Jesus said to the Jews, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, **and ye would not**” (Mat. 23:37).

In the next chapter we will look at more. But it is already clear that Calvinism is wrong. Children are born innocent, and man decides his own destiny by his own free will.

CALVINISM (2)

LIMITED ATONEMENT, IRRESISTIBLE

GRACE AND PERSEVERANCE

We are studying Calvinism under the word TUUP, each letter of which stands for a doctrinal position in Calvinism as follows: T = Total hereditary depravity, U = Unconditional election, L = Limited atonement, I = Irresistible grace and P=Perseverance of the saints. We have looked at the first two: Total hereditary depravity and unconditional election. Let's proceed further.

L - LIMITED ATONEMENT

Calvinism teaches that Christ died for the elect only. The elect are those whom God picked out regardless of their will. A passage they would use is Ephesians 5:25 which reads, "Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it" (Eph. 5:25). True, it says Christ died for the church, but it does not say Christ died for the Church **only**.

Notice Romans 5:6: "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). Surely Christ is not to be thought of as dying for the ungodly elect. Weak sinners in the world are ungodly. But more, if it is argued that he died for the elect, we can truly say that was not God's intention. Notice, "this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have **all men** to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:3,4). He wants all saved, so Christ even dies for the ungodly. Along that line Luke records Jesus as saying, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

Someone might say, “Well, get specific. Where does it actually say Christ died for the world?” That’s fair. Notice the words of Jesus. “I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: If any man eat this bread, he shall live forever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (John 6:51). He gave Himself so the whole world might have life. God was not solely interested in the elect. He and Christ were interested in the whole world. Did not Jesus explain that that was because God loved the world? He said, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). And Paul could explain, “to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself” (2 Cor. 5:19).

Well, one might argue that world doesn’t always mean “world.” Or, it might not mean the whole world. But John makes such a try futile. He says, “My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world” (I John 2:1,2). Propitiation means a covering for sins which appeases the wrath of God. But John says it is not just for Christians, but for the whole world. That statement includes both categories and says He died for both. Not all in the world accept Christ, but He is offered for all. See also I Timothy 4:10. But let’s proceed.

I - IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

Calvinism taught that to the elect, God worked a kind of direct operation which made them suitable, whether they accepted it or not, for eternal life. This direct operation came from the Holy Spirit. They used passages like I Corinthians 2:14, “Now the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged” (I Cor. 2:14).

So, they teach, God has to help out with a direct operation of the Spirit. But Scripture says Scripture will make us complete. It says, “All scripture is God breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16,17). If Scripture will make us complete, why

would we need a direct operation of the Spirit, something the Bible really never talks about? In scripture we learn that a heart is pricked by hearing. Luke records the sermon of Peter on Pentecost. We read, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:36,37). So preaching pricks the heart. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him" (John 6:44). How does God draw him? Jesus goes on and says, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (John 6:44,45). The Christian religion is taught, heard, and learned.

Too, the Holy Spirit works in conviction, conversion, and sanctification through the word. Notice Ephesians 6:17, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17). The Spirit of truth works through the truth to effect His will. He doesn't, thereby, coerce our free will. We remain a free moral agent.

In 2 Thessalonians 2:13 it says we are sanctified by the Spirit. John 17:17 says we are sanctified by the word. The Spirit, therefore, works through the word to sanctify us. We understand the Word and the Spirit, the Spirit and the Word; they work together. Paul told the Corinthians, "which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Cor. 2:13). There is no irresistible grace. We can accept or we can refuse God's grace.

P - PERSEVERANCE

We have looked at "once saved always saved" in other lessons. Calvinism teaches that God will not let the called fall. Let's just hear God's word on this however. Paul said, "Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4). A Christian can be severed from his savior, and it clearly says he can fall from grace. Paul knew that, so he said, "but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (I Cor. 9:27). He was,

in that statement, not afraid he would lose his rewards in heaven; he said, “I myself should be rejected.”

Notice in detail what Paul said to the Hebrew Christians who were in danger of falling away: “Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto die end” (Heb. 3:12-14). Notice Paul said we are partakers of Christ if we hold fast unto the end. “If” is conditional. And to the Roman Christians Paul said of the Jews: “Well; by their unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by thy faith. Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will he spare thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God’s goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom. 11:20-22). That is a clear warning to all Christians. We can be cut off, just as the Jews were cut off.

The truth is, the Bible teaches that we must continue worthy to be saved. In Revelation, Jesus said, “But thou hasta few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy” (Rev. 3:4). And Paul said to the Thessalonians about persecution, "which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God; to the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer” (2 Thessalonians 1:5).

So we are judged by our works. Paul said to the Romans, “who [God] will render to every man according to his works” (Rom. 2:6). On all this see also 2 Thessalonians 4:14; Matthew 16:27; Revelation 2:23b; and Revelation 22:12. There is no God-enforced faithfulness. We must love enough to persevere. So Calvinism is wrong on each of its five points: total hereditary depravity, unconditional election, limited atonement, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints. It is such a grim doctrine, I thank God through Jesus Christ that it is not true.

ELECTION (1)

PROBLEMS WITH ELECTION

We have briefly looked at the doctrine of "Election" before under Calvinism, but now we seek to be more thorough. This doctrine teaches that certain predestined ones, having done neither good nor evil, are selected to eternal life, with regard to nothing but God's arbitrary choice. We do not believe the doctrine, and in fact, we think it a most pernicious doctrine. We believe a person has free will to obey the gospel, and live in such a holy way that God will allow them to go to heaven by His grace. We shall study this under several headings with much scriptural evidence.

GOD LOVES ALL

First, we would point out that God loves all, the whole world, and not some group called the "elect." John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Notice, God loves the world, not just the elect And again Jesus said, "That the world may know that thou didst send me, and lovest them, even as thou lovest me" (John 17:23). This passage shows not only that God loves the whole world, He loves it intensely, even as He loves Christ. So we are not surprised when Paul says, "For while we were yet weak, in due season Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. 5:6). He did not merely die for the elect. He even died, by the will of God, for the ungodly.

HE DOESN'T WANT ANY TO PERISH

He not only loves all, He doesn't want any to perish. Peter said, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish but that all would come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). It does not say God is unwilling for the elect to perish, but that he wants none to perish. He wants all — not just the elect — to come to repentance. Long ago God said through Ezekiel, "Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked? saith the Lord Jehovah; and not rather that he should return from his way, and live?" (Eze. 18:23). Notice, it is God's will that the wicked have opportunity to turn and live. So Paul says, "To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor, 5:19). And again Paul writes to Timothy, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who would have all men to be saved, and come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:3,4). Paul says, "all men," not "all elect men." This agrees with Peter who said, "And it shall be, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21). Notice Peter says, "whosoever."

CHRIST DIED FOR ALL

We can see that it was not God's will that just the elect be saved, for the Bible is clear that Christ died for all. If there is failure, it is on those who do not meet God's conditions. John the immerser said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). He is not said to take away the sin of the elect world. Even the Samaritans understood it so. We read, "and they said to the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy speaking; for we have heard for ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world" (John 4:42).

Jesus said, "For the bread of God is that which cometh down out of heaven, and giveth life unto the world" (John 6:33). So life is not for pre-chosen few. It is offered to the whole world. Where does it say life was only offered to the elect? If so, why did Christ die for all? No wonder Jesus Christ could say, "For I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). And again, Jesus said, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself" (John 12:32). He knew the blessings of His crucifixion were for all.

A UNIVERSAL INVITATION

So the Bible abounds with one great universal invitation. For example, God said through Isaiah, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22). So here God pleads with the ends of the earth to be saved, and why plead with them if they are already elected to salvation? And God said to Ezekiel, "Say unto them, as I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel" (Eze. 33:11). God seeks not just the elect. He seeks the wicked. He wants them to turn. There is a universal invitation. So Jesus says, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Mat. 11:28-30). There are no restrictions. Christ desires all to come. Yes, God's plan of salvation includes all who will meet His conditions. Paul said, "and he made of one every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed seasons, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him and find him" (Acts 17:26,27). So we read, "and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name unto all the nations" (Luke 24:47). They all are to seek, and remission of sins is to be preached to all. There is a universal invitation, and we have seen it again at the end of the Bible. It says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And he that heareth, let him say, come. And he that is athirst, let him come; he that will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17).

LOSS OF ETERNAL LIFE

Calvinism teaches that Christ died for the elect and that the elect could never lose eternal life. If it can be shown that those for whom He died could be lost, the whole system of unconditional election falls. It will also demonstrate that man's response to the gospel determines who gets eternal life. Let's inspect several passages.

First, Paul says, "For if because of meat thy brother is grieved, thou walkest no longer in love. Destroy not with thy meat him for whom Christ died" (Rom. 14:15). Now Paul here writes to saints (Rom. 1:17). He says the weak brother and the strong brother belong to the Lord (Rom. 14:8). Then he tells the strong brother not to destroy

the weak brother by causing the weak brother to do something his conscience can't handle. He tells the strong brother he could be the occasion of the weak brother falling (Rom. 14:13), that he could overthrow the weak brother (Rom. 14:20), and that the strong brother could cause the weak to be condemned (Rom. 14:23). This is all parallel to 1 Corinthians 8:11 where the weak brother is said to perish. All the language used and the contexts all argue that there can be a loss of eternal life for saints, brothers in Christ. So Christ died not just for the elect, but those He died for could be lost it depends on their obedience.

Notice again John 3:16. It says, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Those who believe have life, but could have perished. So Christ died for those who could disbelieve and perish. But if the world for whom He died meant the elect world, then only those of the elect world who believe have eternal life. Those of the elect world who disbelieve, perish. So none of this can make the doctrine of unconditional election scriptural. Every which way one turns such a doctrine is refuted.

Notice 2 Peter 2:1: "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction" (2 Pet. 2:1). We can notice right off that the destruction is promised for those said to be bought by the Master, Jesus Christ. Those bought by Christ are lost because they teach false doctrine. This fits with 1 Corinthians 8:11 where Paul says, "For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died." Now Calvinism says the elect can't perish. But if Christ died for those who could perish, then he died for those unelected as well as the elect. But here a brother, a saint, him for whom Christ died, can perish. Problems mount for the doctrine of unconditional election.

And we find that the gospel is preached to all in the hope of saving them. Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Mat 28:19). All nations are called. Not all will

heed. So Jesus says, “For many are called but few chosen” (Mat. 22:14). Not all respond to the universal invitation.

CONCLUSION

So what have we seen? We have noticed that God tries to save all, not just the elect. Specifically, God loves the whole world, not just an elect group. We have seen He wants none to perish. He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and He wants all men to be saved. He calls Himself the Saviour of all and says whosoever calls on His name can be saved. Christ took away the sins of the world, was saviour of the world, gave His life to the world, came to save the world, sought to draw all men unto him, and died for brethren who could perish.

We saw that he that believed could have eternal life, and that He even bought false teachers who could perish. So the gospel was preached to all; there was a universal invitation, and God had no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He wants them to turn. He invites all to come and emphatically says whoever will can have the waters of life freely. So the doctrine of unconditional election of only a few rather than an offer to the whole world is not only a harsh doctrine, it decidedly is a false doctrine. And we are glad it is.

ELECTION (2)

OBEDIENCE, WORTH,

RESPONSIBILITY, DOING THINGS

Previously we saw that God tries to save all men, not just the elect. The scriptures clearly say He doesn't want any to perish and so we saw scripture which say He tries to save all. We saw He loves all, not just the elect. We saw that the doctrine of unconditional election is wrong because the Bible said numerous times that the elect could be lost. But the gospel was preached to all in the hope of saving all. So we find in scripture more than one universal invitation. Here we will argue against the doctrine of unconditional election by showing proof from scripture that man can save himself by doing things, action on his part. Of course, the basis and ground of salvation is the grace of God, the blood of Christ. But man saves himself by doing God's commandments, which doing is ordained by God to reach out and take hold of His grace by which we are saved. So grace is the cause of eternal salvation. Obedience procures the grace by which we are saved. Obedience is the procuring cause of salvation and grace is the operating or working cause of salvation. So, are we saved by an

unconditional election, or are we saved by obedience and doing things? Let's view the scriptures.

OBEDIENCE

Paul said of Christ, "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered: and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8,9). So Christ is captain of eternal salvation only to those who obey Him. And earlier Paul said, "Rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus" (2 The. 1:8). So clearly obedience to the gospel, not unconditional election is a condition to eternal salvation. Thus Jesus could say, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). No obedience, no eternal life. Where does that leave unconditional election? And notice, this passage speaks of eternal life.

WORTH

Then some are called worthy, and that is given as a reason for salvation. Paul said, 'To the end that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer" (2 The. 1:5). Paul said the Thessalonians had patience, faith, and endurance. Therefore they were worthy. They would not be worthy without patience and faith. Then after His resurrection, as recorded in the Book of Revelation, Jesus said, "But thou has a few names in Sardis that did not defile their garments; and they shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4). A walk in white symbolizes eternal life, as do the other symbols in chapters two and three. The Christians are worthy because they did not defile their garments. So they have eternal life because they are worthy. They met conditions for eternal life.

HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY

There are so many ways to show human responsibility. First, some are said to have the right to eternal salvation. In Revelation we read, "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:24). Some have the right to the tree of life and the holy

city and others do not. And Paul said to Timothy, "Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). Here Timothy, by the conditions of heeding himself and his teaching, can save himself and them that hear the teaching. They are saved by the human responsibility of heeding teaching. Conditions, not unconditional election, are again essential.

SAVE YOURSELF

Conditions are essential to life for a person is said to save himself by meeting conditions. As Peter preached "And with many other words he testified, and exhorted them, saying, save yourselves from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). How were they saved? They saved themselves. They obeyed in repentance and baptism and so met conditions to save themselves. Notice, you can even save others. James said, "Let him know, that he who converteth a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall cover a multitude of sins" (Jas. 5:20).

WE HAVE

ETERNAL LIFE BY DOING THINGS

Yes, conditions are essential, for a person is said to have eternal life by doing things. Paul said, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life" (Gal. 6:7,8). Sowing to the Spirit is a condition to eternal life. This is like Paul saying, "Fight the good fight of the faith, lay hold on the life eternal, whereunto thou was called" (1 Tim. 6:12). Two conditions are found here: fighting the good fight and laying hold on eternal life. Peter says the same. He says, "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:10,11). Notice, they had, in context, to give diligence and abound in faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love to enter into the

eternal kingdom. And all these recent passages talk of eternal life, not some other salvation. But more.

Jesus gave an Old Testament answer regarding eternal life. And we read, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And he said unto him... But if thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments" (Mat. 19:16,17). A man under the Old Testament was saved by grace through faith when he kept the commandments. Today it is the same. Notice Jesus didn't say, "If you are elect you have life."

And Paul said in 2 Cor. 5:10, "For we must all be made manifest before the judgment-seat of Christ; that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he had done, whether it be good or bad." Paul clearly says we receive according to what we have done, not whether or not we are elect. In a vision John heard these words, "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have the right to come to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city. Without are the dogs, and the sorcerers, and the fornicators, and the murderers, and the idolaters, and every one that loveth and maketh a lie" (Rev. 22:14,15). Now some wash their robes and have the right to enter into the heavenly city. But notice it was because they did something. It was not because they were elect. Too, the ones who were without and not able to enter in were such because of what they did. It was not because God arbitrarily reprobated them. They were without because they committed sorcery, fornication, murder, worshipped idols, and because they lied. So, mankind is lost or saved not on the basis of election or reprobation on God's part, but because of what they have done. So Paul could say, "Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:9,10). Man has eternal life or eternal punishment because of what he does. Notice Paul in Romans 2:6-10. He says of God, "Who will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life; but unto them that are factious and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness shall be wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil, of the Jew first, and

also of the Greek; but glory and honor and peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek: for there is no respect of persons with God" (Rom. 2:6-11). Notice it says we seek eternal life by patience in well-doing. It says God will render eternal life or wrath and indignation on the basis of our works. We are saved or lost by obeying the truth or obeying unrighteousness. Some have well-doing and some work evil and God is no respecter of persons and renders to each according to whether they work good or work evil.

CONCLUSION

We have seen that in scripture man is said to have eternal life by doing things. There must be obedience (Heb. 5:8,9). He must obey the gospel (2 Thes. 1:8). He must obey the Son (John 3:36). He must be counted worthy (2 Thes. 1:5). He must be worthy by not defiling his garments (Rev. 3:4). So he can save himself from a crooked generation (Acts 2:40). By continuing in the teaching one can save himself and them that hear him (1 Tim. 4:16). So you can also convert a sinner from the error of his way (Jas. 5:20). What you sow you reap (Gal. 6:7,8). You must lay hold on life eternal (1 Tim. 6:12). You can make your calling and election sure (2 Pet. 1:10,11). You have to keep commandments (Mat. 19:16,17). We receive according to what we have done (2 Cor. 5:10). You must wash your robes and make them white (Rev. 22:14). You seek glory and eternal life by well-doing (Rom. 2:6,7).

So we conclude by asking this question. How can one ever believe in election and reprobation?

ELECTION (3)

MORE REASONS WHY

THE DOCTRINE IS FALSE

As we continue studying the Calvinistic doctrine of "Election," let's see why we might regard such a doctrine as false.

GOD IS FAIR AND EQUAL TO ALL

First, we would notice that God is fair and equal to all. He does not pick some to save and some to damn while they of themselves have no choice, and in a system where they can do nothing about it. James said if you have respect of persons you sin (Jas. 2:9). Psalm 145:17 and Daniel 9:14 says God is always righteous. Ezekiel 18:25 says God's way is equal. Let's notice carefully a few scriptures. In

Acts 10:34,35 we read, “and Peter opened his mouth, and said, of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him” (Acts 10:34,35). So who has a chance of being saved? In every nation, he who fears and works righteousness. It is not the elect. So Paul agreed with Peter and said, “For there is no respect of persons with God” (Rom. 2:11). And again Peter said, “And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear” (1 Pet. 1:17). No, God is no respecter of persons. And Paul could say, “knowing that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no respect of persons with him” (Eph. 6:9). He treats all alike. But there is more.

THE GOSPEL

If Christ shed His blood and poured it out for remission of sins (Mat 26:28), what does He use to offer that salvation? He uses the gospel, so all have an equal chance to go to heaven. Paul said, “Whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 The. 2:14). And Romans 8:30 says the called are justified, and the justified are glorified. But the call comes through the gospel. Through this gospel call, the glory of the Lord Jesus is attained.

Then Paul says, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). It is powerful, and notice the gospel is unto salvation. Truly it is only to those who obey it, but it is unto salvation. And again Paul says, this time to the Corinthians, “Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved” (1 Cor. 15:1,2). This clearly says you are saved by the gospel, and corroborates Romans 1:16. We ask our Calvinist friends to produce the passage which says one is saved without the gospel. Also read 1 Corinthians 1:21 where it says we are saved through preaching. And in 1 Corinthians 4:15 Paul says, “For in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). So God is fair and equal to all, according to the scriptures, and He calls all by the gospel which is the power of God unto salvation. Now we want again to revert to an

earlier theme, that man is said to have eternal life, not by being elect individually, but by doing things.

ETERNAL LIFE IS

CONDITIONAL, FOR CONDITIONS

ARE GIVEN IN ORDER TO OBTAIN LIFE

Jesus said, "Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:28,29). Notice who gets life: they that have done good. So eternal life is conditional. This is illustrated by the next scripture. Jesus said, "Then shall he answer them saying, verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of these least, ye did it not unto me. And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life: (Mat. 25:45,46). Only the righteous go into eternal life. One, the righteousness of God is through faith in Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:22). Two, they are living righteously also for doing right unto their own brethren. Three, those who didn't serve, go into eternal punishment. It is therefore that way that they are judged by things done in the body. (2 Cor. 5:10).

Notice another scripture. Paul said, "For bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come" (I Tim. 4:8). Here godliness is a condition in order to have the promise of the life which is to come. Can the ungodly enter into eternal life? No, so we see conditions are necessary to eternal life.

WE ARE JUDGED ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS

We know eternal life is not based on being individually and arbitrarily elected by God because the Bible says we are judged according to our works. Jesus said, "For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds" (Mat. 16:27). He does not render to them according to whether they are elect, but according to man's deeds. So eternal life is conditional on deeds. Paul agrees with this, for he said, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up for

thyself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. 2:5,6). It is not according to whether they are elect. In the great day of wrath it is according to works.

Notice a few passages regarding eternal life being based on works. Paul said, "Whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor. 11:15). Then we have, "The Lord will render to him according to his works (2 Tim. 4:14) And again we have, "And if you call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work" (1 Pet. 1:17), and on and on we could go. Jesus said, "I will give unto each one of you according to your works" (Rev. 2:23). And we read in the book of Revelation, "And they were judged every man according to their works" (Rev. 20:13). And in Revelation Jesus said, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is" (Rev. 22:12). Jesus will not render according to whether they are elect or not, but according to their works.

ETERNAL LIFE IS CONDITIONAL

BECAUSE FAITH IS A SUPREME CONDITION

Notice we do not say "faith only" is a supreme condition, but that faith is a supreme condition. By "faith" we mean a faith which contains works of obedience (Jas. 2:24; Jas. 2:26; John 3:36; Gal. 5:4; Romans 4:12). But with that in mind, notice Jesus said, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). "Perish" is contrasted with "eternal life." Those who perish do not believe (John 8:24). Those who have life, have it because they believed. So life is conditional on faith.

Notice John 3:36. Jesus said, "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life; but he that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). The life is not promised on the elect unconditionally, but to those who meet the condition of faith. Second, those who do not obey, have wrath, another condition. All this shows we are in a context of conditions. Then Jesus also said, "For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholdeth the son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at

the last day" (John 6:40). One must believe on Jesus to have eternal life. Only believers will be raised up by Christ to enjoy eternal life.

Paul agrees. He said, "howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me as chief might Jesus Christ show forth all his longsuffemg, for an ensample of them that should thereafter believe on him unto eternal life" (1 Tim. 1:16). Notice again Paul shows eternal life is conditional, for faith is a supreme condition. This agrees with what John said, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). One, the words had to be written so we could believe. And two, in believing we have life.

MAN CAN VIOLATE SCRIPTURE IN SUCH A WAY AS TO CONDEMN HIMSELF

"Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). Notice they condemned themselves, respecting eternal life, by thrusting it away from them. They condemned themselves. It was sincerely offered by God. He didn't tantalize them. Yet they condemned themselves. And remember Jesus said God would have gathered the Jews together and protected them, but they "would not" (Mat. 23:37). And Paul said some would perish unsaved and be judged because they received not the love of the truth, believed not the truth, had pleasure in unrighteousness, and in effect they condemned themselves by not meeting God's conditions (2 Thes. 1:7,8).

CONCLUSION

So we must say the doctrine of Calvinistic Election is a most destructive doctrine. It takes away human responsibility, and damns souls. We are glad it is a false doctrine in the false system of Calvinism.

FREE WILL

We are going to look at the doctrine of "Free Will." Some deny that man has free will, saying that he is born totally, hereditarily depraved and that God must elect him to salvation, by a direct operation of the Spirit, and fit him out to eternal salvation. We do not so believe. We believe a person has free will to be saved or not saved. As such we say he has the capacity and ability to meet conditions to

be saved and that he is not born totally and helplessly depraved. Let's look at some scriptures and arguments.

PSALM 58:3

Psalm 58:3 says, "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" (Psalm 58:3). Now at first sound this might appear to support the doctrine of total, hereditary depravity, but let's see. It says they "go astray as soon as they are born." If they were born astray, how could they go astray? No, they are both upright and innocent. They go astray. Notice Ecclesiastes 7:29: "God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecc. 7:29). But someone will note that they go astray as soon as they are born. But this is obvious hyperbole or exaggerated language to make a point on the exceeding sinfulness of mankind. The Bible is full of superlatives and hyperbole. Let's see another scripture.

ROMANS 7:9

Paul said, "And I was alive apart from the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died" (Rom. 7:9). This shows that when Paul was a child he was alive. Sin had not killed him or separated him from God. So as a child he must have been innocent regarding sin. When he reached an accountable age sin was imputed or reckoned to him and he died. So as a child he was not totally, hereditarily depraved. He must have been innocent regarding sin or he would have been dead in his trespasses and sin.

PSALM 106:37,38

Another enlightening passage is Psalm 106:37,38. It says, "Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto demons, and shed innocent blood" (Psa. 106:37,38). If the children were totally, hereditarily depraved, they would have been wicked, sinful, and depraved. But if such when they were sacrificed, innocent blood could not have been shed. Guilty blood would have been shed. So the children had to be innocent. God is the Father of spirits (Heb. 12:9). He gives the spirit of man (Ecc. 12:7). We are his offspring (Acts 17:29), and a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit (Mat. 7:18). Let's go to another.

MATTHEW 18:3

Jesus said, “Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 18:3). Is Jesus saying that except we turn and become as totally depraved little children we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven? No, his statement just wouldn’t make sense unless children were pure and innocent. We must become like them, pure and innocent, or we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. But more.

MAN HAS A FREE WILL

JOSHUA 24:15

Joshua, toward the close of his life, said to Israel regarding the worship of God or the worship of idols, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Jos. 24:15). The one who refuses to serve God will die, but notice they have a choice. Today we have a choice. We notice that Moses had a choice. He exercised his free will when he chose to share in the affliction of the people of God rather than enjoy all the luxury of Egypt. Hebrews 11:25 says, “Choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). We have the same choice in our day. This passage clearly teaches we have free will. Let’s notice another.

ISAIAH 7:15,16

In Isaiah we are in the days of Ahaz, king of Judah. He is threatened by Syria and Israel, two kingdoms of the north. Isaiah says to Ahaz, “Hear ye now, O house of David: Is it a small thing for you to weary men, that ye will weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall he eat, when he knoweth to refuse the evil, and choose the good. For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land whose two kings thou abhorrest shall be forsaken” (Isa. 7:13-16). Now we could say many things about this passage. But we want to only notice one thing. The passage clearly says that the Child had to reach a time in life before He could know to refuse the evil and choose the good. Nevertheless, He would enter such a time. He would also have free will to choose when He reached that age of accountability.

Again, let's look at it. This talks of a young Child. He reaches an age where He can choose. All mankind today can make that same choice. The passage is clear. We can choose. And we would ask, where is the passage which says man has no free will? Where is the passage which says man cannot choose? But even more.

MATTHEW 23:37

Jesus lamented over Jerusalem. He said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Mat. 23:37). Well, it is sad, but it is clear that they exercised their own free will. They had the capability of choosing. They would not. They chose not to come to the safety of the Lord. But they were capable of meeting conditions. They would not, but they could have come to Him. The same is implied in Matthew 11:28-30, and it applies to us all. Jesus said, "come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Mat. 11:28-30). Why give such an invitation if man has no free will? If they cannot choose why talk such, as if they can respond? No, we have free will; we have the capability of choosing. The voice of scripture is certain on this. We can turn to the Old Testament or the New and find passage after passage which so teaches. Notice:

PROVERBS 1:29

Proverbs 1:29 says, "For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of Jehovah" (Pro. 1:29). How can we say man has no free will when this passage talks of what they would not choose? If they had no free will they could not choose the fear of Jehovah, so why even discuss choice? Another:

REVELATION 22:17

Revelation 22:17 says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And he that heareth, let him say, Come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). Why, again, an invitation, if one has no free will? Why say "come" if

they have no choice? Why speak such as "he that will" if there is no will involved? Why all this if there is no free will in man to choose the spiritual so that he may have eternal life? Let's notice another.

JOHN 5:40

Jesus said to the Jews, "ye search the scriptures, because ye think that in them ye have eternal life; and these are they which bear witness of me; and ye will not come to me, that ye may have life" (John 5:39,40). Why testify of Christ in scripture if man has no free will to take advantage of the scriptures? Why would Jesus reproach the Jews for not coming to him if they had no free will to do so? Why say they didn't come to Him so they might have life if there was no free will in them to choose life? Their problem, in context, as seen in so many of the passages we have viewed, is that they "would not." Look for yourself and see if it is not so.

Let's notice one more passage. Again we will see choice in man.

ACTS 13:46

Paul preached the gospel in Antioch. They wanted to hear him again the next Sabbath. The whole city gathered to hear the word of God but the Jews were filled with jealousy and contradicted the things spoken by Paul. So Paul says, "It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). Now we notice several things in this passage. First, of their own free will the Jews thrust the gospel message away from them. Second, they judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. Third, why would Paul preach to them at all if they had no choice regarding eternal life? They had no choice so it was all a waste of time.

So, no, we are glad to proclaim that mankind has a choice regarding eternal life. You can go to heaven if you really want to. You have free will to obey the gospel by believing Jesus is the Christ the Son of God (John 20:30,31), repenting of your sins (Acts 3:19), making the good confession (Rom. 10:9,10; 1 Tim. 6:12), and being baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16).

WHAT THE HEART DOES

We have studied the doctrines of Calvinism. Basically, in response to indulgences and the works salvation of the Roman

Catholic Church, the reformers of the sixteenth century were driven to the opposite extreme. They began to teach that man could do nothing at all to save himself. They tried to prove that God does it all, and they therefore stripped man, as far as eternal salvation goes, of all human responsibility.

CALVINISM

The reformer's doctrine was systemized by John Calvin of Switzerland and can be described this way. First, they believed man was born totally, hereditarily depraved. He was completely without means to do one thing to save himself. Second, God arbitrarily chose or elected some to eternal salvation. They did nothing to deserve it; their will was not even involved in the choice. God elected them and it was His will to damn or reprobate the rest. Neither could do anything about where they would spend eternity. Third, the reformers and Calvin taught limited atonement. Christ didn't die for the whole world, but only for the elect Fourth, they taught a doctrine called irresistible grace. God opened the elect's hearts, by a direct operation of the Holy Spirit, and forced grace on the elect. It was irresistible grace. And fifth, they taught the doctrine of perseverance, that once God forced grace on the elect He would not let them fall from it. Once they were saved they were always saved. So that's the doctrine of Calvinism. But let's focus on the doctrine of "Irresistible Grace," particularly the notion that ultimately man can do nothing so that God must directly open selected individual's hearts by a direct operation. There is at least one passage used to support the doctrine. On a missionary tour Paul goes to Philippi, a city In Macedonia, modern-day Greece. We read, "And on the Sabbath day we went forth without the gate by a river side, where we supposed there was a place of prayer; and we sat down, and spake unto the women that were come together. And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, one that worshiped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened to give heed unto the things which were spoken by 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" (Acts 16:13-15).

Notice the text says God opened Lydia's heart. No one denies that. But did God do it by a direct operation? Were there mysterious

hunches and feelings? What is the heart? Surely the text is not talking of the physical heart. If not, then what?

We believe that to understand how the Lord opened Lydia's heart we need to know what the heart is and how it works. Then we should know how it could be opened and what that even means.

A STUDY OF THE HUMAN HEART

Let's now notice a series of passages which reveal the nature of the human heart. If we understand the nature of the human heart we will understand how it is opened.

In Matthew 9:4 we read, "and Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts" (Mat. 9:4). So right off we learn that the heart thinks. This is similar to Isaiah 32:4 which says, "The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge" (Isa. 32:4). So the heart not only thinks, it can understand. Then Proverbs 14:10 says, "The heart knows his own bitterness." It knows. And in Romans 10:10 we read, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness" (Rom. 10:10). Next we notice the heart can doubt. Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it" (Mark 11:22,23). So in the human heart one can doubt. And in a context of giving for the poor, Paul said the Corinthians should give "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give" (2 Cor. 9:7). It is in the heart that one purposes. And Solomon said, "A man's heart deviseth his way" (Pro. 16:9). So the heart plans and deviseth. This is found to be said in the New Testament as well. To the man sick of the palsy Jesus said, "Son, thy sins are forgiven" (Mark 2:5). Then we read, "But there were certain of the scribes sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, why does this man thus speak" (Mark 2:6). And Jesus said to them, "Why reason ye these things in your hearts?" (Mark 2:8). So the heart reasons.

But, let us go on. The heart seems to be the seat of feelings as well as thoughts. Paul said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Rom. 10:1). It desires. Not only that, it is capable of repentance. Paul said, "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart" (Rom. 2:4). The heart of those going

to destruction was capable of repentance but was impenitent. Then it "presumes." Esther 7:5 says, "who is he, and where is he that durst presume in his heart to do so" (Est. 7:5). It can presume. But even more, "Jesus said, Thou shalt love the Lord they God with all thy heart" (Mat. 22:37). Love comes from the heart. Or we read, "And she despised him in her heart" (2 Sam. 6:16). The heart, therefore can love or despise. And it is that part of us which can receive the law of God. God said, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts" (Heb. 8:10). And again we read, "I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them" (Heb. 10:16). Too, it is in the heart that sorrow is felt. We read in Nehemiah 2:2, "Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart" (Neh. 2:2). Yes, the heart can experience sorrow. So also Daniel said, "I Daniel was grieved in my spirit" (Dan. 7:15). And Paul said, "ye obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17). Obedience springs from the heart.

SUMMARY

Now we have looked at several scriptures which show the nature of the human heart. We notice that the mystery fades regarding the heart. It obviously is a figure of speech for the mind. Let's notice what the heart does. It thinks, understands, knows, believes, doubts, purposes, deviseth, reasons, desires, can repent presumes, loves, despises, receives the law, sorrows, grieves, and obeys. It is easy to see that the heart is the seat of the emotions and the seat of the intellect. The heart is the rational, thinking part of man. There is no mystery here. Whatever opens the heart will be adapted to change the reasoning, knowing, thinking part of man. The heart is that part that thinks, understands, and knows. But to go further, we want to see if there is a relationship between the heart, the mind, and the spirit.

THE HEART, THE MIND, THE SPIRIT

Now we can see the heart is what we understand as the mind. The heart reasons, thinks, and knows. That of course is what takes place in the mind. You repent in the mind and you repent in the heart You

believe in your heart and you believe in your mind. You understand with your heart; you understand with your mind. You reason in your heart and you reason in the mind. You think in your heart and none deny you think in your mind. Then we read in scripture that one can be double-hearted. Jesus said you could doubt in your heart.

James called that being doubleminded. He said, "he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (Jas. 1:6-8).

Then we noticed that the heart knows. Recall Solomon said, "The heart knoweth his own bitterness" (Pro. 14:10). So it is that part of man which knows. But Paul said, "For who among men knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of the man, which is in him" (1 Cor. 2:11). The heart knows things; the mind knows things; the spirit of man knows things. They are all one and the same.

But the main thing we cannot help but notice is that the heart is the rational part of man, and what moves it must be something which appeals to the intellect and can change it or reform it.

WHAT OPENS THE HEART?

David said, "The law of Jehovah is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19:7). To "convert" is to "turn around." What does it? The law of Jehovah does it. So Jeremiah said, "Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). The word of God is designed for nothing else than changing the human heart. David said, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and light unto my path" (Psa. 119:104,105). So the word of God affects the heart. It is a light, and gives an understanding so that one can hate every false way. So, after the word has worked, a person is changed, just as Lydia was changed. And again David said, "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psa. 119:9). Only by the application of the word does one respond by cleansing his life. The word of God sets one at attention. Paul said, "For the word of God is living and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to

discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). What more could have power to open or turn the heart? The word of God is said to prick the heart. Is that not really the same as open it, for in either case one is ready to hear more and respond to what it hears? It says the Lord opened Lydia's heart to give heed to the things spoken by Paul (Acts 16:14). How did God do it? Did He open her heart through His word? Notice on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached about Jesus risen from the dead we read, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified" (Acts 2:36). Now what was the effect of these words on the crowd of Jews? Did it have an effect on them as far as making them want to give heed to hear more? Did they at this point get their heart open to give heed to the things that were spoken? We continue and read, "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:36). So, yes, the gospel opened their hearts or minds to give heed to what else Peter would say. In fact, their heart was so worked on by the word of God that they actually asked for more. No wonder Paul could say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). And again he could say, "all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

So yes, the heart is the mind and scripture opens the mind. Too, we just saw how preaching made the Jews on Pentecost want to give heed just as God opened Lydia's heart to give heed. But Acts 2 did not say God did it, where as in Acts 16 it does say God did it. But we have said before that what God's word accomplishes, God accomplishes. Among other scriptures we noticed that God is said to work in us (Phil. 2:12,13). How does He do it? I Thessalonians 2:13 says His word works in us. God works in us, but through His word. He opens our heart, but we cannot see any other way He does it but through His voice. Keep in mind all the passages which show the heart is the mind and all the passages which show that God's will for operating on the mind is to do it through His word. The word of God sanctifies, edifies, and saves (John 17:17; Acts 2:38; James 1:21). There is no passage I

know of in the Bible which says or demonstrates that God works on the human heart in any other way than through His word. Thus a person's free will is not coerced. But we have seen a plethora of passages which show the mind of man is influenced by the word of God. So we have this progression of reasoning. First, the human heart and the human part that reasons are the same. Second, in every way the part of man that "knows" is changed, converted, or moved by God's word. Third, what God's word does, God does. So as in other places we conclude that God opened the heart of Lydia, but He did it to her as He did it to us — through His word. The heart reasons, and that which turns the reason of man is God through His word.

DEPRAVITY AND ORIGINAL SIN

We want to say a few words about the doctrines of "Original Sin" and "Depravity." These doctrines affect our salvation so we must be right on them. The way we know whether we are right or wrong is by speaking the way the Bible speaks. So let's study the Bible.

ORIGINAL SIN

Some teach we inherit the sin of Adam, so that we are born with original sin. One passage they use is Romans 5:12- 14. It reads thusly: "Therefore as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned: for until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the likeness of Adam's transgression, who is a figure of him that was to come" (Rom. 5:12-14). Well, it is said sin entered the world by one man. That would be Adam. And then it clearly says death therefore passed unto all men for that all sinned. So we all die because of the sin of Adam, which we all bear. So we are born with original sin. We sinned in Adam they teach.

However, I understand the "death" of this passage to be talking of spiritual death. The moral and spiritual situation of mankind is under discussion. Too, "all sinned" cannot refer to sinning in Adam for verse 14 says that from Adam to Moses men did not sin after likeness of Adam's sin. They were not guilty of a sin like Adam's. They were guilty of another kind of sin. If they sinned in Adam, they did sin after the likeness of Adam's sin.

Further, it is argued that through one man sin entered into the world. So they teach it is inherited, all sin in their father Adam, so death passes unto all men. But how does sin enter into the world by one man? Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. From then on one could learn good and evil and when he chose the evil he sinned and thus died spiritually. Sin did not pass into the world by being inherited. Because Adam ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, mankind from then on lost its innocence, sinned, even not after the likeness of Adam's sin, and so death passed to them.

EZEKIEL 18:20 AND 1 JOHN 3:4

Way back in Old Testament times God said "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" (Eze. 18:20). God goes on and says, "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord Jehovah" (Eze. 18:30). So sin is not passed down or inherited. It is not an inheritance, but something one does or commits. Sin is not a heritage. Mankind does sin. He is not an heir of sin, an inheritor or inheritress or inheritrix of sin. John says, "Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). So sin is breaking law, a violation of law. It is something someone does, so we do not bear the sin of all our fathers. We no more sinned in Adam than we sinned in Noah. Sin is something the individual does himself. So let's go on. Let's see if a child is born depraved.

PSALM 58:3 — DEPRAVITY

It seems one of the best or most popular passages used to teach the doctrine of depravity is Psalm 58:3. It says, 'The wicked are estranged from the womb: They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies" (Psa. 58:3). But does this passage teach that a child is born totally depraved? We think not. First, verse 3 clearly says "they go astray." It does not say they are born astray. Verse three says they go astray "speaking lies." Can a just-born babe speak? Can a just-born baby lie? Then verse 6 says, "Break their teeth, O God." The ones talked of here are at least old enough to have teeth. And would David really ask God to treat children like that?

But it says they go astray from the womb as soon as they are born. But how soon is soon? Deuteronomy 4:25 and 26 says Israel shall soon perish from the land when they commit idolatry. Hundreds of years after they had incessantly committed idolatry they were punished with exile. How soon is "soon?" However, what we actually have in the phrase, "they go astray as soon as they are born" and the phrase "estranged from the womb" are Hebrew superlatives, exaggerated language to give force to the point being made. It is a colorful figure of speech; and that it is a figure is seen in the fact that it cannot be taken literally without contradicting the context, all that we mentioned about babies having teeth and speaking lies. Let's look at another.

PSALM 51:5

David said, “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psalm 51:5). So Calvinists say this passage teaches original sin and thereby depravity. However, the text says, “in sin did my mother conceive me.” It does not say “with sin did my mother conceive me.” Some have brought this fact out by using parallel language. Notice: “I was brought forth in a potato patch, and in a field of spuds did my mother conceive me.” Does that mean he was born full of potatoes? No, certainly not, and Psalm 51:5 does not teach that David was born full of sin.

TWO ALTERNATIVES

Jesus said, “Who hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Mark 4:9). Now regarding this passage he could be born depraved and can’t hear, born astray; or, he became depraved and can’t hear; he went astray. Let’s answer which alternative is the correct one by looking at a sequence of scriptures. First, God gives us our spirit: “and the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). Second, God would not bring forth an unclean soul: “a good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit” (Mat. 7:18a). Third, in agreement with all this we find, “Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till unrighteousness was found in thee” (Ezek. 28:15). Fourth, the wicked go astray as we have seen. It says so in Psalm 58:3: “The wicked are estranged from the womb: They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies” (Psa. 58:3). And Fifth, Solomon said, “Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecc. 7:29). So these passages teach (1) God gives the spirit, (2) good does not bring forth evil, (3) the king of Tyre was created perfect, (4) God made man upright, (5) so he goes astray. These passages show that man is born innocent, becomes depraved, and goes astray. He is simply not born depraved.

Error: Adam's iniquities have separated between you and your God. Answer: Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God. "

Error: Adam's sins have hid his face from you. Answer: Isaiah 59:2: "your sins have hid his face from you. "

Error: You were alienated from God by inherited depravity, not by wicked works. Answer: Colossians 1:21: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. "

Error: The son shall bear the iniquities of his father, even to Adam. Answer: Ezekiel 18:20: "The son shall not bear the iniquities of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. "

Error: We are born unprofitable. Answer: Romans 3:12: "They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable. "

Error: You were depraved in your ways from the day you were created because iniquity was born in you. Answer: Ezekiel 28:15: "Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. "

Error: Men are made after the similitude of the devil. Answer: James 3:9: "And therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God. "

Error: We are the offspring of the devil. Answer: Acts 17:28: "Certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. " [This is speaking of God, J.C.M.]

Add to this what we have learned about babies being pure. Jesus said, "for to such [little children] belongeth the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:13-16). And again He said, "whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke 18:15-17).

DEAD IN SIN

It is often argued that since we are dead in sin (Eph. 2:1), we are incapable of doing any good thing to save ourselves. Dead men can't act. But there is a power in the word of God to quicken or make alive. David said, "Quicken thou me according to thy word" (Psa. 119:25), and "For thy word has quickened me" (Psa. 119:50). He said, "I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened me" (Psa. 119:93). See also, Psalm 119:107; Psalm 119:149; Psalm 119:154; Psalm 119:156.

HE RENDERS ACCORDING TO OUR WORKS

Paul said of God, "who will render to every man according to his works" (Rom. 2:6). And again David prayed, "Give them according to their work, and according to the wickedness of their doings: Give them after the operation of their hands; render to them their desert" (Psa. 28:4). No, it is not due to being born depraved that one is lost. It is due to his works. See also Proverbs 24:12b; 2 Corinthians 11:15; Revelation 22:12.

No, we are not born with original sin; nor are we born depraved. Everyone of his own free will can be saved if they want to be saved.

DIRECT

OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT

There has always been a lot of strange thinking regarding how we are saved from sin (Mat. 1:21). And for many years some have taught that we have irresistible grace from God, and that He saves us by a direct operation of the Spirit. At least such a notion has been around since the fifteen hundreds and the Protestant Reformation. Let's look at some of these ideas, only we are going to look at them from the perspective of what God has to teach on the subject. Let's look first at such a concept called irresistible Grace.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

This doctrine goes hand in hand with the Calvinistic doctrine called "Election." This strange doctrine teaches that God decides whom He wants to save eternally regardless of anything they do. He forces His grace on them and such elect go to heaven solely because God chooses that they do so. So Calvinism teaches that for the elect, grace is irresistible. Yet briefly notice a few scriptures. Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath passed out of death into life" (John 5:24). So Jesus clearly teaches you do not have life, eternal life, automatically. You must hear, and then you must believe. He says so.

Then notice Acts 15:9. It says, "and he made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:9). So the heart is purified by faith. At least this passage says the heart is purified at faith and not before faith.

Then we ask the question, if grace is irresistible, how can it be received in vain? Paul said, "and working together with him we entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor. 6:1). So clearly, if God wanted His grace to be irresistible, it could never be given in vain. That it can be received in vain indicates that man must play a part in the receiving of the grace of God. And we also notice Paul says, "For the grace of God hath appeared bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11). If God desired His grace to be irresistible, why are not all saved, for it appeared to all? So irresistible grace is not only

not taught in scripture, it is taught against. Now in the same vein, we see the concept of a "Direct Operation of the Spirit" taught against. Let's see.

DIRECT OPERATION

Paul said, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work," (2 Tim. 3:16,17). This passage could be no clearer that a direct operation of the spirit is not needed. Scripture makes one complete. It furnishes one unto every good work.

Not only that, to begin with, we are pricked in the heart regarding salvation by hearing the word of God. Peter said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:36,37). If they are pricked in the heart by the word of God, why would they need some mysterious direct operation of the Spirit?

The truth of the matter is, the word of God is enough, and the Christian religion is one that is taught, heard, and learned. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (John 6:44,45).

THE SPIRIT GUIDES THROUGH WORDS

Contrary to the notion that the Spirit works on and guides us through a direct operation, we find in scripture that He works on and guides us through the word of God. Let's notice a number of scriptures.

Paul confided, "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). Even for the apostles and prophets there was no mysterious operation. The Spirit revealed through words. And again Paul said, "which things also we speak, not in words which

man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (1 Cor. 2:13).

The Hebrew writer said, "Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, Like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:7,8). The Spirit talked. He guided by moral persuasion. He spoke and taught. And we are not aware of any scripture which says He manipulated the mind of men apart from revelation.

David expressed it this way. He said, "Now these are the last words of David. David the son of Jesse saith, and the man who was raised on high saith, The anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel: the Spirit of Jehovah spake by me, and his word was upon my tongue" (2 Sam. 23:1,2). David spake by the Spirit. It was a word from the Spirit. There were no hunches, no strange feelings, no dark and mysterious feelings and moods. The Spirit spake, and He used David's mouth. Peter was clear on it. He said, "Brethren, it was needful that the scripture should be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spake before by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who was guide to them that took Jesus" (Acts 1:16). So again, the Spirit, when He wished to influence men, used words out of the mouth of a prophet.

Now Genesis 6:3 says, "And Jehovah said, My spirit shall not strive with man for ever, for that he also is flesh: yet shall his days be a hundred and twenty years" (Gen. 6:3). Well, how does the Spirit strive? Notice we read, "Yet many years didst thou bear with them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit through thy prophets: yet would they not give ear: therefore gavest thou them into the hand of the peoples of the lands" (Neh. 9:30). God did not use some kind of direct operation on the heart of men to strive and to testify against them. He sought out prophets and put words in their mouths. So, they could hear revelation from God. Yet they would not give ear.

The Spirit did not use direct force or mysterious coercion. He used words. They were His tools. So Paul could well say, "and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

HOW DOES GOD WORK IN US?

There is a passage which says God works in us. Paul said, "for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work, for His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13). We do not deny that God works in us. The scriptures clearly says that He does. The question is, how does He work in us. Is it in some dark, irresistible mood forced on us in some mysterious way? We know of no passage which tells of such a strange occurrence. But notice, the same author, Paul, also says, "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (1 Thess. 2:13). So one passage says God works in us; the other passage says His word works in us. From all else we have seen, would we not understand that God works in us through His word? Is it not the sword of the Spirit? Did He not put His word in the prophets so that they could teach and guide us? That is how He works in us, through His word. What His word does He does. How could He work in us in any other way?

Notice again. David said, "The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars; yea, Jehovah breaketh in pieces the cedars of Lebanon. The voice of Jehovah shaketh the wilderness; Jehovah shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh" (Psa. 29:5,8). See, what Jehovah's voice does Jehovah does. He does so through His voice.

Now we might say there are two types of force, mechanical and persuasive. We could say we want Joe out of the room. We could physically pick him up and remove him. Or, we could persuade him to leave by arguments of some type. Now God can convert a man. But does He do it by physical force or through moral persuasion? The answer is simple. David said, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19:7). Yes God converts us. But He clearly says He does it through His law. So Paul could say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). And again he said, "Now I make known unto you, brethren, the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye received, wherein also ye stand, by which also ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you, except ye believed in vain" (1 Cor. 15:1,2). So the law of God converts us. That's why it can be said to save us. It

contains warnings, threats, promises, and blessings as high as heaven and as deep as hell. We reflect on them and according to our heart we respond.

Jesus said, “I know ye are Abraham’s seed; yet ye seek to kill me, because my word hath not free course in you” (John 8:37). And again He said, “already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you” (John 15:3).

So we are converted, not by a direct operation on our heart by the Spirit. The Spirit of God uses truth on us, and through that God works in us. And if by free will we heed the word we are converted.

INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT (1)

JOHN CALVIN

I would like to deal with a little known, and I think much misunderstood doctrine; the influence of the Holy Spirit in the salvation of men. First, I want to deal with what the reformers of the 1500's said as penned by John Calvin. Referring to 1 Peter 1:2 Calvin said, "By these words he reminds us, that if the shedding of his sacred blood is not to be in vain, our souls must be washed in it by the secret cleansing of the Holy Spirit" (Book in, chapter 1). He speaks of the Holy Spirit's work, "to open our minds and hearts, and make us capable of receiving this testimony" (Book IV, chapter 17).

BAPTIST CHURCH MANUAL

"OF GRACE IN REGENERATION"

"We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life" (pp. 49,50).

LEWIS SPERRY CHAFER

SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY (VOLUME VI)

He was President and Professor of Systematic Theology at Dallas Theological Seminary. The gist of his thoughts on our subject can be found in the following thoughts; "By the enabling power of the Holy Spirit some measure of the experience of divine love, divine joy, and

divine peace yet to come may be secured now. So, likewise, the knowledge of God and especially that part which He has caused to be written down in Scripture may be entered into by the same Spirit" (Systematic Theology, p. 109).

"The spiritual man is the theme of the remainder of this volume. Suffice it to say at this point that he is called spiritual because he manifests a right adjustment to the Holy Spirit who indwells him. This manifestation includes the enlightenment given to such by which the spiritual man may come to know the Word of God" (p. 169).

"The Holy Spirit is the Master Teacher, but spiritually this ministry is restricted, in the main, to the Word of God. That Word has been given to men by God in good faith and with the expectation that it would be understood and received by those for whom it is intended. That they need to study to show themselves approved unto God in making the right divisions of doctrine and in arriving at its true meaning does not lessen the obligation; indeed, few apprehend the fact that the Word of God, quite different from other themes of knowledge, cannot be received with understanding other than by personal illumination such as the Holy Spirit alone can achieve" (p. 221).

On sanctification Chafer says, "It is accomplished by the power of God through the Spirit and through the Word ..." (p. 285).

In his book Grace Chafer says, "The two foundation truths which determine all spiritual perception are that, by divine arrangement, (1) the Spirit is given only to those who are saved, and (2) spiritual understanding is made to depend exclusively on the presence of the Spirit of God in the heart" (vii).

Again, "Spiritual understanding is not, therefore, dependent upon human sagacity or learning; it depends only on the teaching of the indwelling Spirit. Possessing this Biblical testimony, misunderstanding at this point is without excuse"(ix) "Since the Spirit is given only to those who are saved through faith in Christ, they alone are able to receive the body of truth which the Spirit teaches. Neglect of this fundamental, unalterable fact is the key-error of all modernism" (ix, x). Well, such is Calvinism.

SOME DIFFERING THOUGHTS

ALEXANDER CAMPBELL

There were men in this country beginning in the 1800's who saw things quite differently. They challenged Calvinists to debate. In the Campbell-Rice debate Alexander Campbell affirmed: "In conversion and sanctification the Spirit of God operates on persons only through the word" (p.611). In his second speech he said, "The doctrine which I oppose, so far as it is really believed and acted upon, neutralizes preaching, annuls the Bible, and perfectly annihilates human responsibility. I know no doctrine more fatal" (p. 644). His idea was, "God's Holy Spirit is the agent — his gospel is the instrument" (p. 677). Writing of his times he said, "I say deluded; for every man who supposes he was converted to God by the literal descent of the Holy Spirit, or by its naked influence upon his spirit, is as certainly deluded as the followers of Joseph Smith (Millennial Harbinger, 1831, pp. 211,212).

To argue his point in Millennial Harbinger he made a dialogue between "Austin" and "Timothy." Here are some clear statements he makes worthy of consideration:

"The argument is the power of man, and the only power which one spirit can exert over another is its arguments" (1831, p. 294).

"As the spirit of man puts forth all its moral power in the words which it fills with its ideas; so the Spirit of God puts forth all its converting and sanctifying power in the words it fills with its ideas" (p. 295).

"We plead that all the converting power of the Holy Spirit is exhibited in the Divine Record" (p. 296).

"They are most clamorous for help, who will not help themselves, by submitting their minds to the impression of the Holy Spirit in its word" (p. 297).

N. B. HARDEMAN

On the completion and perfection of God's part in salvation, in Hardeman's Tabernacle Sermons (Vol. n, p. 146), N.B. Hardeman asks three questions, the third of which is this:

"Now, third, do you believe this morning that when the Holy Spirit guided the apostles unto the proclamation of the truth and they finally penned all of that Bible before us — do you believe the Holy Spirit finished His word with reference to the plan of salvation."

In a debate with Ben Bogard, he negated this proposition: 'The Bible teaches that in conviction and conversion the Holy Spirit exercises an influence in the addition to the written or spoken word" (p. 7, Hardeman-Bogard Debate).

In that debate N. B. Hardeman said, "May I suggest that there is no middle ground, no neutral point, and no harmony between the two positions... Therefore, we must insist that the Holy Spirit operates, in conviction and conversion, either through, with, or by means of the word, or that it operates distinct and separate from the word and without and separate from the word, and without the use of the word of God" (p. 19 debate).

COMMENTS

Well, we can see that there is a big gap between what Calvinism disciples and what the Restoration thinkers believed. On the one hand, the Reformers (whose doctrine was later systematized by Calvin), who took away from their doctrine the idea of personal choice, free will, and that they themselves played a part in whether or not they were saved in part by their own efforts, had to take the stand that God did it all. They taught man was so dead in the sin of Adam that it was impossible for him to lift one finger in his salvation. There had to be mysterious workings by the Spirit on the heart. It had to be prepared, enlightened, or the word illuminated to penetrate the heart. Some called it a direct operation of the Spirit. It was an, "I can't, God can!" position. On the other hand there were those such as Campbell and Hardeman and others who believed that for the honest and good heart there was a power in the moral persuasion of the Holy Spirit which resided in His word and is now in His scripture. We will look at all this in upcoming remarks, but let us close with one scripture. Paul said by the Holy Ghost, "All scripture is God breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT (2)

As we continue to look at how the Holy Spirit works on the human heart, we have been comparing what two schools of thought have believed; Calvinism and those bound by the Bible. We saw that Calvinism teaches that man is incapable of being what he should be without a mysterious, secret, working of the Holy Spirit directly on the heart of the believer. That is generally Reformation thinking. Others we mentioned like Alexander Campbell and N.B. Hardeman understand the Spirit of God influences the human spirit through words or moral persuasion. Hence the saint or sinner has free will and personal choice. The only thing stopping his complete development as a child of God would be the disobedience of a wicked heart. Let's continue on and see what some who have tried to make the Bible their sole authority in religion have to say.

J.I. LOWELL

"It is objected, that if the truth makes us free, then the Spirit has nothing to do with it. Ah, indeed; then according to such logic, if the seed brings forth fruit, then the farmer himself does not raise fruit!! The words of the gospel are the Spirit's own words; and what any being does through his words, he does, as literally, as if he did it with his hand. . . .The question is not, whether the Spirit does the work; but, 'How does the Spirit do it?' The sects are ever quarreling about how it is done, and yet they contend it is a mystery and confess they know nothing about how it is done! So we are not likely to obtain much light from that quarter. But men of faith know how it is done; for God has told them it is done 'through the truth;' the only influence that is in harmony with man's accountability and the freedom of his will."

He continues, “there is a fatal error among men, namely, that the gospel depends on its being applied by the Holy Spirit. The Preacher can hardly preach or pray without using the phrase, ‘apply the word,’ or some similar expression; but I insist that he is bound to find that expression in the book, or frankly acknowledge the idea is not there. So far from being true, the Bible always makes ‘the power of the gospel to depend on faith.’ Its power depends not on its being ‘applied,’ but on its being ‘believed ’”

He makes another interesting observation and one worthy of our consideration: “The Bible says men are converted, sanctified, and saved through the truth; and cunning and artful men play upon this expression. They say it means ‘with the truth.’ They teach that the Spirit uses the truth as the warrior uses his sword, or as the mechanic uses his tools. The idea is entirely mechanical; and Dr. Jeter, in behalf of the whole ‘evangelical family,’ contends the power with which the truth is applied is physical; but the prepositions through and with are entirely different in their use. Now let me tell you, Doctor, the warrior never kills his foe through his sword, but with his sword. The mechanic never hews timber through his axe, nor saws a board through his saw, nor drives a nail through his hammer! He performs these acts with his tools, and not through them. Anything done through a clerk, the clerk always does: and anything done through an intelligent agent, that agent always does in person; and anything done ‘through the truth,’ the truth itself does; hence Jesus uses these expressions as synonymous. He not only says, ‘sanctify them through the truth,’ but he also says the truth shall make you free.’” These and the following quotes are found in Doctrinal; and Practical Tracts (1876), reprinted by Restoration Reprint Library.

J. W. MCGARVEY ON ROMANS 8:16

“The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God” (Rom. 8:16). J.W. McGarvey says, “Paul, in the passage we are discussing, had reference, no doubt, to all these forms of testimony, for his language is unrestricted, and, therefore, includes all the testimony that the Spirit has given on the subject in hand. But to us, the reference must be practically limited to the written testimony, for this is all we have.

"The whole matter of the Spirit's testimony resolves into this: that the Holy Spirit, through the Scriptures, testifies that men who pass through certain changes, and maintain, afterward, a certain character are children of God. Whatever may be men's theories of spiritual influence, you will find no believer in the inspiration of the Scriptures who will deny that the Spirit does thus testify, or who will affirm that he communicates ideas on this subject in any other way."

T.W. BRENT

T. W. Brent says, "Every thing necessary to a thorough exhibition of the Christian religion, both theoretically and practically, is comprehended in the Scriptures. . . .The man of God is designed to be perfect, and the Scriptures given by inspiration were designed to make him so. They not only furnish him, but thoroughly furnish him, not only to some good works but to all good works. Does it not follow, then, that there is nothing left discretionary with man? Nay, if there be any work to which the man of God is not thoroughly furnished by the scriptures, does it not follow that it is not a good work ?..." (p. 613, Gospel Plan of Salvation).

He continues, "Having found that the Holy Spirit has clothed its ideas in words adapted to the comprehension of man, we can see a beauty and fitness in the parable of the sower and the explanation of it by the Saviour" (p. 617).

He deals with an objection: "And if the Holy Spirit only operates on man mediately, and the devil immediately, then it follows, that the latter has more power than the former. We would respectfully suggest the modus operandi of the Holy Spirit is not a question of power. We care not to examine whether the Spirit can or cannot operate in this or that way. It is sufficient that we know how it does operate " (p. 628). . . . If God has given us a full and perfect revelation of His mind and will concerning the redemption, conversion, salvation, government, spiritual growth, and final happiness of man in His Word, what need have we for influences of, or communications from, the Spirit without the Word? We cannot conceive of an impression necessary to be made

upon the heart of man which the Word of the Lord is not capable of making". . . . (p. 630) "If you tell us you do not want influences of the Spirit without the Word, but an accompanying influence with the Word, then is this not an attack upon the sufficiency and truth of the Word? It seems to virtually say: 'I will not believe and obey the Lord in full assurance of faith in His Word until there is the accompanying influence of the Spirit through my own feelings confirming its truth.' If the Spirit makes impressions through our feelings not conveyed by words, we would like to see the rule of interpretation. How shall we decide whether it confirms or contradicts the Word?... It occurs to us that we would about as soon undertake to translate the tapings of table-legs into good English as any other kind of communication not made through words" (p. 631).

Regarding providence he says, "A providential circumstance may prepare a man to favorably receive the Spirit's teaching; e.g. the death of a friend or near relative, or physical suffering. . . . Our dependence upon God is brought home to us, and thus the heart is prepared for a favorable consideration of spiritual instruction; but not a ray of spiritual light can we derive from such afflictions. We are simply prepared to consider what light we previously had, and to receive additional instruction if it is presented to us. We are not prepared to regard the mellowing influence of such afflictions as the work of the Holy Spirit in conversion" (p. 635).

JOE S. WARLICK

In the Ben M. Bogard (Baptist) - Joe S. Warlick (Christian) debate Joe Warlick said, "It will not be enough to find one [scripture passage] which shows that the Spirit actually operates, this we admit. Find one for us which shows how it operates, and which teaches, motely or remotely, that the operation is by direct or immediate touch, 'unconfused with means.'"

Well, we want to listen to additional thinking next, then we want to see the scriptures which ought to influence us rightly.

INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT (3)

We have looked at Reformation thinking which was systematized by John Calvin and which taught that the Holy Spirit worked in a secret, mysterious way to prepare the heart for reception and understanding of the word. Some believe He worked on the word. In this country, as we have seen, when men wanted to go back to the word of God as the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:11) which would restore the original church rather than reform the Catholic church, they soon entered a fight to the death with Calvinism, and especially all its teaching regarding a direct operation of the Spirit. As they studied the Bible they found that God made man a rational being, and that God motivated man by communication, moral persuasion, warnings, promises, and exhortations. Man, according to the Bible, has free will to make personal choices, and the only thing that prevented conviction, conversion, and sanctification was a preference for sin which produced a wicked and unbelieving and disobedient heart. As far as the Lord's church was concerned, truth mattered more than denominational loyalty, so Calvinism and a direct operation of the Spirit lost out for these could not be found much less sustained in scripture. Let's see what others have said about the work of the Spirit on the human heart as they opposed Calvinism.

DAVID LIPSCOMB AND E. G. SEWELL

"The Holy Spirit bears his testimony through the words of the apostles, and no man has a spiritual idea regarding salvation that has

not come through apostles as found in the New Testament; and when men look for spiritual influences outside the words of the Spirit, they will be forever subject to all kinds of extravagances or delusions that their leaders may have a mind to impose upon them. The Spirit made thousands of Christians in the days of the apostles by speaking through them and telling sinners what to do; but not one was made a Christian otherwise. We have these same words now, and all may be Christians by them if they will.

"We understand that all who obey the gospel and come into the temple of God receive the Spirit to dwell with them. We would not, however, pretend to say that the Spirit that is promised to dwell in the Christian is a Comforter in the sense that he was to the apostles. The Spirit comforts Christians through his words upon the same principle that he makes Christians through his words" (Questions Answered by Lipscomb and Sewell, ed. M.C. Kurfees, Nashville, 1969, Gospel Advocate Co.)

ROBERT L. WHITESIDE

"If God could have made a gospel that would reach the sinner's heart, but did not, as Mr. Bogard contended, then the deficiency is in the gospel and not in the sinner; and that is another reflection on God .... Sane people are moved by motive .... God presents to the sinner motives as high as heaven, and as deep and awful as hell, and as beautiful as perfect holiness and bliss. These motives are presented to him in the Bible. And consider this: every sensible act is prompted by a sensible motive" (Doctrinal Discourses, pp. 142-143).

E.R. HARPER

"It was through this revelation of God, by the Holy Spirit, that these, on the day of Pentecost, were convicted, converted, saved, and sanctified by the operation of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, BY WHICH WORD, Christ declared, God sanctified the people. Hence in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit operated upon these people through the word of God given to him that day by the Father. This is the only way the Holy Spirit ever operates upon or influences man in any way today. He does not by-pass the mind of man, nor does he dishonor or insult the intelligence of man by motivating him in exciting feelings of some kind by placing man's hopes of the promises of God upon

some kind of way-out subjectivism, better felt than told. . . .It is not a 'subjective' type of religion based upon our feeling, but it is based upon testimony (the Bible) that moves our intelligence into action."

"The Holy Spirit did not come into PERSONAL contact with the individuals upon whom he operated with his SWORD, the Word of God. Just so it is today. The Holy Spirit operates today upon the hearts of men, both saint and sinner, by. and through, his word — not in personal combat endeavoring to defeat the sinful nature in either the saint or the sinner. God respects the free moral agency of man; man's privilege is to accept or reject" (p. 27).

Speaking of the memoirs of J.N. Hall (co-president of the Hall-Moody Institute, Baptist) E.R. Harper says Hall gives "the most concise, the most distinct, and clarifying explanation I have ever read explaining what is meant by the 'direct miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit,' as is taught by Sister Bass and ALL of those among us who are in any way pressing the 'miraculous, supernatural indwelling of the Holy Spirit's person,' performing any kind of 'miraculous' influence upon us, which influence is 'not the direct result of the effectual working of the Word of God'". . . . Hall says, 'God's doctrines, ordinances and teachings are embodied in his written Word and that not beyond, or without them, but in CONJUNCTION WITH THEM, THERE IS A DISTINCT PERSONAL POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'" . . . .

Talking of sister Bass at Highland in Abilene Harper says, "She said she believed that both the Word and the Holy Spirit worked together. That is what J.N. Hall said, only he used the word 'conjunction'" (p. 64).

Brother Harper continues, "This is the most destructive of all supposed Christian religious doctrines known to me. It is as destructive, if not more so, than miracles and tongues. It must be stopped in our ranks, or we are soon to be a 'forgotten people"' (p. 65). All this is from Ernest Rosenthal Harper's book, Harper on the Holy Spirit Issues in the Twentieth Century.

FRANKLIN CAMP

Dealing with the restoration of the past Franklin Camp says in The Work of the Holy Spirit, "The Restoration Movement has made numerous contributions to the religious world. One of the greatest contributions has been the insistence that the Holy Spirit operates only through the Word in conversion and sanctification. Calvinistic teaching of total depravity was the mother of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit" (p. 1).

Dealing with the present time he writes, "Since the emphasis of the Restoration Movement was to turn men from emotional experiences back to the Bible, one would never have thought the day would come when the false teaching of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit would become a matter of controversy in the church. But it is here, and unless we can stop it, we are headed the same way that the Protestant world has gone. It is later than many think. . . .It is to this end that this book is being written, to show the fallacy of all such claims, and establish the proposition that the Holy Spirit operates in conversion and sanctification only through the Word. This proposition has stood the test of debate after debate in the past. It will stand the test of all who may try to attack it. It is unshakeable because it is the truth of the gospel of Christ...." (p. 2).

Discussing the Campbell-Rice Debate Franklin Camp quotes the Presbyterian Calvinist as saying, '"I have been proving that in the conversion and sanctification of adults there is: first, the instrumentality of the Word; second, a distinct agency of the Holy Spirit for which the pious are accustomed to pray, and influence effectually renewing and sanctifying the soul,' (page 702). Again Rice says, 'How the Spirit operates on the heart in conversion and sanctification, I profess not to understand.'

"Note carefully the following: Rice makes no distinction between the direct operation in conversion and the direct operation in sanctification. He states that in sanctification there is an influence of the Spirit in addition to the word and distinct from it. An influence without which arguments and motives of the gospel never convert and sanctify one of Adam's ruined race (p. 628). Other statements could be given to show that Rice believed that the Word was used in conversion, but there had to be a direct and distinct influence of the Spirit in addition to the Word in conversion. Let me summarize Rice's

position as stated in the preceding quotes: 1) Rice says that the Word is used in conversion, but that there is an influence of the Spirit distinct from the Word and in addition to the Word that is necessary for conversion; 2) Rice claimed that the Spirit worked in connection and conjunction with the Word in sanctification, but that also there was a direct and distinct influence just as there was in conversion; 3) Rice maintained that the influence of the Spirit in addition to the Word was not a miracle. But in order to try to defend this, he explained that this operation was invisible and mysterious" (p. 27).

"Thus, what has happened in the church today is that some brethren have simply adopted the Calvinistic doctrine of the direct, invisible, and mysterious influence of the Spirit on the Christian, rather than teaching what the Bible teaches regarding the Spirit's work on the alien and on the Christian. The direct operation of the Spirit on the Christian, in addition to the Word and distinct from the Word, is Calvinistic teaching purely and simply" (p. 28).

INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT (4)

We continue looking at the words of various men concerning how the Spirit influences the heart of the saint, then we want to look at scripture.

GEORGE W. DEHOFF

"Indeed, everything the Bible says that the Holy Spirit does for us on earth, it also says the Word of God does it for us. This simply proves that God's Holy Spirit operates through God's written Word. Saints and sinners depend on this Word for God's message. . . .The notion that the Holy Spirit is operating in some manner separate and apart from His Word is Calvinism — it is false doctrine" (1988 Bellview Lectures, Are We Moving Away From The Cross of Christ?, p. 185).

GUY N. WOODS

"Sanctification is not some mysterious, inwrought condition accomplished through the independent agency of the Holy Spirit. This, too, is clearly apparent from what is affirmed of sanctification in the Scriptures. . . 'Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth' (John 17:17). David is an excellent example of one who attained to sanctification through the word of truth: 'Thy word have I hid in mine

heart, that I might not sin against thee' The Psalmist felt that the word was sufficient help in avoiding the allurements of Satan; the view that an independent ministry, apart from the word, by the Spirit is necessary, would have drawn no sympathy from him!" (Questions and Answers Open Forum, by Guy N. Wood, Published by Freed-Hardeman college, pp. 332,333).

J. D. THOMAS

He gives more history and background and his remarks on this subject are thereby useful. He says, "Evangelicals form quite a large body of Protestants who hold a very distinctive view of revelation growing out of traditional thought yet also out of currents of the Protestant Reformation. Although they are great defenders of the Bible as a positive propositional revelation, and opt for 'hard' history, they in fact hold that 'authentication by the Holy Spirit' is really primary in the revelation of God's will. Actually they feel that this spiritual experience is agreeable to the idea of propositional revelation and that the Bible teaches such, even though it cannot be documented from scripture. Their certainty comes from feelings, derived from a direct confrontation by the Spirit. . . .In effect, [Billy] Graham's theology of the Bible at this point is the same as that of Barth. In both cases, revelation comes through the word 'as God chooses.' One does it by existential confrontation and the other by an immediate and direct action of the Holy Spirit. . . .

Bernard Ramm further expounds this immediate contribution of the Spirit: "Paralleling this objective revelation is the operation of the Spirit of God. He is the Mover in the writing of revelation; He is the Illuminator in the heart of the believer, giving him the grace to recognize revelation and the strength to appropriate it.

"Further, the word rests helpless in the hand till the Spirit quickens the heart to perceive its divinity.... The Word is mute in the hand of the sinner till the Spirit brings His illuminating grace."

But J. D. Thomas continues.

BIBLICAL POSITIVISM

J. D. Thomas says, "In contrast to the above theories of knowledge that have currency today, all of which have some degree

of subjectivism or indefiniteness (whether existential or Spirit dependent) the present author would now like to propose a basic epistemology that we will call 'Biblical Positivism.' This designation is because it is positive, certain and definite, and because we believe it to be more Biblical than competing views.

"This Biblical positivism approach is really that which has been traditional in church history, more so than Calvin's 'Spirit authentication.' In fact, we argue that it is the basic epistemology of the New Testament and of the early church. It is propositional, rational, objective and positivistic — 'ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' (John 8:32).

"This view does not endow man's reason unduly, but simply considers that the Holy Spirit has inspired God's word infallibly and correctly as it is addressed to the normal reasoning capacity of man. When man, then, sincerely applies himself in diligent seeking for the truth of revelation he can come to know it with positiveness. The seed of truth is 'sown' in good and honest hearts' [Luke 8:15] and that is all that is necessary, since the nature of the word (seed) is such that it is conditioned to man's normal reasoning capacity. No divine encounter, or enabling power of the Spirit, or specially ordained interpreter is needed. Given the revealed facts, the truth is discerned by inductive and deductive reasoning, just like scientific, historical, or any other ordinary knowledge is learned" (Heaven's Window, 1974, pp. 13-20).

ROBERT T. TAYLOR

"The man who has not the Spirit is none of his. The reason is obvious. He refuses to be moved and molded by Deity's will as set forth in the Bible— As we hear and heed the gospel, we are led by the Spirit. This is how sonship to God is established. On this very point brother J. Noel Merideth has stated so sagely and written so well:"

Influence is wrought upon the heart of the sinner and the Christian only through the medium of the word of truth. Any effort to make it appear that there is a direct influence on the heart of the sinner or Christian, independent of the word of God is false, hurtful and an impeachment of the all sufficiency of the Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16,17). The Spirit influences; but he does it by means of or through the word.

SUMMARY

Well, so far in our series we have looked at how men view the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the Christian. Let's notice some of the most pertinent points.

1. Campbell thought that the doctrine of a direct operation of the Spirit would neutralize preaching, annul the Bible, and annihilate human responsibility. Therefore it was fatal. There could be no naked influence of Spirit on spirit.

2. The spirit or heart of man is the seat of the reason, the will, and the emotions of the man. That which is to influence the spirit must have power to change the three. Words do that very thing, so God uses words or moral persuasion to change the heart of man.

3. N.B. Hardeman says there can be no middle ground. Either the Spirit operates on the heart only in words or he does not.

4. J.I. Lowell says the sects ever quarrel over how the Spirit works, but confess they do not know. As he says, we are not likely to get much light from that quarter.

Too, when the sects say the Holy Spirit applies the word, they need to find such an expression in scripture.

5. J. W. McGarvey says that the Spirit today only works through the Bible for that is all we have.

6. T. W. Brent says all that is needed in the Christian religion is comprehended in Scriptures. They furnish him unto every good work. The Holy Spirit clothes his ideas in words. And any accompanying influence of the Spirit's activity with the word is an attack on the sufficiency of the truth and the word.

Regarding providence, it can make one favorable to receive the Spirit's teaching. But no ray of light is brought by providence. It merely brings to mind what we already know or it prepares the way for truth from God.

7. Joe S. Warlick clearly shows the difference in the operation of the Spirit and how He operates. He says He operates, but challenges

anyone to find where scripture says He operates directly by immediate touch unconfused with means.

8. R. L. Whiteside points out that sane people are moved by sane motives. These motives are found in the Bible and every sensible act is prompted by a sensible motive.

9. E. R. Harper points out that the Spirit never by-passes the mind of man. And on and on we could go.

INFLUENCE OF THE SPIRIT (5)

So far we have listened to what men have said about how the Holy Spirit influences the human spirit. Now, let us focus on what the Bible says. In this book in a chapter on the human heart we have seen that the heart of man is the rational part of man called the mind. "Why reason ye in your hearts" (Luke 5:22), Jesus says. It is also that rational part of man called the "spirit" which knows things, "For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him?" (1 Cor. 1:11). It is the part of man which hears, holds the word of God fast, and brings forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:15).

So, since God made man a rational being with a free will and personal choice, it would seem that His plan of salvation from beginning to end would be adapted to choice and free will by rational persuasion, rather than to mysterious mechanical force and the help of some kind of mystical, abstruse, inexplicable coercion, spiritual steroids, or any other kind of direct compulsion from the Holy Spirit. So as a people we have always commonly argued that in conviction, conversion, and sanctification, the Holy Spirit works on our spirit only

through the word of God: "And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

THE GOSPEL IS THE POWER

OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

As a people, we all love Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Yet we should ask, why is the gospel such "power" (dunamis, from which we get dynamite and which is often translated "miracle")? I believe it is the power because words that are well designed for the reasoning, will, and emotions of men can be dynamite; they can be explosive. When used they can incite a fight, a riot, or launch a war. They are so dangerous laws are even passed to restrict what can be said, such as crying "fire" in a movie theater.

The gospel of God is even better for it is perfectly designed with just the right motives, warnings, admonitions, promises, blessings and hope to slay enmity toward God and reconcile honest and good hearts. Nowhere in the Bible are we ever told that more is needed than God's word or that other force is used: "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psa., 73:24).

The word of God is from "that than which a greater cannot be conceived," i.e., God Almighty (El-Shaddai). Therefore scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35), is completely pure (Psa. 12:6), and will accomplish precisely what God pleases without any unrevealed reinforcements; and it will prosper in the things whereunto He sent it without any imaginary supernaturalism (Isa. 55:8-11). Things not expressed in scripture, all these "I-can't-explain-it super-sensibilities," we must assign to the kingdom of elfdom, where fairies and witchery and direct operation of the Spirit and many other wondrous esoteric things abide.

FAITH, FREE WILL,

HONEST HEART, AND OBEDIENCE

However, God never claims His word is literary brute force, coercive to those who love pleasure more than righteousness, or a bludgeon to free-will or personal resolve. We read, "but the word of

hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard" (Heb. 4:2). Obedience follows faith so we read, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves" (Jas. 1:22). And thus Jesus often said, "He that hath ears, let him hear" (Mat. 13:9). And again Jesus presented what in the face of the power of God for conviction, conversion and sanctification, is the common and eternal problem for hearers. It is never said we need a mysterious force from the Spirit, but rather, "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed" (Mat. 13:15). True, Paul says, "For the word of God is sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). And it is true God said, "Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces" (Jer. 23:29). Yet it is also true that God says, "And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). This passage is maybe the best there is to show what is required for the Spirit of Truth to work through truth in conviction, conversion, and sanctification. There is no behind-the-scenes extrasensory influx of strength from the Spirit to help us obey and carry on, no occultism mentioned here or elsewhere, no telepathic lucidity, no etheric mind power from the Spirit is promised. What stands in the way of obedience and fruit bearing is a heart not honest and good, a lack of faith, a lack of patience. Lack of fruit is not ascribed to a lack of direct contact of Spirit on spirit, but a lack of honesty, goodness and patience (Luke 8:15). Now let's briefly in small part confirm this by scripture.

CONFIRMATORY SCRIPTURES

"Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). I believe every false teacher must eventually make some kind of attack on the truth. Anyone who makes a strike at the all-sufficiency of God's word in matters religious, which are necessary to get you to heaven, is a false teacher, a novice in the word, or someone whose study has hit a glitch which we hope is

temporary. Pride or such like can convince us that our speculations are truth, our musings doctrine, and our theoretical postulations and suppositions are God's actual word in scripture. Humility and love of truth help us to hold all such in sincere suspicion until in scripture we find it is so authenticated that even a tyro or a new convert can be able to see it to be certainly taught in God's word. But someone will say, "True, the scriptures are all-sufficient, but all sufficient for what?" Well one thing I know, they are of themselves, after delivered by the Spirit, all sufficient unto "every good work." That to me includes anything even a "kissing cousin" to sanctification. The idea that something direct, Spirit on spirit, is needed for me to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, have strength to resist sin, or such like is a doctrine which denounces the all-sufficiency of God's word.

Human wisdom says you can't be pure from just reading scripture. Yes you can. By words the Bible injects the honest and good heart with a hope of a resurrection of the dead. So John says, "every one that hath this hope set on him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:3). Where is this mysterious "direct working"? Did not God say to Israel, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18).

But a sectarian will say the Spirit must sanctify you (2 Thes. 2:13; 1 Pet. 1:3). Yes, but Jesus showed how the Spirit does it: "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). Why must they assume it is mysterious, personal, and direct? God created man with a spirit. That spirit possesses free will and desires, but it is open to truth and reason if it is honest and good (Luke 8:15) and if it loves truth more than pleasures of unrighteousness (2 Thes. 2:12).

The sectarian says that man is so dead that nothing but direct, personal influence of the Spirit can revive and strengthen him. But David said, "I will never forget thy precepts; for with them thou hast quickened [made alive] me" (Psa. 119:93). And again, "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19:7, KJV; NKJV).

But should I not need some supernatural contact with the Holy Spirit to really make me clean? The Bible says, "already ye are clean because of the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3).

We have said that God operates on us sufficiently with the motives from the power of file Holy Spirit, knowledge of which are found in the gospel preached by the Holy Spirit We know all that because Peter said, "seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue" (2 Pet. 1:3). All things that pertain to life and godliness come through knowledge, not some mystic sixth sense, or some incomprehensible supernatural infusion of something which of course they can never seem to explain.

Words strengthen, fortify, and give us strength to resist. So David said, "As for the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the ways of the violent" (Psa. 17:4). We conquer by the strength we get from God's word and from all we know of Him Who spoke it. So again David said, "The law of his God is in his heart; None of his steps shall slide" (Psa. 37:31). And did not John the apostle write, "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:14). Now such verses clearly show how God strengthens us, fortifies us, and gives us power to overcome the devil. It is through words, words, words of God's lips. But those who believe there is a direct, personal, Spirit on spirit influence to enable us to do the will of God never seem able to find one single passage in the Bible which expresses it as being real for Christians after miraculous times.

Yet someone, for reasons I cannot understand, still says you can't be clean and resist sin without some kind of extra-biblical power from the Holy Spirit in addition to the influence of the word. Still, against such notions, wherever they come from, God says, "Wherewith shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word" (Psa. 119:9). And again, "Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee" (Psa. 119:11).

But how can you bear fruit of the Spirit unless you have direct personal contact with the Spirit in a way beyond His words? When I hear sentiment like that I just wonder what the problem is. Jesus said, "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself" (Mark4:27,28). Jesus said the seed of the kingdom is the word of God

(Luke 8:11). And He concluded, “And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). One hears the commands of the Spirit in the truth He uttered, which is now only found in the Bible. If his heart is honest and good, he yields to the instruction of the spirit and bears the fruit that such seed of the Spirit yields in good ground. Must a child have direct, personal contact with a loving father before he can obey the voice of that father and bear fruit the father urges, on any particular occasion?

Yet someone will say that sin is so strong, and once it has you the only way to be free from its grip is by some inexplicable power given by direct, personal, contact with the indwelling Spirit. Why believe such? Where is it taught? If I could see it taught I would accept it. Whatever ways God chooses to work are fine with me. But I will not accept them until He reveals them. This is especially true when over and over again He does reveal His way of operation. So Jesus says, “If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; (32) And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31,32). When the Jews said they were never in bondage to any man Jesus replied, “Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin” (John 8:34). So truth sets you free from sin.

We could go on and on, but always in every passage, the thing that is always lacking is any revelation about the Holy Spirit ever working in conviction, conversion, or sanctification separate and apart, in addition to, or beyond the Word of God. So, since it is lacking why do some believe it?

PREMILLENNIALISM (1)

WRONG ON THE CHURCH AND THE RESURRECTION

Premillennialism is a system which basically says Christ will come to earth and reign a thousand years before the end of all things. Pre means “before” and millennial means "one thousand." We do not believe the system called “Premillennialism.” To show why, we will first describe the doctrine in a general way. Then we will study, in a little detail, nine reasons why we sincerely believe the system is wrong. Let’s begin.

A GENERAL VIEW OF PREMILLENNIALISM

What follows will not be representative of every school of thought regarding Premillennialism, but a general and representative

review of the doctrine as a whole. Premillennialists disagree with each other, so I can't give all the varieties.

First, it is taught that the Old Testament predicted the reestablishment of David's kingdom. The Jews refused to accept Jesus, so He couldn't set up his kingdom. Thwarted, He went back to heaven, but as an afterthought He left the church as a kind of interim measure.

Before the second coming, we have the church age in which we are now. Near the close of this reign, there will be the resurrection of righteous believers. It is described, Premillennialists teach, in Revelation 20. All the saints of the Old Testament and New Testament dispensations will share in the first part of the first resurrection. Saints who are still alive on earth will be changed in form of body. Later there will be a resurrection of "tribulation saints." That will be the second part of the first resurrection.

Next however, there will be the "rapture." The Bible never mentions even the word, but it is supposed to be a time when all saints are resurrected and changed and removed up into the air. The church age then ends. The coming of Christ for His saints is secret, at night, and the Rapture is supposed to be the first stage of the Lord's second coming. So the rapture is the taking of saints to heaven.

Those saints are supposed to be in heaven with Christ seven years. There will occur the judgment of the saints. They will be given rewards and positions. According to Premillennialism, the marriage-feast in heaven will be eaten (Revelation 19:7-9).

During the last three and a half years of this seven years will be the "Great Tribulation." Many people on earth will be converted during this period. Too, the Anti-Christ is said to appear during these seven years. The Jews make a covenant with him. The converted saints are killed before the Lord returns. During this period "All Israel" is said to be saved (Rom. 11:26).

Then comes the second coming. The Revelation of Christ is come. This ends the great tribulation after the battle of Har-megedon (Rev. 16:16). Tribulation saints are resurrected and there is the gleanings of the great harvest of the resurrection. This is seven years

after the resurrection of the other saints and is the second part of the first resurrection. This is the time of the second stage of the second coming. Gentiles who are living on earth are judged and disposed of.

Now Christ ascends to the throne of David. He is an earthly king with a one-thousand year reign. Satan is bound and sealed in a pit (Rev. 20:2).

The kingdom, again, is a material, earthly kingdom of one-thousand years. During this time the Gentiles will be converted. National Israel will be supreme over all the earth. Members of the church will rule with Christ in Jerusalem. During the millennium no one will be subject to temptation. Saints come with Christ to rule. They are those who suffer martyrdom and those who refuse the name of the beast.

At the end of the millennium Satan will be loosed for a little while (Rev. 20:7). There will then be the resurrection and judgment of the wicked. There is to be then, according to Premillennialism, eternity on a reconditioned heaven and earth. Some saints will be in a reconditioned heaven.

What we have seen in this general over-view of Premillennialism are about nine significant points. We will now begin to inspect each of these nine points.

THEY ARE WRONG REGARDING THE CHURCH

Remember Premillennialism teaches that Christ came to set up the kingdom, but He was rejected, failed, and when He went back to heaven He left the church as an afterthought. However, Christ's rejection was prophesied. Isaiah said of the Messiah, "who hath believed our message? And to whom hath the arm of Jehovah been revealed?" (Isa. 53:1). In verse three Isaiah says, "He was despised, and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief' (Isa. 53:3). And David said of the Messiah, "The stone which the builders rejected is become the head of the comer. This is Jehovah's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psa. 118:22,23). No, the church was not an afterthought. It was even in the mind of God from all eternity. Paul said, "and to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery

which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things: to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:9-11). So the church is no afterthought as Premillennialism teaches.

THEY ARE WRONG ON THE RESURRECTION

Second, Premillennialism is wrong concerning the resurrection. It teaches that there will be a resurrection of the righteous at the end of the church age. Saints will be raptured to heaven. Then after 1,000 years there will be a resurrection of the wicked. Yet the Bible, in clear contexts, places the resurrection of the wicked and the righteous together. In the parable of the tares the householder says of the wicked and righteous, "Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn" (Mat. 13:30). Then notice Jesus' explanation: "The son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears, let him hear" (Mat. 13:41-43). This clearly shows the wicked and the righteous as being raised together and at the same time and on the same occasion. Then in the "Parable of Judgment Day" we see the righteous and the wicked together, one on the left hand and one on the right hand of the King. Finally we read, "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life:" (Mat. 25:46). Again, the righteous and the wicked are seen together just as they lived together on earth. This all agrees with John 5:27-29: "And he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour cometh, in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John 5:27-29). Jesus talked of this resurrection as happening for both at the same

PREMILLENNIALISM (2)

WRONG ON THE KINGDOM

AND THE RAPTURE

We have been studying Premillennialism, that doctrine where Christ is supposed to come back and reign on the earth a thousand years before the final resurrection. We are looking at nine points wherein we sincerely believe Premillennialism is wrong. We have showed that Premillennialism is wrong on the church, thinking it was

an afterthought, an interim measure until Jesus could set up the kingdom, which He failed to do at His first coming. Two, we showed Premillennialism is wrong in its belief on the resurrection, thinking there are two separate resurrections, one of the righteous and one of the wicked. Let's look now at other features of Premillennialism.

PREMILLENNIALISM IS

WRONG ON THE KINGDOM

Premillennialism says the kingdom will be set up at the second coming and is not present now. However, the proper interpretation of Daniel 2 shows that it would be set up in the days of the Roman Empire. It is the fourth kingdom after Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. Rome ruled over various kingdoms and we read, "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." (Dan. 2:44). Too, Jesus received the kingdom at His ascension. In Acts 1:10,11 Jesus ascends and disappears in the clouds. In a prophetic vision, hundreds of years earlier, Daniel saw what happened. He said, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man, and he came even to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all the peoples nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (Dan. 7:13,14). So Jesus' coronation was right after He ascended. He became King and began His reign at that time.

Too, in the days of John the baptizer the kingdom was close. He preached, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 3:2). And Jesus also preached, "Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 4:17). And notice how Jesus put it in Mark 9:1: "Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). They would not die, Jesus said, before they saw the kingdom come with power. It did come with power. After His resurrection Jesus said, "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy

Spirit is come upon you: And ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). When they got the Spirit they would get the power. Next they soon got the power on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus when they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). Thereafter, the kingdom is spoken of as existing, present tense, already in operation. Notice a few passages.

"Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love" (Col. 1:13). "To the end that ye should walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2:12). So, in the first century saints were translated into the kingdom and were being called into the kingdom and glory. And in the first century John the apostle said, "I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1:9). In the first century John says he is a partaker of the kingdom. And in Hebrews 12:28 Paul says, "Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (Heb. 12:28). Paul said they were receiving the kingdom.

But one more thing: not only did they receive the kingdom in the first century, it was not a physical, earthly kingdom at all, as Premillennialism expects. We read, "And being asked by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God cometh he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo, here! or there! for lo, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20,21). At His trial, before Pilate, Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). The kingdom is not a material kingdom set up here on earth. And it, being a spiritual kingdom, takes a spiritual birth to get into it. Again Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). When you put it all together, it is not a physical kingdom at all. It is the reign of God in

the heart of the believer through the truth. So Premillennialism is all wrong on the kingdom.

THE RAPTURE

Premillennialism is all wrong on the rapture. The word is not even found in the New Testament. Premillennialists use it to mean the carrying away of saints by Christ to heaven. It is supposed to occur at the end of the church age and serve as the first stage of the second coming. The so-called tribulation saints are supposed to be resurrected at the beginning of the one-thousand year reign.

One passage they use is I Thessalonians 4:13-17 "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 that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I The. 4:16,17). But that verse is not talking of a rapture. It is speaking of the second coming. The word rapture is not in the verse, nor is it anywhere in the Bible. And friend, if the word is not in the Bible, isn't it likely the concept behind the word is not in the Bible? The coming of Christ mentioned in I Thess. 4:13-17 is the same as the one mentioned in Revelation 1:7: "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, amen" (Rev. 1:7).

Further, I Thessalonians 4:13-17 has terms used of the end of the world contained in it. There is the shout, the voice of the archangel and the trump of God in verse 16. That doesn't sound like a secret rapture does it? Then verse 18 says they will ever be with the Lord. Doesn't that sound like eternity?

The other passage they use is I Corinthians 15:50-58. In part it says, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed..." (I Cor. 15:50ff). But there is the trump again, so it is not secret (v. 52). It is the time for immortality (I Cor. 15:53). It

is a time when death is swallowed up in victory (v. 54). When the so-called "rapture" occurs, death is supposed to be still on the earth. So the concept of the rapture doesn't fit the passage. The truth is, one might say it is hard to disprove the rapture using the Bible. It is hard to disprove something the Bible never ever really talks about. I can truly say that as far as the Bible is concerned, there is no such thing as the rapture.

So Premillennialism is wrong on the church; it is wrong on the kingdom; it is wrong on the resurrection; and it is wrong on the rapture. And there is more to come.

PREMILLENNIALISM (3)

WRONG ON THE GREAT TRIBULATION, THE SECOND COMING AND THE LAND PROMISES

We have been viewing that very earthly of doctrines called "Premillennialism." So far we have seen that the Bible contradicts Premillennialism regarding its view of the church, its view on the kingdom, its view on the resurrection, and its view regarding the rapture, a concept not found in Scripture. Though we take no pleasure in it, we will now begin to see where the Bible contradicts other tenants of Premillennialism.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

Premillennialism is wrong on its doctrine called, "The Great Tribulation." It teaches that the raptured saints will be in heaven 7 years. During the last 31/2 years there is supposed to be a great tribulation followed by the second coming of Christ. They arrive at this by misunderstanding Daniel's 70 weeks and die "time, times, and half a time" of Revelation 12:14. But we want to simply point out that the whole Christian dispensation is fittingly featured as a great tribulation. In the Parable of the Sower recorded in Matthew 13, we find, "and he that was sown upon the rocky places, this is he that heareth the word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while; and when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, straightway stumbleth" (Mat. 13:20,21). Yes, all are tested by tribulation. Jesus said, straight out: "These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye may have peace. In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

Paul uses the word tribulation twelve times. In ten of these references tribulation is used of the ordinary sufferings of the Christian walk. For example we find: "confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). And Paul taught, "and not only so, but we also rejoice in our tribulations: knowing that tribulation worketh stedfastness; and stedfastness, approvedness; and approvedness, hope" (Rom. 5:3,4). The other two times the word is used is talking of tribulation of the wicked in hell.

We wonder, where do they get these things such as the "great tribulation." In Scripture there is tribulation, but never a doctrine of a "Great Tribulation." But more!

THE SECOND COMING

Premillennialism is wrong on the second coming. They say the first part is secret. But the Bible never talks of two parts. There is simply the second coming of Christ and it is spoken of this way: "Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, amen" (Rev. 1:7). That's not very secret

Too, the Bible never says He will descend to reign here on earth on a worldly throne. Notice: "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 that are alive, that are left shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (I Thess. 4:16-18). We meet in the clouds and will ever be with the Lord in the air; that's where heaven is. The Bible never literally has Jesus set foot on this literal earth ever again.

But they are also wrong in saying Christ will sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem. We have seen before that His coronation was at the time of His ascension from earth when He came with the clouds to receive from the Ancient of days a kingdom (Dan. 7:13,14). But notice Peter's language: "Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us unto this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spake of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus did God raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he hath poured forth this, which ye see and hear" (Acts 2:29-33). Here we notice that Christ's sitting on the throne came at the resurrection and was not to be fulfilled at the second coming. Hear Jesus after the resurrection: "He that

overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne" (Rev. 3:21). The throne of God is the throne of David. God loaned it to the people; later it was taken back for the Messiah.

Along this line notice Hebrews 8:1: "Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens" (Heb. 8:1). Does that not sound as if Jesus sat down on His throne and now reigns in the heavens? Can it be more clear? And notice: "Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1,2). So Christ has already received His coronation and is now already on the throne of God. Premillennialists are all amiss on the second coming.

THE LAND PROMISES

Further, Premillennialists are wrong on the land promises. They contend that certain land promises made to Israel were never fulfilled, and so they look for that fulfillment in our day. They say that Israelites must be restored to Canaan land. They must rebuild the city of Jerusalem and the temple as well. The Gentiles must become subservient to the Jews and all this must take place at the coming of Jesus and just prior to the thousand-year reign. In saying all this they lift many passages from the Old Testament and say they have not yet been fulfilled. For example notice Genesis 15:18: "In that day Jehovah made a covenant with Abram, saying, unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates" (Gen. 15:18). Yet Joshua said the prophecy of Canaan proper had been fulfilled: "So Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which he sware to give unto their fathers; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein, and Jehovah gave them rest round about, according to all that he sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed

not aught of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Josh. 21:43-45).

But one might ask, "Did it extend from the Nile to the Euphrates"? Notice: "And he [Solomon] ruled over all the kings from the River [Euphrates] even unto the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt" (I Chr. 9:26).

But someone might say, "Well they did not retain all that land." Yet all acknowledge the conditional nature of prophecy. Notice how God puts it: "And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them" (Jer. 18:9,10). Read all, Jeremiah 18:5-12. Israel had it, but due to their iniquity the land was all taken away from them. So Premillennialists are as wrong as they can be on the land promises. There are these clear passages of Scripture which refute them. I am glad, for Premillennialism is a very earthly doctrine.

PREMILLENNIALISM (4)

WRONG ON HAR-MAGEDON

AND THE FINAL ABODE

We have been Scripturally viewing nine claims of Premillennialism and are now ready to view the last two. Then we will summarize all nine.

THE WAR OF HAR-MAGEDON

Though it gives us no pleasure to point it out, Premillennialism is wrong on Har-magedon. Their view comes from Revelation 16 and 17. In Revelation, in a context where it talks about enemies of the church it says, "And they gathered them together into the place which is called in Hebrew Har-magedon" (Rev. 16:16). In verse 14 it says, "for they are spirits of demons, working signs; which go forth unto the kings of the whole world, to gather them together unto the war of the great day of God, the Almighty" (Rev. 16:14). In the seventeenth chapter Christ and His forces are symbolized thusly: "These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of Lords, and King of Kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful" (Rev. 17:14).

From that they teach that after the rapture the saints will return with Christ when He comes to destroy the forces of the Antichrist Then He will establish His kingdom. The great battle of Har-magedon will be fought, though in Revelation it is called a war not a battle.

However, I believe the war of Har-magedon is being fought right now. It is a spiritual war and our souls are the spoils. What we have in Revelation is symbolism of that great war which goes on during the whole Christian dispensation. It is not in the Middle East, Afghanistan, and it does not involve Russia, China, or Great Britain. It is a conflict between Christ and Christians against Satan and evil spiritual forces. It involves temptation, and sin, holy living and persecution, faith and

hope, walking in darkness and walking in the light, prayer, being led not into temptation, sanctification and patience, tribulation, toil and cleansing by the blood of Christ. It involves obedience to the gospel and loving of this present world. Yes, the great war of Har-magedon is being fought right now. It is a spiritual battle and you are in it on one side or the other, depending on whether you have obeyed the Gospel in the way God gave it depending on whether you morally live as a saint or as a hypocrite, depending on whether the doctrines you hold are Scripturally true or whether they are false or even mere traditions of man. It would be of benefit to you to check your position out for you may be fighting against Christ.

Yes, it is a conflict between Christ and the Church, against Satan and evil forces. It is a spiritual battle, and you are presently in it Paul said, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5). True, we don't war in the flesh, and our weapons are not in the flesh according to scripture. What then!? Paul said, "Finally be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his might Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Wherefore take up the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: with all prayer and supplication praying at all seasons in the Spirit, and watching thereunto in all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Eph. 6:10-18). So it is a spiritual battle and we need spiritual armor. It is not a war in the flesh. The Scriptures cannot be more emphatic than that.

Megiddo was a famous battleground. It was to them like the name Gettysburg. Har-magedon is used to symbolize the great spiritual war we all fight. Paul dwelt on this theme constantly. He said, "Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier on service entangleth himself in the affairs of this life; that he may please him who enrolled him as a soldier" (2 Tim. 2:3,4).

True, there is a war on. But Premillennialism is all wrong on the war of Har-magedon. It is a spiritual war and it is going on now. It is not a physical battle sometime in the future. And it is a war, not a battle.

THE FINAL ABODE

But more. Premillennialism is wrong on the final abode. They teach that some will abide in the New Heaven and on the New Earth. Heaven and earth are those we have now, only they will be redone. But the Bible says the heaven and earth are to be done away, not merely remodeled. Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mat. 24:35). And notice the language of Peter: "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness. Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:10-13). True, there are to be new heavens and a new earth, in the sense that they symbolize our new dwelling place in heaven. Notice why we say such. John, in Revelation says, "And the heaven was removed as a scroll when it is rolled up; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places" (Rev. 6:14). And he is more clear in Revelation 20:11. Talking of the end of the world John says, "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat upon it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them" (Rev. 20:11). If no place is found for them, then the new heaven and the new earth must be symbolical of our new dwelling place in heaven. Jesus is in heaven and spends eternity there.

And He said, “Let not your heart be troubled: 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; for I go to prepare a place for you. and if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know the way” (John 14:1-4).

We could go on and on. The Scriptures are clear. Our reward is in heaven (Mat. 5:12). There our treasures are stored (Mat. 6:20). Our names are written in heaven (Luke 10:20), and the kingdom here on earth will be finally delivered up there (I Cor. 15:24). That’s why Paul said our citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20), and Peter said our inheritance is reserved there, (I Pet. 1:4). The Bible clearly says that heaven is where we will serve (Rev. 22:1-5). So Premillennialism is wrong on the final abode. They are wrong on these nine tenants:

1. The Church.
2. The Kingdom.
3. The resurrection.
4. Their mythical rapture.
5. The great tribulation.
6. The second coming.
7. The land promises.
8. The war of Har-magedon.
9. And the final abode.

Premillennialism is such a carnal, earthly, materialistic doctrine, I am glad it is a false system.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM (1)

THE CHURCH AND AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

We are going to begin a series regarding the original church and what is the authority in religion. We will discuss certain statements made in religion, and in doing so strive to learn more about that original church we read about in the Bible.

ARGUMENTS ON THE CHURCH

1. It is said that Jesus is God and as such He would not make a mess of His church as seen in all the divisions today. Since the Catholic Church is not divided, it must be the true church.

However, the Catholic Church, as all denominational churches, is divided. There is Greek Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed Churches. God never wanted division, yet even the first century church had division (2 Cor. 11:13-15; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 7-11; Jude 3,4). The Bible warned us that there would be division (I Cor. 11:18,19).

2. Then it is argued that Jesus said to the apostles, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Mat. 28:20). The apostles were not going to live to the end of the world; therefore Jesus must have referred to their successors. This shows that in the true church you will have successors to the apostles.

However, an apostle was to be a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:8; Acts 1:22). Witnesses do not have successors. Too, Matthew 28:18-20 just says Jesus will be with all disciples as they carry out the great commission until the end of the world.

3. Sometimes it is said that Jesus said the gates of hell would not prevail against the church (Mat. 16:18), and that the only church which has existed all of these 2,000 years is the Roman Catholic Church.

Though we often admire good Catholics for their devotion to their religion, we are sad to disagree with them on this. We sincerely date the Catholic Church around 600 A.D. It does not resemble at all the first church, the one we read; about in the Bible. And the gates of Hades never did prevail against that original church unto this day, though it may not be visible in the pages of history. Too, the seed of the kingdom is the word of God (Luke 8:11). The kingdom is the church (Matt. 16:13-19; Heb. 12:23,28). If you have wheat seed you have wheat If you have the seed of God's kingdom you have the kingdom, and the gates of Hades can never prevail against it (Mat. 24:35). Also, if today we take the pure word of God and plant it into the hearts of men it will today produce only that New Testament Church (Luke 8:11). All we need do, to have the original church in our day, is put away human doctrines, human traditions, catechisms, manuals, and disciplines, and follow the word of God alone. In that way we can restore the original church in our own day. In that way we can have pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity, without addition, without subtraction. But let's go on.

THE FINAL AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

4. It is said that scriptures are not the final authority in religion; the living voice of the church is the final authority. The first problem such a statement encounters is the fact that it not only finds no support for the statement in the word of God, it actually contradicts the word of God. Paul said, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37). Again, Paul said, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Well, what about traditions of the living voice of the church? Jesus said, "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship

me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). Regarding traditions of men He further said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:13). And the apostle Paul warned, 'Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8).

5. It is argued that if scripture were the final authority wouldn't Jesus himself have written? We wonder why at all that would be the case. This was to be the work of the Holy Spirit and His chosen apostles and prophets. See John 14:26; John 16:13, and 2 Peter 1:19-21. Baptism is essential to salvation, but Jesus did not baptize (John 4:1,2).

6. But it is asked, if scripture were that important, would Jesus have not asked His apostles to write? Yet at least on one occasion He did. He told John, "What thou seest, write in a book and send it to the seven churches" (Rev. 1:11). And in truth, through the Holy Spirit they were to be guided into all this (I Cor. 4:6; I Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:15,16). It is true that of the original 12 only a few wrote, but that few was all that was needed to make the New Testament, along with Paul and the prophets who wrote the New Testament.

7. How could the written word be the ultimate court of appeal to the early church? The church existed for years before anything was written down, some say. However, it is admitted things were early written down and called the word of God (2 The. 3:6; 2 The. 2:2; 2 Tim. 3:16,17). However, as we shall see, the word of God was the final appeal. That word was first in the apostles, then in the apostles and their writings, then in their writings alone.

8. How can the Bible be the final authority? Half the world is illiterate? Yet the Bible has been translated into almost every known language. And literate men read scripture to illiterate. Now it is being widely put on audio tape so all can listen to it.

9. Where would they for so many years get access to the books, some say. Until the 1500's there was no printing press. So for 1600 or 1700 years men couldn't use the Bible. But we would reply that there were enough Bibles for honest and good hearts to be evangelized. Men

galore preached to those who did not have a Bible. To preach from the Bible and according to the Bible is still to follow the rule of the Bible and to express that it is the final authority. Such a case is still preaching the word of God and not the traditions of men.

10. Someone however argues, some in the church did not accept Revelation, Hebrews, or James for almost 300 years. Too, it is argued, the early church read the Shepherd of Hermes and the Didache. It wasn't until the Catholic Council of Nice that the New Testament Canon was decided.

Yet we would reply, many read the Bible in the written form before the printed form. They read James, Revelation and Hebrews and others though these book's full inspiration was doubted by some. Some doubted the inspiration of the book of Revelation because it was hard to understand. They doubted Hebrews because there was no name put on it, though the early church always thought Paul wrote it. James seemed to some to have a lot of Judaism in it. But these and other books which were questioned by some because they were small and personal were always accepted as scripture by many. They were read as good books by others, and the weight of evidence in them that they were the word of God eventually caused them to win their way into the Canon. The other books which some thought might be inspired could not pass the test and were just set aside finally as mere Christian literature. I have read all the apostolic fathers without injury to my faith. But it seems the Bible books won the honest and good hearts of each generation, though they were slow in winning general and universal acceptance.

Too, no Catholic Council decided what books were to be accepted into the Bible. The books themselves decided the issue. The Council of Nice merely stated what people had already accepted. The books had already won the day for themselves.

11. But some ask, what do you do if you can't read Greek? You have, they say, to take an individual's word for it. Well, we would reply, their word and their translation is open to all scholars and they point out the weaknesses found in any translation. They are glad to do it and often more than zealous to do so. It is the least of our worries that some will change the meaning of the original. Scholars in every

denomination can check the original for those who are not proficient in Greek and Hebrew. So it is no big danger to rely on a comparison of versions. Too, you have to take someone's word if you rely on the living voice of the church. It is even worse when they are not inspired and the living voice of the church is truly not inspired. They contradict each other. But regarding scripture, we have a multitude of translations to check, most of which corroborate each other. The ultimate test is to ask if they produce a proper faith. Do they speak according to the truth? And Peter indicated that the written word can even be more sure than what was witnessed (2 Pet. 1:19).

So no, only scripture can be our authority in the Christian faith.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM (2)

THE LIVING VOICE OF THE CHURCH (2)

We have been studying what some call the "living Voice of the Catholic Church," which some sincerely believe is the final authority in religion. We believe the Bible is the final authority in religion, and that the "Living Voice of the Church" is human no doctrine at all. We are trying to sincerely answer arguments used to sustain the authority of "The Living Voice of the Church." Let's proceed.

12. It is argued that you have to accept the Catholic "Living Voice of the Church" as the authority in religion because even if you can read Hebrew and Greek, you cannot compare such manuscripts with the original documents.

However, we reply that various manuscripts are so numerous that all that understand textual criticism claim we with certainly have surely the exact original in the copies we have. And again, you cannot compare the "Living Voice of the Church" with the original manuscripts. Too, when you compare the "Living Voice of the Church" with the copies of the original they contradict each other.

13. Sometimes it is said that you can't claim the Bible is inspired just because it says it is inspired. True, but we rejoice that the Catholic Church has taken a stand, saying the Bible is inspired. But the reading of the Bible causes one to believe it is inspired, not merely its claims.

But we would add, mere statements to the effect that the "Living Voice of the Church" is inspired does not make it inspired. And again, we have in the Bible the words of the very apostles of Christ and prophets produced by them. And they claimed to have all the truth in their day, none to be delivered later in a so-called "Living Voice of the Church" (Acts 20:27; John 16:13; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3).

14. Then it is argued that the church did not come from scriptures; rather, scriptures came from the church. But that being so tells us nothing about there being a "Living Voice of the Church" which was to serve as an authority once the apostles and prophets died off. The miraculous forces that produced scripture were only to last until scripture was completed (I Cor. 13:10). First there was truth, then the church, then the writing down of truth. Truth was before the church, and today truth is in the scriptures and those scriptures contradict the "Living Voice of the Church."

15. Attention is drawn to the fact that the Eunuch told Philip he could not understand scripture unless someone guided him (Acts 8:31). However, the Eunuch was not a Christian, much less a prophet making an inspired statement, much less talking of the necessity of the "Living Voice of the Church." Too, he did not have the gospel facts whereby he could properly interpret Isaiah 53. Today we are aware of the gospel facts and they are all written down in scripture. As scripture they can guide us into all truth. The apostles and prophets of scripture were inspired by God, but the theologians of the "Living Voice of the Church" never even claim inspiration. They contradict scripture and they contradict each other.

16. Similarly it is argued that the Old Testament wasn't the supreme court for the Jews. It is said Jesus told the apostles to do and observe all that the scribes and Pharisees taught and said. However, they taught what Moses taught and should have been listened to. When they taught on their own laws Jesus said it was vain worship and traditions of men which should be rooted up (Matt. 15:7-9,13). See also Matthew 16:6; Mark 8:15; Luke 12:1.

17. To support the "Living Voice of the Church," some point out that faith comes by hearing not by reading (Rom. 10:17). Vine says in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words that "hearing"

in Romans 10:17 means "The receiving of a message." So something more than mere audible hearing is in mind. Receiving the word and not mere audible hearing is in mind. And John said as clearly as it could be said, that miracles were written so that we might believe.

18. It is argued that taking the scriptures as the sole authority in religion does nothing but cause division for every man has his own interpretation. However, the Bible lays division off on false teachers (Acts 20:29,30; 2 Peter 2:1-3), human traditions and doctrines of men (Mat. 15:7-9; Col. 2:8), carnality (I Cor. 3:1-4), lack of good will toward God (John 7:17), lack of love for truth (2 Thess. 2:9-12), ignorance and instability (2 Pet. 3:16), and love of evil (2 The. 2:11,12). How could any of us dare say God's word was the cause of division?

19. Sometimes it is said that a church is proved not to be a human institution if it stands a long time without falling. But error does stand a long time. It is in synchronization with the world and the world loves darkness and error and helps human religion to stand. So the kingdom of Satan does very well. Many false groups are growing.

20. If a house is dirty, some say, you sweep it out, not tear it down. But if the foundation is rotten you tear it down. Churches built on faulty foundations of human wisdom and traditions of men need to be torn down. Jesus said, in a context of traditions of men, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:13).

ARGUMENTS FOR THE SOLE AUTHORITY

OF THE WORD OF GOD

Now let us spend a little time discussing why the Bible is the sole authority in religion.

1. When Jesus was on earth, he asserted He would reveal all truth to the apostles (John 14:26; John 16:13). The apostles evidently got what Jesus promised. Paul said, "Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26,27). Peter asserts the same thing. He said, "seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet.

1:3). So they had it all in the first century while the apostles were alive. But Jude went further and said the faith was delivered once for all (Jude 3). It was understandable to boot (John 8:31,32; Eph. 3:3,4; 2 Cor. 1:13). And Paul said scripture was sufficient, clearly refuting the notion of a living voice of the church. He said, "all scripture is God-breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Yes, Paul says this of scripture, what is written down. And further, he says, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37). He said Christians needed to learn not to go beyond what was written (I Cor. 4:6). So that which is written is our final authority. It was revealed to the apostles; they had it all; they said it was sufficient and that it would not need to be delivered again. So as such, what is written in scripture is our only reliable authority in religion.

2. Notice, too, in Matthew 28:18-20 Jesus said all authority in heaven and on earth was delivered unto Him (Mat. 28:18-20). He said the world would be judged by His words: "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). We will be judged by the words of Christ, and that even through the writings of His apostles and prophets, and not through the teachings of uninspired men who even contradict Christ as well as each

Someone might say, "well, we don't have all Jesus spoke." But Jesus said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mat 24:35).

3. Then we notice that the apostles and prophets wrote down truth. John said he wrote that they may not sin (I John 2:1). See Revelation 1:10,11. The mystery was committed to writing, Ephesians 3:3,4. See 2 Peter 1:15-21.

4. So we can sum it up this way. First the word of God was solely in the apostles and prophets and was all oral (Acts 2:1-4; Acts 20:20-27). Then when they began to write the word of God was both oral and written. It was found in the apostles and in their writings or

scripture (2 The. 2:2; 2 Thess. 2:15). Finally, when they died it was all written (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 1 Cor. 13:9-11).

So no, in Christianity there is no such thing as the "Living Voice of the Church." Human wisdom along with human traditions and human philosophy are all condemned. The only reliable source of God's words is in the writings of the apostles and prophets called the Bible. We should not be afraid of the Bible. We should use it as the final arbiter in all religious matters for truly, it only is the word of the Almighty God.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM (3)

PETER NEVER WAS A POPE

It is with reluctance that I must speak on what must be a very cherished belief of some. But truth must be upheld and defended, and we have a charge from God's word to contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3). The notion that Peter was a Pope is a position which came not from a study of the Bible, nor can it be defended by God's word. Jesus never having authorized a Pope, such a doctrine is a tradition of men and as such is clearly condemned in the Bible (Mat. 15:7-9; Col. 2:8; I Pet. 4:11). We do not deny he was an apostle, we only deny he was the chief apostle or that he held any office such as the papacy has.

In regard to such a notion, we want to investigate various arguments used to argue that Peter was a Pope, and the first Pope at that.

ARGUMENT ONE

It has been argued that Peter must have been a Pope for in every list of the apostles Peter is named first. We are invited to see Matthew

10:2: “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother...” (Mat. 10:2). Though we might wonder why such a list might prove Peter was a Pope, we dismiss it altogether when we read Galatians 2:9: “And when they perceived the grace that was given unto me, James and Cephas [Peter] and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9). There is a list of pillars and Peter does not appear first. Notice: “Now Philip was from Bethsaida, of the city of Andrew and Peter” (John 1:44). So there is nothing to this argument.

ARGUMENT TWO

It is argued that Peter must have been a Pope for he was the only one to have his name changed. John 1:42 says, “He brought him unto Jesus. Jesus looked upon him and said, Thou art Simon the son of John: thou shalt be called Cephas (which is by interpretation, Peter)” (John 1:42). Yet notice, “and l Simon he surnamed Peter; and James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and them he surnamed Boanerges, which is, Sons of thunder” (Mark 3:16,17). Too, we notice Barnabas was surnamed but he held no office such as Pope (Acts 4:36). Neither did James and John. And how would a surname indicate one was a Pope? We know not

ARGUMENT THREE

In Matthew 17:23-26 Jesus paid the temple tax just for Peter and Himself. The question is, why did He give the tax just for Peter and Himself? Because Peter was the one to whom they asked whether Jesus paid the tax, Jesus paid the tax for him. Too, Peter, not the other apostles, came to Jesus about the matter.

ARGUMENT FOUR

After the resurrection, when Peter and John ran to the tomb of Jesus, John got there first but waited for Peter (John 20:6). Why did John wait for Peter, it is asked. Well, it was not because Peter was Pope. The flimsiness of such arguments show the lengths that are gone to to try to establish that Peter was the first Pope. We can see how barren the arguments are. The reason John waited and Peter did not is

probably because John was more cautious and timid and it is easy to see Peter is more forceful and strong in almost everything.

ARGUMENT FIVE

In Acts one when they are laying down the conditions for an apostle and one to replace Judas, Peter takes the lead. But we would reply that such does not indicate that Peter was a Pope. Peter was headstrong, forceful, aggressive, and impetuous. In most cases this was good. When Jesus walked on the water it was Peter who asked if he could walk on the water to come to Jesus (Mat. 14:28). At the transfiguration of Jesus it was Peter who spoke up to mention building tabernacles (Mat. 17:4). When the mob pressed on Jesus and Jesus asked who touched Him it was Peter who spoke up and said the multitudes crushed him (Luke 8:45). Peter was outspoken, aggressive, and of strong character. But none of that says anything about being a Pope, an office never found in God's word. All it shows is Peter had a strong personality and was a natural leader.

ARGUMENT SIX

It is argued that Peter preached the first two gospel sermons and did the first miracle. However, on the day of Pentecost others were preaching as well as Peter. All got the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). All were preaching (Acts 2:14). It is the evident design of Luke in the book of Acts to spend the first part talking about Peter and the second and greater part talking about Paul. So we naturally in the first part of Acts find stories about Peter, how he and John appear before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4,5), etc.

ARGUMENT SEVEN

Peter brought the Gentiles into the church, it is argued. However, someone had to do it. Too, why would this make Peter a Pope? There is nothing in the writings of any of the apostles and prophets about such an office. Too, Peter, as we have seen, was one of the pillars of the early church, one of repute (Gal. 2:6,9). Who better could get the Jews to accept the fact that Gentiles could enter the church. But to draw from that that there should be a Pope is to flatly add to God's word and to violate Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; and Proverbs 30:6. The

concept of a Pope is to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).

ARGUMENT EIGHT

It is argued that the church was built on Peter. After all, Jesus said, "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Mat. 16:18). It is true that Peter means "rock," but there is more to it than that. The word for Peter in the original Greek is petros. It is masculine gender and means a small detached stone. When Jesus said "upon this rock" He used petra, a feminine gender, and referring to a ledge or a cliff. I believe the ledge on which Christ built His church is the confession which Peter just made, the fact that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God. The church is built on that confession. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John 11:25,26). So, no, the church is built on Christ, not Peter.

ARGUMENT NINE

It is argued that Jesus spoke in Aramaic and that the two terms for rock are the same in it. But we must reply, Jesus had to show in Aramaic, somehow that Peter and the rock on which the church was built were different for when written in Greek the Holy Spirit made them different. Then it is noted that no person occupies two positions in the same illustration. Peter is looked upon, because he spoke out first, as the doorkeeper with the keys. He would not also be the foundation of the building in the same illustration. Further, no apostle felt the need to lay a foundation of Peter. Paul said, "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 3:11).

ARGUMENT TEN

It is argued that Peter was given the keys of the kingdom and thereby had the authority to define laws for Christ. Yet in Matthew 16:18 and 19 the perfect tense is used in the Greek. The Greek perfect

tense denotes the present state resultant upon a past action. So it literally could read, "Whatsoever you bind on earth, shall have been bound in heaven." So the apostles did nothing on their own. They bound only where heaven had already bound. Too, from Matthew 18:18 we learn it was not merely Peter doing the binding. All the apostles received that authority. All the apostles would be on twelve thrones and judging (Mat. 19:28). That certainly does not put any one over the others.

ARGUMENT ELEVEN

It is then argued that Peter in John 21 was told to feed the flock. But when you read the whole story, Jesus is merely giving Peter, who denied Jesus three times, the opportunity to confess Him three times and to go to work again. Any other idea drawn from that would be assumption pure and simple. It is Christ, not Peter who is called the Chief Shepherd. We read, "and when the Chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5:4). And again Peter says, "For ye were going astray like sheep; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and bishop of your souls" (I Pet. 2:25). Christ, not Peter, is the Chief Shepherd. And we have often said, we could do a better job of making Paul a Pope rather than Peter. Paul said he was entrusted with the gospel of the uncircumcision just as Peter was with the circumcision (Gal. 2:7,8). Then he said, "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned" (Gal. 2:11). And on and on we could go.

ARGUMENT TWELVE

But it is then argued that since there is a visible church there must be a visible head of the church. But we wonder why that should be. Our membership in the church is invisible. The kingdom of God is within (Luke 17:20,21). No, in the Lord's church, the Lord has the authority. He said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:18-20).

We function here on earth with Christ as our head. He is the Chief Shepherd, the bishop of our souls, the King of the Kingdom. And never does He say He would put one here on earth over the church.

ROMAN CATHOLICISM (4)

VARIOUS DOCTRINES

THE COVERING, PURGATORY, PRAYER TO MARY AND SAINTS. CELIBACY, NAME AND TITLES, AND THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY OF MARY

We have been studying various doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church. We now move on from a study of the authority of the word of God and the living voice of the church and a study of the church into various and sundry doctrines.

THE COVERING OF THE HEAD

Some individuals and various churches believe that a woman in worship should have her head covered in some fashion. After all, 1 Corinthians 11:5,6 says "But every woman praying or prophesying with her head unveiled dishonoureth her head; for it is one and the same as if she were shaven. For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn; but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled" (I Cor. 11:5,6). But here we would notice that Paul puts the covering in the same category as a woman with her head shaved. It was often a custom that an adulteress or a harlot would have her head shaved. It seems the Grecian woman understood that in Christianity there was neither Jew nor Greek, bond or free, male nor female (Gal. 3:28). While custom had a woman wear a veil as a sign of the authority of her husband, these women thought that now that they were Christians such a custom need not prevail. Paul says it is one and the same thing as shaving her head, which customarily was done to a harlot or an adulteress. If that custom would embarrass them, then custom must matter, and they should then follow the custom of a woman wearing a veil. It was one and the same thing (I Cor. 11:5). Then Paul again places it in the realm of custom when he says, "But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God" (1 Cor. 11:16). Paul and the other churches had no such custom as of women taking the veil off because they were Christians. So no, we do not have such a custom as wearing the veil for women to show the husband's authority, so women today need not wear the veil. If we were going to keep that custom, why not keep the custom of the holy kiss (1 Thess. 5:26), foot-washing (1 Tim. 5:10), and other customs unique to their culture.

PURGATORY

We all know the doctrine of purgatory, a supposed place where saints go to burn away their sins. Only we do not know the doctrine from the Bible. The Council of Trent said everyone who denies purgatory is anathematized, so the doctrine, we suppose, must be found in the living voice of the church. But what does the Bible say regarding sin remaining and needing to be burned away in punishment for the believer? Paul said, "Much more then, being now justified by his blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through him

[Christ]" (Rom. 5:9). And again he said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1). When one becomes a Christian, he is cleansed of his sins in water baptism, and is just by the blood of Christ, saved from the wrath of God, and under no condemnation. The scriptures are clear on that, and thus the Christian need not go to his grave with sin. In fact, he must not. The Bible teaches that when a Christian sins he must repent of sin and pray to the Lord for forgiveness (Acts 8:22). He confesses his sin to God and the blood of Christ keeps on cleansing him of sin (1 John 1:7-10). Christ is the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:1,2). He appeases the wrath of God and covets our sin. We do not face God laden with sins. Paul said we have been, "reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before him" (Col. 1:22).

Sometimes 1 Cor. 3:15 is used to teach there is a purgatory. It says, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15). But this obviously is a reference to the fires of tribulation which every Christian must pass through in this life in order to mold their character so that they are fitted out for eternal life. Jesus said, "In the world ye have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). So Paul said, "confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). The same or similar interpretation is applied to Psalm 66:12; Isaiah 43:2; Amos 4:11, and Jude 23. Just because a passage has fire in it does not mean it speaks of purgatory, a concept never proven from the Bible.

Then sometimes 1 Corinthians 5:4,5 is used. It says, "In the name of our Lord Jesus, ye being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:4,5). But this passage says nothing about purgatory. It discusses church discipline and chastening in this life for a sinner. The man under discussion did not go to purgatory. He was later received back into fellowship by the Corinthians (2 Cor. 2:5-11). 1 Timothy 1:20 talks of chastening and church discipline also. See Hebrews 12.

PRAYER TO MARY AND THE SAINTS

It is taught that we should pray to Mary, the mother of Jesus, and to other saints so that they can intervene between Christ and us. However, Jesus is the one in the role of mediator of the New Covenant. The Holy Spirit said of Jesus, "And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance" (Heb. 9:15). Hebrews 12:24 says, "and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant" (Heb. 12:24). But there is only one Mediator. 1 Timothy 2:5 says, "For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5). To say there is another mediator is to cast severity on the tender nature of Christ. We certainly need no other mediator from the standpoint of Christ being too severe. We read of Jesus, "For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succor them that are tempted" (Heb. 2:18). Paul said, "For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). And Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light" (Mat. 11:28-30). There is not one shred of scriptural evidence that we should ever pray to Mary or any saint. Jesus taught us to pray to God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son (John 14:13,14).

THE CELIBATE STATE FOR PRIESTS

Then it is said that priests should not marry. However, in the original church we read about in the Bible there was never a clergy called priests. The way God set it up all Christians were called priests (1 Pet. 2:9). And to forbid marriage is a mark of the fallen-away church. Paul condemned those who would fall away "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. 4:3). It is true that I Corinthians 7:26 shows that it was good to remain single during great distress if you had the ability. But Peter was married (Mark 1:30). He led his wife about with him as did the rest of the apostles. Paul said marriage was to be had in honor

(Heb. 13:4). And he said, “Let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2).

TO CALL A MAN FATHER

Then there is the custom of calling the priest “father.” But Jesus said, “And call no man your father on the earth; for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven” (Mat. 23:9). Someone will say Paul called Timothy his child in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2; Philippians 2:22). He said to the Corinthians that they had not many fathers for only he begat them through the gospel. But what Paul said was true. He fathered them and Timothy. But he refused to wear “Father” as a religious title in direct contradiction to what Jesus commanded. True, one can be described as to a work he performs; but it is sin to wear a religious title as that which separates one Christian from another. Jesus clearly condemned religious titles such as Reverend, Priest, Bishop and Pope.

THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY OF MARY

It is taught that Mary, after the virgin birth, never had children. But the Bible, clearly taken for what it says, shows the opposite. Her children are all listed in Matthew 13:55. And in Matthew 13:55 since father and mother are mentioned, we know the text speaks of Jesus’ immediate family when it says, “Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas? and his sisters, are they not all with us” (Mat. 13:55,56). In Galatians 1:19 James the Lord’s brother is mentioned. In Acts 1:14 Mary the mother of Jesus is mentioned along with Jesus’ brethren. And in John 7:3-5 his brethren are distinguished from his disciples. So, no, the doctrine of the perpetual virginity of Mary is a human tradition.

May God help us to only speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). May we not add to or detract from the work He gave us (Deu. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18,19). May we never accept human doctrines and the traditions of men (Mat. 15:7-9; Col. 2:8; 2 John 9-11).

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (1)

RELATIONSHIP WITH THE WORD

INTRODUCTION

There is only one God (Isa. 44:6; I Tim. 2:5). But that one God is in three Persons (Mat. 28:18-20). The Holy Spirit is God the Spirit (Acts 5:3,4; 2 Cor 3:17). Jesus also is God as is God the Father (John 1:1; Heb. 1:8,9).

As God, the Holy Spirit is a person, but not a human person. He is called "He" in John 14:26 and John 16:13. He can brood (Gen. 1:2), strive (Gen. 6:3), grieve (Eph. 4:30), and envy (Jas. 4:5).

He is called by various names, which names reveal His word and character: the Holy Spirit (Psa. 51:11), the Spirit of Christ (Rom. 8:9), the Spirit of life (Rom. 8:2), the Spirit of adoption (Rom. 8:15), the Comforter (John 14:26), the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13), and the Spirit of grace (Heb. 10:19).

His attributes are those God has. He is eternal (Heb. 9:14), omniscient or all knowing (I Cor. 2:9-11), omnipresent or present everywhere (Psa. 139:7), and omnipotent or "all powerful" (Job 26:13). As is God the Father, He is interested in us, grieving and jealous on our behalf (Eph. 4:30; Jas. 4:4-6). He won't force Himself on us for the Bible says He can be resisted (Acts 7:51,52; Neh. 9:30). He can become vexed (Isa. 63:10), and quenched (I Thes. 5:19).

HIS RELATIONSHIP TO THE WORD

But here we want to look at His relationship to the word of God. First, again notice His name. Jesus said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 16:13). There is something in a name. The name "Jesus" means "Saviour." The Spirit is called "the Spirit of truth" because He has a special relationship with the truth. Notice this passage: "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Cor. 2:10-13). So the Spirit of truth reveals truth, and that in spiritual words. So in Acts 2:4 we read of the apostles: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to

speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4).

Notice however, when one does something through means, he is still said to do it For example, Paul says, "in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). God dwells in us through the means of the Spirit. Along that line, the Spirit is called the Holy Spirit because He makes us Holy. Paul said, "and for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe (I The. 2:13). It will be our contention that the Holy Spirit makes us Holy through the word of God. Notice Paul further said, "But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you brethren beloved of the Lord, for that God chose you from the beginning unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 The. 2:13). That says the Spirit sanctifies or sets us apart for God's use. But Jesus prayed, "Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). No, the Spirit does not sanctify us directly. He does it through means, the means of the truth. So we see in His description "Spirit of truth," that He has a special relationship with truth.

THE SPIRIT USED CHOSEN MEN

But how does the Spirit deliver truth? Let's notice: "Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them" (Neh. 9:20). If no more were written, we might believe the spirit instructed them directly. But we read, "yet many years dids't thou bear with them, and testifiedst against them by thy Spirit through thy prophets" (Neh. 9:30). So He is the Spirit of truth for He prompts men to deliver the truth. Peter is very emphatic on this. He says, "knowing this first that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:19-21). We notice first that "men spake from God." Then it says they were "moved" by the Holy Spirit. The word moved in the original is a word used to describe a ship driven by the wind. It carries it along. The ship Paul was in was borne along. So men whom the Spirit used were borne along or passively carried along. Concerning prophets of old, Peter said they were, "searching what

time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them" (I Pet. 1:10,11). The Spirit would bare them along in delivering a prophecy. Once they uttered it, then they would search it out and try to understand it. They did not produce it of themselves. They "spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:19-21). Recall that we saw that Paul said the Holy Spirit revealed the things of God, and that in words, to chosen apostles and prophets (I Cor. 2:10-13).

So, there is a special relationship between the Holy Spirit and the truth. He reveals truth to men, bears them along in truth, so that they utter the oracles of God. He sanctifies men through the truth, and thus is called the Holy Spirit. He, of old, testified unto men through prophets of God.

DOES HE STILL REVEAL TRUTH?

No, the Holy Spirit does not reveal truth to men today. It is all revealed in the Bible. Jude said, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). See, the faith was delivered to the saints, and that "once for all." But someone might say that all the faith was not delivered in the first century. Yet recall John 16:13. Jesus said, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 16:13). See, the apostles would have "all the truth."

If they had it all in the first century (John 16:13), and if it was delivered "once for all" there is no place found for latter-day revealing by the Holy Spirit. Then Peter said, "seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). There again is the confession that they had "all things." Nothing about life or godliness would be lacking. And again remember that such, Jude says, was delivered in the first century "once for all." And along that line Paul said, "Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring

unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26,27). So there in the first century they had the "whole counsel of God." There was not more to come later, and remember Jude said they had it delivered "once for all."

WAS IT WRITTEN DOWN?

Paul wrote the Thessalonians, "Now we beseech you, brethren, touching the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our gathering together unto him; to the end that ye be not quickly shaken from your mind, nor yet be troubled, either by spirit, or by word, or by epistle as from us, as that the day of the Lord is just at hand" (2 Thes. 2:2). Paul writes them about the day of the Lord, but he mentions that they might be disturbed in receiving an epistle or letter as if from the apostles. So apostles, at an early age — the letters to the Thessalonians were the first written—were being written by inspired men. And notice Paul wrote the Corinthians, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (I Cor. 14:37). Paul understood his writing to be inspired for he said it was the commandment of the Lord. Too, it was the commandment of the Lord even though written down. So yes, the commands, the word of God was written down. So Paul could say, "all scripture is God-breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Notice Scripture will make one complete and will completely furnish unto every good work. What could be lacking? And since Jude said the faith was delivered "once for all," no additions, subtractions, or changes are to be expected.

So here we have begun a study of the Holy Spirit. He has a close relationship with the word. No "living voice of the church," no modern-day prophesies, no latter-day revelation of any type can come. They had in the first century words revealed by the Spirit, the "whole counsel of God," "all things that pertain to life and godliness," "all the truth," and it was written down to become the faith "once for all delivered." The work of the Spirit in revealing truth is done. Now it is up to us to "take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17).

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (2)

THREE MEASURES OF THE SPIRIT

We have seen the Holy Spirit's close relationship with the word of God. In this chapter I want to look at what we might call the Three Measures of the Spirit. In doing so we will better understand His relationship to the apostles and prophets as well as His relationship to us today.

BACKGROUND

John the baptizer said, "For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for he giveth not the Spirit by measure" (John 3:34). Jesus had the Spirit without measure. Some receive the Spirit with measure. When the seventy elders were picked to assist Moses we read, "and Jehovah came down in the cloud, and spake unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and put it upon the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that when the Spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, but they did so no more" (Numbers 11:25).

In the New Testament there seem to be three measures of the Holy Spirit. There is the baptism (Acts 11:7), the laying on of hands measure (Acts 8:18), and what can be called the normal indwelling (I Cor. 6:19). Let's look at them.

THE BAPTISM

The baptism of the Spirit was first spoken of by John the baptizer. He said to the Jews, "I indeed baptize you in water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you in the Holy Spirit and in fire: whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly cleanse his threshing-floor; and he will gather his wheat into the garner, but the chaff he will burn up with unquenchable fire" (Mat. 3:11,12). From this we learn Jesus is the agent Who baptizes; the element He baptizes into is the Holy Spirit, and the fire is the unquenchable fire which in context is hell fire. We learn the baptism of fire is for the wicked (Rev. 21:8).

But further, we would ask the question, "Since the baptism of fire, later on in Scripture, is narrowed down to the wicked, is the baptism in the Holy Spirit narrowed down?" The answer is yes. We later see it more particularly narrowed down to the apostles. Jesus speaks to them about this after His resurrection. He says, "And being assembled together with them, he charged them not to depart from

Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father which, said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:4,5).

But notice further. He again says, "But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). So they will get power when the Holy Spirit comes on them. Then a few days later we read, "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4). That was the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and Jesus administered it to the apostles. But a few days earlier, as recorded in Acts 1:15, there were one-hundred and twenty disciples gathered together. Some believe all got the baptism. But carefully notice the pronouns of Acts 1:26-2:4. In Acts 2:4 it says, "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). Who are the "they" and "them" who spake in tongues when they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit? The nearest antecedent noun is "apostles" in Acts 1:26. This teaches that the apostles were the ones baptized in the Holy Spirit. This is corroborated by Acts 2:14. The apostles got the baptism and Peter was ready to preach that first gospel sermon. We read, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice ..." (Acts 2:14). He didn't stand up with the 120 but with the eleven. So the eleven were the ones who were speaking in tongues after they were filled with the Holy Spirit. The only other time the baptism of the Spirit is given is at the house of Cornelius as recorded in Acts chapters 10 and 11. Gentiles, at this point are not being taught and converted. Peter sees a vision of animals and is told what God has cleansed Peter should not call common. Then strangers arrive from a Roman Centurion named Cornelius. He also saw a vision of an angel and was told to send for a man named Peter. Cornelius, a Gentile, is told Peter will speak unto him words whereby Cornelius can be saved. Peter arrives. As a Jew he feels he should not fellowship Gentiles. But after his own vision

and after what Cornelius said about the angel Peter finally says, "Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him" (Acts 10:35). Then as Peter began to preach unto them Jesus, the Holy Spirit fell on them and Peter recalled what Jesus said about the baptism of the Spirit (Acts 10:44-45; Acts 11:15,26). But the question is asked, "Why did Gentiles receive the baptism of the Spirit?" The answer is found in Acts 15:8. There Peter says, "And God, who knoweth the heart, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Spirit, even as he did unto us" (Acts 15:8). In the baptism of the Spirit of Cornelius and his household we find that God is bearing witness that Gentiles can obey the gospel and become Christians. It never occurs again for anyone, and it is never hinted anywhere that it is for all Christians. Only it gave the apostles power and served as a sign concerning Gentiles.

THE LAYING ON OF HANDS MEASURE

Another measure of the Spirit is called the laying-on-of-hands measure. Its purpose was to impart spiritual gifts so that the word of God could be confirmed and the early church could edify itself or build itself up by the word (Acts 20:32). In Acts 8 Philip can do spiritual gifts and miracles, and he converts many Samaritans. But it seems he cannot, not being an apostle, pass these spiritual gifts on to others. They receive apostles from Jerusalem and these, Peter and John, lay hands on the converts. Luke says, "Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money" (Acts 8:18). Simon the Sorcerer had been converted but he wants to buy the ability the apostles had to lay hands on saints and give them this measure of the Spirit. He is rebuked for such a notion. But we learn one thing. Spiritual gifts came through the laying on of the hands of an apostle. Later in Acts 19 Paul, an apostle, lays hands on some saints in Ephesus whom he had to rebaptize. When he laid hands on them, "they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6). Paul told Timothy, "For which cause I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee through the laying on of my hands" (2 Tim. 1:6). He tells the Romans he wants to come to them so he can impart to them spiritual gifts. These spiritual gifts were to pass away. Paul said, "but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:10). We will

study that later. But at least we have learned from Scripture that these spiritual gifts came through the laying on of the hands of an apostle (Acts 8:18). To be an apostle one had to see the resurrected Christ and be a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:21,22). No one can do that, so there are no apostles in our day. Thus there are no laying on of the hands of an apostle in order to impart spiritual gifts in our day. So, since we have the Bible to edify us today, we don't need miraculous spiritual gifts and they have passed away anyway. We will study more on all this.

THE NORMAL INDWELLING

Finally there is what is called the normal indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Scripture never says it is for any other purpose but to be an incentive to holiness. The Spirit dwells in us, but never does Scripture say He does anything to us separate and apart from the word. It is His sword (Eph. 6:17), and by it the Spirit sanctifies us (I Pet. 1:2; John 17:17). It is just true that individually we are a temple of God and He dwells in us through the Holy Spirit. Ephesus 2:22 says, "in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). So the Spirit dwells in us. Paul says this several times. Notice:

> But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his (Rom. 8:9).
>
> And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father (Gal. 4:6).
>
> Or know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? (I Cor. 6:19).
>
> Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (I Cor. 3:16).

Yes the Spirit dwells in the Christian. And as we said, there are three measures of the Holy Spirit. One should look at each one separately, and not mix them together as vegetable soup. Too, I have

never felt the mode of the indwelling was so clearly expressed in Scripture or of such importance that brethren should divide over it.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS PASSED AWAY

In the last chapter we saw that the New Testament taught that there were three measures of the Spirit. One measure brought the ability to use spiritual gifts, which gifts were given by the Holy Spirit. We want to teach why we sincerely believe that spiritual gifts ceased, and that they are not available today and, in fact according to God's scheme of things, are not needed.

Paul said, "Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:8-10). Later we will study what we believe the "perfect" of I Corinthians 13:10 is speaking of. We will show why we believe it is basically talking of the Bible and that spiritual gifts passed away when scripture was written down. However, now, we want to again study Acts 8:18. It says, "Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money" (Acts 8:18). Of course he was rebuked by Peter for trying to buy the gift with money. But the inspired Luke shows how these gifts came. They came through the laying on of the apostles hands. In Acts 8 we see Philip preaching and doing great signs in Samaria. The Samaritans believe and are baptized. The Samaritans need spiritual gifts whereby they can edify themselves. However, Philip does not lay hands on them and impart the gifts. Evidently he cannot. They send two apostles to them, Peter and John. When they come they lay hands on the Samaritans and the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit. That's when Simon the Sorcerer saw "that through the laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Spirit was given" (Acts 8:18).

Now to be an apostle certain requirements had to be met. When God would select one to take the place of Judas Peter said, "Of the men therefore that have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and went out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us, of these must one become a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:21,22). No one

today can meet the qualification of being an apostle, for none today can see Jesus and be an eye witness of the resurrection. So if there are no apostles today, there are no hands of the apostles today. If there are no hands of the apostles today, there are no laying on of the hands of an apostle today. If there are no laying on of the hands of an apostle today, there is no giving of spiritual gifts which come by the laying on of the hands of an apostle. That's why we do not believe in spiritual gifts, miracles, and tongue speaking in our day. Later we will show why the gifts are not needed, and we will show why miracles have passed away and that our needs are now supplied by grace in answer to prayer.

THE PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

The passing of spiritual gifts is seen in their purposes. First, they were to edify or build up in the faith. They imparted truth and truth would edify. Paul told the elders at Ephesus, "And now I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). Truth edifies, but truth at the beginning of the church was only in the apostles. Jesus said to the apostles, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26). Again Jesus told them, "Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 16:13). Then after the resurrection Luke says, "and, being assembled together with them, he [Jesus] charged them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which said he, ye heard from me: for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:4,5). We read on in Acts. Luke says, "And when the day of Pentecost was now come, they were all together in once place. And suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of the rushing of a mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them tongues parting asunder, like as of fire; and it sat upon each one of them, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts

2:1-4). So the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit. They could do miracles and could speak the word of God unerringly. They could do so on all their missionary trips. But there was a problem. As they went from place to place, when they could not stay long at any given locale, they would have to go away from a new congregation and leave babes in Christ who had no way to edify or build themselves up in the most holy faith. The Bible was not yet written, and they would need some way, when left by the apostles, to get access to the word of God. So the apostles' would lay hands on chosen prophets. These prophets would then be inspired by the Holy Spirit to speak die word of God and build the new Christians up in the faith. So these spiritual gifts are somewhat listed in I Corinthians 12. And in I Corinthians 14 we read, "What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each one has a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (I Cor. 14:26). This method of edifying by spiritual gifts was to be temporary. So Paul, speaking of their demise said, "Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:8). And he followed it by saying, "but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:10). So the spiritual gifts were temporary until the perfect would come. In the next chapter we will show why we in the churches of Christ honestly believe that the "perfect" is speaking of Scripture in its finished and final state.

ANOTHER PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Not only were spiritual gifts used to edify by imparting knowledge to saints and new converts, we notice that some gifts were designed to confirm that the word spoken by apostles and prophets was really from God. They could do this by various gifts which would convince unbelievers that God was truly with them. The doing of miracles would show that God approved of these men. The same was true in the case of Jesus. Peter said, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). Nicodemus got the message. He said to Jesus, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher

come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2). And John said, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31).

Now notice Mark 16 and the great commission. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned. And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:15-18). The question is, why did they do these miracles? Mark answers our question in verse 20. He says "and they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen" (Mark 16:20).

THE WORD WAS CONFIRMED

The word was confirmed. Notice Hebrews 2:1-4. It says, "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:1-4). Then recall John said miracles were written that we should believe (John 20:30,31). So they were written for the same reason they were wrought, to ensure belief. Once the signs confirmed the word and were written down by credible witnesses they produced faith just as much as if the signs were witnessed. So we don't need miracles to confirm the word any more. The word has already been confirmed and written down so we can believe. We will take a closer look at miracles later. Yet, now at least, we can see that spiritual gifts passed away.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (4)

THAT WHICH IS PERFECT

Occasionally in any study a passage receives close attention. I Corinthians 13:10 is such a passage. In a discussion of revelation and spiritual gifts Paul says, "but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:10). Notice the whole context. Paul says, "Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:8-10). If the "perfect" is still to come up in the future, then spiritual gifts, represented by prophecy, tongues, and miraculous knowledge still abide. For "that which is in part," due to the context, is spiritual gifts. And only when the "perfect" comes will the part be done away. If "perfect" refers to the Bible, then spiritual gifts passed away when Scripture came, for, "when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:10).

There are two main, and I believe wrong, interpretations of I Corinthians 13:10. One says the "perfect" must be talking of Christ at His second coming and the other says perfect must be talking of heaven for only there will we be perfect. Now, though, I want to develop why I believe "perfect" is talking about Scripture.

THE ORIGINAL WORD

The Greek dictionaries or lexicons say the original word, telos, does not mean "flawless" such as Jesus was flawless but "having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect" (Arndt & Gingrich). Robinson, Liddell and Scott, Abbott and Smith, Berry, Vine, and

Vincent all say the same. Wuest says, “In I Corinthians 13:10 the word means complete and is contrasted to that which is incomplete.” So we begin to lose the idea of “flawless” and begin to get in mind something which is complete. Not only that, complete at the end of a process. Vine says it “signifies having reached its end (telos), finished, complete, perfect.” Thayer says, “Brought to its end, finished.” This all harmonizes with the idea that “perfect” speaks of Scripture. Scripture is the final result of a process of inspiration and writing. First the word of God is in man. As they write it down it is in men and their writings. Then it is, after they die, in their writings alone. See I Corinthians 2:9- 13; I Thessalonians 2:13; I Corinthians 14:37; and 2 Peter 1:19-21.

THE ENGLISH TRANSLATION

When they translated from the Greek original, why did they decide to use the word perfect? It is from the Latin per (thoroughly) and *ficere* (fact, to make). Per means “through” and fact means “deed.” So perfect means “through the deed.” So the idea is that of process, a process involved in finishing a deed or act — a completion. But the second most common meaning of perfect today is “flawless.” That was not its original meaning. The word originally meant “completion.” Like most words it has evolved in meaning. Tyndale, in the 1500’s was the first to use the word parfit or perfit. It then entered into the King James Version of the Bible in 1611. But at that time it was a good choice, for perfect then meant “complete.” So originally perfect was a clear translation. But when the word evolved to also have the meaning of “flaw-less,” and that became a common meaning, we can see how some could wrongly suppose “perfect” referred to “heaven.” For they thought there we would be most flawless. Or we can see how “perfect” would make them think of Jesus, since He was the only perfect man. But they wrongly attach “flawless” to the word instead of the idea of “complete.”

PERFECT AND THE CONTEXT

Let’s look at perfect and the context. Here we find the whole crux and core of the matter. There is an obvious contrast between “the part” and the “complete.” We have the partial on one hand and the complete on the other. We are led s to believe that the contrasted things have the

same characteristics, or nature, or material make-up. And as we look carefully at the context, we learn that the part is revelation. It consists of prophecy, tongue speaking, and inspired knowledge. If that is the "part," then the "perfect," the "complete," must be more of the same, only complete revelation. If the "part" is revelation, the complete must be complete revelation, the Scriptures, today the Bible. When the final draft of this manuscript was ready, complete, then the scribbled notes and rough drafts were put away. Yes, tongue speaking, prophecy, and miraculous knowledge were in part. It was a tongue here and a prophecy there, disconnected and fragmentary. But the Bible is the whole of revelation in order and final form. We don't need the partial any longer and as Paul said, they actually are done away. One day the Scripture with all the confirmatory signs written in it was complete and in circulation. The partial was done away. Tongue speaking, miracles, and prophecy were, as are all miraculous spiritual gifts, done away. The partial finally added up to the complete. And this contextual interpretation is hard to answer.

It is sometimes compared to the scaffolding surrounding a building. It is there for a purpose, often to raise up or build the building it surrounds. But when the building is finished, the scaffolding comes down. So tongues and all spiritual gifts were partial. But when the compete is come, the partial is done away.

PERFECT AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

What we have said about "the perfect" fits other considerations. It fits 2 Timothy 3:16,17. Paul said of Scripture, "all scripture is God-breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). We no longer need spiritual gifts, for Paul clearly says Scripture will make you complete and furnish you unto every good work. It can do that because it is completed revelation at the end of a process. Spiritual gifts are no longer needed.

Then we have earlier learned that spiritual gifts were never intended to go much past the first century. They came by the laying on of the hands of apostles. Recall when the Samaritans had the laying on of the hands of the apostles so that they could have these spiritual

gifts, Luke wrote, "Now when Simon [the Sorcerer] saw that through the laying on of the apostles hands the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money" (Acts 8:18). In Romans 1:11 Paul told the Roman Christians that he wanted to go to them to impart a spiritual gift to them. He could not do it by prayer. He had to go to them to do it. These spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues and prophesying, came clearly by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. Recall we have pointed out that there are no apostles today. One of the requirements to be an apostle was to have seen the resurrected Christ so that one could be a witness of the resurrection (Acts 1:22). So, no one has done that today. So there are no apostles today. Then there are no hands of the apostles today. If there are no hands of the apostles today, there is no laying on of the hands of the apostles today, hence no spiritual gifts which came by the laying on of the hands of the apostles. So this state of things would have occurred about the time the apostles and prophets had written the biographies of Jesus and their letters which were all collected together to form the New Testament. So it could truly happen as Paul said it would, when the complete revelation came, the part was totally done away.

This contextual explanation of the passage fits the immediate context, the definition of the word telos, the English translation "perfect," 2 Timothy 3:16, Acts 8:18, and the rest of the New Testament. The partial finally added up to the complete.

That's why in this context Paul says prophecy, speaking in tongues, and bits and pieces of miraculous knowledge are of this nature: "When I was a child, I spake as a child, I felt as a child, I thought as a child: now that I am become a man, I have put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known. But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (I Cor. 13:11-13). As grand a gift from God as they were, miraculous spiritual gifts were childish compared to the Bible, where revelation is full-grown. They were like trying to look in a mirror which was dark. The Bible is like seeing face to face. In verse 8 Paul said they would be done away. Verse 10 shows they were done away when the compete revelation in the Bible, even with all its confirmatory signs written in it, came from God through chosen

apostles and prophets. Long for the Bible with all your heart, for it is the word of God Himself.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (5)

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

There was a plethora of miracles when Elisha replaced Elijah as a prophet. Elisha smote the Jordan with the mantle of Elijah. He said, "Where is the God of Elijah?" The waters parted, and he went over the Jordan on dry land (2 Kings 2:14ff). There was bad water at a certain place. Elisha took a new cruse and cast salt into the water and the water was cured. Children made fun of him. He, because he stood in the place of God as God's prophet, cursed them in the name of the Lord and two she bears tore forty two of them (2 Kin. 2:23-25). Why did this all occur? Why were so many miracles done? Well, we have a new prophet Would God not want to authenticate that the prophet actually spoke for God? Yes. We think that is the purpose, and if so it will help us understand the purpose of all miracles. As we consider the purpose or design of miracles, we will use as our hypothesis that the reason for miracles is that they are to function as signs that God is truly with the one who does them. Let's test that hypothesis.

THE MIRACLES OF JESUS

Why did Jesus do miracles? Most of His miracles are benevolent. Did He merely do them to help people or was there a hidden agenda? Did He have an ulterior motive, some design or purpose for His display of power? First, notice Acts 2:22. Peter says of Jesus, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by

him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). Peter says Jesus shows He was approved of God by doing miracles. Miracles in the activity of Jesus were to prove something — that Jesus was the Christ of God. Notice how clear this is in John 3:1,2: "Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:1,2). How did Nicodemus know Jesus was from God? He knew it because of the signs Jesus did. Jesus did the signs for a purpose. Notice another. John the baptizer is in prison. He sends several disciples to make sure Jesus is the Christ. We read, "Now when John heard in the prison the works of the Christ, he sent by his disciples and said unto him, Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me" (Mat. 11:2-6). John could know Jesus was the one due to the miracles Jesus did. He was approved of God by miracles (Acts 2:22). Nicodemus knew Jesus was from God by miracles. John the baptizer knew Jesus was from God by miracles. And finally notice the language of the apostle John: "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). So it is clear, miracles were to authenticate that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God. If that is true, we ought to find in Scripture where it is said that miracles are confirmation of faith, that they produce faith by confirming the word that is preached. We do.

MIRACLES PRODUCE FAITH

Notice a few passages. The apostle John wrote, "This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him" (John 2:11). They believed on Him due to His signs. Then John writes, "Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed on his name beholding his signs which he did" (John 2:23). Signs were important to confirm His

message so they could believe. And notice what John further says: "Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which he did, believed on him" (John 11:45). This was at the tomb of Lazarus when Jesus raised him from the dead. The Jews beheld the miracle and accepted His word that He was the Son of God.

Now think of all this in this way. Jesus has to present Himself as an object of faith. But we would ask, "How is faith produced?" Well, the first thing we must have is testimony. We cannot believe that of which we have not heard. However, often testimony is not enough. Since we were little children we learned we could be lied to or even teased with error, untruth, jokes, and other deceptions. So we sometimes require confirmation of testimony. In fact, the more important the testimony the greater the need for confirmation. And in fact, if one gave supernatural testimony would we not require supernatural confirmation? Jesus came and testified that he was the Son of God from heaven and that He could save mankind and that He was going back to heaven. Such supernatural testimony would require proof, supernatural proof that He was not a liar but was really the Son of God from heaven. So Jesus did miracles. And they had the proper effect. Nicodemus said, again, "Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2).

CONSTANT CONFIRMATION

Well, do we need constant confirmation? No. Jesus need not come back each generation and work miracles so we can believe. When signs are written down by credible witnesses that's enough. Again remember John wrote, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). He's already been approved (Acts 2:22). We don't need constant confirmation. For example, notice Romans 1:4. It says of Jesus, "Who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:4). Jesus was declared to be the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead. We do not require that He be resurrected each generation to prove it No, when testified to by

competent witnesses that's enough to produce faith. So we say of miracles, "these are written for the same reason they are wrought." They, when written, produce faith.

WHY DID THE APOSTLES DO MIRACLES?

Why did the apostles do miracles? They did so to confirm that the word they spoke was really from God. Again, supernatural confirmation was needed for supernatural testimony. To prove they spoke from God and were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 1:19-21), they worked miracles by the Holy Spirit. Notice Jesus said, "And these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:17,18). But why? The reason is given in verse 20: "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen" (Mark 16:20). They did signs to confirm the word, just as we said. Not only that, the Scripture says the word was confirmed. Notice: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will" (Heb. 2:3,4). The word was confirmed. There is no need for more. And we have seen we do not need constant confirmation. The signs were written for the same reason they were wrought. Now it is all in the New Testament. Again, miracles are like scaffolding on a building. Once the building is completed, the scaffolding serves no further purpose and it is taken down. Once miracles confirmed the word, their purpose ceased and they passed away. Notice also God made animals and mankind miraculously. Then they were to spread by natural means, giving birth to offspring. Then God made the church miraculously. Now it is to spread naturally, through the preaching of the word.

One final word. Let no one think that God has abandoned us because miracles have ceased. No. He still works by answering our prayers. He does so fully and truly, but not miraculously. He works through natural law in a way that requires faith on our part, not sight

(2 Cor. 5:7). He no longer violates natural law; he works through it in daily grace. Without miracles, He answers our prayers.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (6)

ANSWERING THE BEST

ARGUMENTS FOR MIRACLES

ARGUMENT ONE

(Those who deny miracles deny the Bible)

First it is simply argued that those who deny miracles deny what the Bible teaches and violate these scriptures: Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 21:8; Rev. 22:18,19; I Pet. 4:11; 2 Tim. 3:16,17.

Yet we would reply in this way. All believe in a flood (Gen. 6), but we do not believe it is happening today. We don't deny Bible miracles; we just deny miracles happen today.

ARGUMENT TWO

(Miraculous power was included in the atonement)

It is argued this way. Isaiah 53:5 says, "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." The same is found in I Peter 2:24.

Yet we would first notice that redeemed persons of the Bible suffered sickness (I Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20; 2 Cor. 12:7- 9). Too, the atonement has been made but death will continue until Christ's coming (I Cor. 15:24; Heb. 9:27). The body is to be prey for death and disease for as long as man lives.

Yet we would reply more. Notice Matthew 8:17 quotes Isaiah 53:4, "Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases." The prediction was fulfilled in the life of Christ according to Matthew 8:16,17. In that passage, sins are not mentioned. He refers only to sickness. So Isaiah 53:4 speaks of Christ's work before the atonement.

Really, what Isaiah 53:5 talks of is the healing of the sin sick soul (Isa. 6:10; Isa. 19:22; Isa. 30:26; Isa. 57:17,19; Isa. 58:8). Never was physical healing preached as part of the atonement, but remission of sins was (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). If healing were part of the atonement, why were there gifts of healing (I Cor. 12:29,30)?

ARGUMENT THREE

(Matthew 6:25 says to not be anxious for your body and Matthew 6:33 says a these things shall be added to you)

When Jesus says in that context that we should not be anxious for the body he was speaking of raiment and says so in the very verse (v. 25). To read the whole passage has Him say be not anxious for your body regarding what you should put on. Let's see another.

ARGUMENT FOUR

(In Matthew 10:1 Jesus gave power to heal sickness. When did he ever retract it?)

In a similar way it is argued that in I Corinthians 12:28 God set miracles in the church. Where did he ever take them out? We would reply that God made man out of dust. Where does it say He ever quit? God started mankind by miracle and then continued by natural means. God started the church by miracles but now wants it to spread by faith not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Too, as clear as could be Paul said prophecy, tongues, and miraculous knowledge were to cease (I Cor. 13:8).

ARGUMENT FIVE

(Miraculous power is part of the great commission)

Regarding miracles "shall" is mentioned nine times, like saying one "shall" lay hands on the sick and they shall recover. They say we only accept part of the teaching, the part about baptism saving.

We would reply, miraculous power was not in the great commission; it followed the believing of that commission. Too, Mark 16:20 shows why they did miraculous signs. It says, "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed" (Mark 16:20). They did not do miracles just to be doing them. They did them to confirm the word and Hebrews 2:3 says the word has been confirmed. So miracles are no longer needed.

ARGUMENT SIX

(There is no salvation without signs and wonders. John 4:48 says, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will in no wise believe")

However, John 4:48 is a rebuke. Jesus reproved the heart which, though he wrought miracles enough, yet unless they continually saw signs, would not believe. The truth is, miracles were written for the same reason they were wrought — to produce faith (John 20:30,31). So today, since miracles are written down, we no longer need to witness them in order to believe.

ARGUMENT SEVEN

(Jesus said believers shall do the works He does and even greater. He does not say it will just be for a little while)

We must notice however, they did no miracle greater than Christ. In John eleven He raised Lazarus from the dead and in Matthew 14:26 He walked on the water. Yet in saving souls through preaching, they did what Christ did and even greater. Evangelistically they had larger and wider results. They did a greater work geographically for they went into all the world. They did a greater work nationally for they went also to the Gentiles while He confined Himself to the lost sheep of Israel. They preached in fact while He preached in promise. They preached the new covenant while He preached the Old. Spiritual works are in mind, not miracles.

ARGUMENT EIGHT

(Acts 2:38 says as many as call receive the gift of the Holy Spirit)

Yes, we all receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, but the text does not say the gift is a gift to work miracles. The Spirit, through the word of God gives us a good life, even seasons of refreshing from the Lord. You can see this clearly by comparing Acts 2:38 with Acts 3:19.

ARGUMENT NINE

(Where the gospel was preached, signs and wonders were performed {I Cor. 2:4; Rom. 15:18,19})

Yet in simple reply, since the word was confirmed (Heb. 2:3), we simply teach that God confirms the word by miracles no longer. The purpose of miracles being needed no longer, their working has been done away.

ARGUMENT TEN

(You are to pray for revelation, Ephesians 1:16,17)

While spiritual gifts, existed, Paul did pray that early Christians would have a spirit of wisdom and revelation. But today we have the Bible. Every spiritual purpose of New Testament Christianity is today served by the word of God and so miracles are not needed. What needs to be found is that the scriptures teach miracles will continue forever, but that teaching is not found in the Bible.

ARGUMENT ELEVEN

(James said prayer for the sick would avail, Jos. 5:15)

Prayer for the sick does avail, but it does not avail miraculously. James five need not be taken miraculously. It is the prayer that saves them. The Lord raised them up, it says, and they were healed, verse 16. But who says the healing was miraculous? We believe God heals providentially, and that is different from miracles. A miracle was a power to prove a point, usually confirming that God was with the person who worked the miracle. Nicodemus said, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2). But if a miracle

was to signify God was with the person, it could not be an ordinary act. It had to be extraordinary. And to do that it had to violate natural law. Then it would astound, arrest attention, and serve as a sign. But the answer to a prayer does not need to astound or to violate natural law. So in a miracle God violates natural law. In answer to a prayer, God works through natural law. Daily grace whereby we walk by faith, not sight, is sufficient (Heb. 4:3,4; 2 Cor. 5:7). That is the difference.

ARGUMENT TWELVE

(Where did the Romans get spiritual gifts? No apostle had been there to lay hands on them as required, you say due to Acts 8:18)

We would reply that on the day of Pentecost sojourners from Rome were present. Would they not go back to Rome and form a church? Before they went back they would have had hands laid on them by an apostle (Rom. 16:3). Too, there would be people Paul could have converted who made up the church in Rome. Epanetus was converted in Asia but was now in Rome when Paul wrote (Rom. 16:5). Paul mentions around 20 people by name who he knew but were now at Rome. See Romans 16. Yet they were still deficient in gifts and Paul wanted to go to Rome to impart spiritual gifts unto them (Rom. 1:11). Notice he had to go to Rome to do it. So Acts 8:18 held true when it said spiritual gifts came through the laying on of the apostles hands.

ARGUMENT THIRTEEN

(Timothy did not get his miraculous gift by the laying on of the hands of an apostle but rather through the laying on of the hands of the presbytery {I Tim. 4:14})

Yet if you look closely, Timothy got his gift "with the hands of the presbytery" not by the hands of the presbytery. 2 Timothy 1:6 says he got his spiritual gift through the laying on of Paul's hands. Paul was an apostle. When you put the two passages together you find Timothy received his spiritual gift through the laying on of the hands of Paul and it was accompanied by the laying on of the hands of the elders to appoint him to the work as in Acts 13.

We have looked at and replied to thirteen arguments used to try to teach miracles exist in our day. God still works today and answers

prayer. He just need not work a miracle in breaking natural law to do so.

WORK OF THE SPIRIT (7)

ANSWERING ARGUMENTS FOR MIRACLES (2)

ARGUMENT ONE

(Healing was to come by obedience, and God always provided for the healing of His people. He promised them no diseases, Exodus 15:26).

Well, God still provides for healing. He heals by providence, through prayer (James 5). It is non-miraculous. What God is saying in Exodus is that they won't be chastened, and it was said to the Jewish nation, not us.

ARGUMENT TWO

(Jesus hasn't changed, Hebrews 13:8)

It is true that Jesus hasn't changed, but His methods do change. Once He preached only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Mat. 10:5,6). Now He goes unto the whole world (Eph. 2:17). Again consider that Enoch walked with God and God took him. Has God changed just because every one who walks with God is not taken (Heb. 11:5)?

ARGUMENT THREE

(Jesus did not heal incidentally; He was sent to heal, Mat. 4:23)

Matthew 4:23 says Jesus healed all manner of disease and sickness. It does not say His mission here was to heal. Acts 2:22 says, "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know." This passage clearly shows the purpose for which he did miracles was to show Himself approved of God. That His miracles were benevolent would further show He came from a loving God.

ARGUMENT FOUR

(Power was promised to the church of the New Testament, Acts 1:8).

That is true. It was promised to the apostles during an age of miracles. The purpose of their power was to confirm that the word they preached really came from God (Mark 16:20). It did come from God, and Hebrews 2:3 tells us the word was confirmed. It does not need to be confirmed in every generation. Jesus was, for example, seen to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:4). He need not come back each generation and be resurrected to prove it. Once proved, always proved. And John said the miracles were written that we might believe (John 20:30,31). When written down they would produce faith. So the working of miracles is not needed in our day.

ARGUMENT FIVE

(The Bible says woe unto them that trust in man [Isa. 31:1-3]. We must trust in God for healing, not man)

First, we would say we do trust in God. He heals our sick and raises them up. He does so, however, by grace and providence, not by miracle. Then Jesus taught that the sick need a physician. He said, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick" (Mat. 9:12). See also Mark 2:17 and Luke 5:31. So in healing, we do our part today. We pray, then trust in God, and He works through the power of the human body to heal, through physicians, through medicine, to make the healing take place that may not have taken place without prayer. But our ultimate source of healing is God

who works not by signs and miracles, but in a way that calls for faith and not a walking by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

ARGUMENT SIX

(In Matthew we are told that we must teach all things commanded by the apostles, Mat. 28:18-20)

We do. The apostles taught the purpose of miracles and when the purpose or design of miracles ceased, miracles would naturally cease. The apostles taught they would confirm the word and that once written they would serve the purpose of producing faith just as if they were witnessed. The Bible further teaches that God helps us today by daily grace and answers to our prayers in a non-miraculous way.

ARGUMENT SEVEN

(Jesus put healing in the church; it will be there until I Corinthians 13:8-10 has been fulfilled)

Actually, as we have studied before, the "perfect" of I Corinthians 13:8-10 has come and has been fulfilled. It is the complete revelation of God in final form with authenticating miracles Written down in it. And I Corinthians 13:8-10 said when the "complete" or "perfect" came spiritual gifts would pass away and they did.

ARGUMENT EIGHT

(If healing has been taken out of the covenant that means God changed the covenant. Galatians 3:15 says even a man's covenant cannot be added to)

First, for miraculous healing to be phased out was part of the covenant as we have showed by looking at the design of the miracles and the covenant. Having apostles also, in passing away, met the requirements of the covenant, and when gone did not change the covenant.

Second, however, miracles were not a part of the covenant. They were used to confirm that the covenant really came from God. We truly cannot change the covenant after it is confirmed by signs.

ARGUMENT NINE

(In Matthew 20:1-16 the last received the same as the first)

Yet we must protest that this verse is not talking of miracles but of receiving heaven. Heaven is the common-to-all gift to those who labor for it. It is also not true that we later-generation Christians are to receive what first-century Christians received regarding faith. They saw the resurrected Christ. We, today, believe not because we have seen. See John 20:29.

ARGUMENT TEN

(If our generation cannot work miracles then God is guilty of favoritism).

We would reply that God is not playing favorites because He does not create each man out of the dust of the earth, place each in paradise, or let each see Christ's resurrected body. Thomas and the apostles got to see the resurrected body of Jesus. But Jesus wanted us to believe without seeing the miracle of the resurrection. By not seeing miracles we are not really given less, only our faith is challenged more, and faith, not sight, is precious in the eyes of God. And it is not a blind faith, but a faith based on evidence. See I Peter 1:7, 2 Pet 1:1 on faith being precious. No, to walk by miracle and by sight is a step back from the challenges of faith in Christianity.

ARGUMENT ELEVEN

(The Bible says you receive the Spirit for the asking. Luke 11:13 says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?")

Yes, God gives the Spirit to them who ask Him. The question is, in what sense does God give the Spirit? Luke 11:13 is parallel with Matthew 7:11 where it says for asking we receive "good things." We listen to the voice of the Spirit and through our obedience and the

intercession of the Spirit we receive good things. See Romans 8:26-28.

ARGUMENT TWELVE

(Romans 8 says the Spirit bears witness with our spirit)

Here is how such happens. The Bible says the Spirit of truth, through the truth, bears witness to all religious facts (John 16:13; Eph. 6:17). He does this in words which were written down as scripture (I Cor. 2:11-13; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; I Cor. 14:37). The Spirit bears witness that to be a child of God you must believe Jesus is the Christ (John 8:24), repent of your sins (Acts 3:19), confess your faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9,10), and be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Our spirit is the part of us that thinks and knows (I Cor. 2:11). The Spirit of truth tells us through the word what is necessary to become a child of God. Our spirit knows we have done so. So the Spirit thereby testifies with our spirit that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16-18). None of this, however, teaches that miracles are to continue in our day.

ARGUMENT THIRTEEN

(You are sign seekers, Matthew 12:39, asking us to tempt God, Matthew 4:7)

When Jesus reproved them for asking for a sign, the facts were, he had done signs enough. It was already sufficient in His mind (Mat. 9:27; Mat. 9:32; Mat. 8:5; Mat. 12:22; Mat. 8:2; Mat 8:25; Mat. 9:23; Mat. 12:10). The evidence, much in testimony, which should have produced faith (John 20:30-31), was all around them. Yet He did promise the sign of Jonah. But their hearts were wrong and He knew they were an evil offspring or generation. Sin not signs was their overriding problem.

But we are not wrong to demand signs of so-called miracle workers in our day. Those who have investigated these so-called miracles have uniformly found them not to be real. But recall, signs were to confirm the word. These so- called miracle workers in our day have not done signs aplenty, and what they do offer in evidence is more than clearly suspect. But Paul gladly did signs. He said to those

who knew best, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works” (2 Cor. 12:12). And he said, “Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ” (I Cor. 11:1).

Then by comparing Matthew 16:1; Luke 11:16; and Mark 8:11 it seems they on some occasions asked for an unusual sign, one from heaven. He refused because their hearts were not right.

Too, the Israelites only tempted God when they did not believe in His power (Num. 14:22; Deut. 6:16; Psa. 78:18,19). We believe He can do signs, only we do not believe it is His will to do them today. Since we believe in His power, we are not tempting Him today.

Yes, God is great and able to do whatever He wishes. We have presented some reasons why He chooses that today we should walk by faith and not by sight.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (8)

MIRACLES CEASED WHEN THEIR PURPOSE CEASED

We continue our study of Bible miracles. Do miracles go on today, or have they ceased? Though God intervenes in this life and answers prayer in a real and magnificent way, we take the position that the Bible teaches that miracles are no longer performed. We sincerely believe that is the obvious teaching when one understands the purpose for which biblical miracles were performed. Let’s explore this by first looking at the design or purpose of miracles.

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

In our study of miracles, we want to see if God just did them to be helpful, or was a larger design or purpose evident? When God did

miracles was He only interested in healing infirmities, or did He have a stronger motive? Was there an ulterior point to be established?

In studying the design or purpose of miracles, we are well served if we talk on the nature of faith. First, we cannot believe that to which there has been no testimony. Sometimes we say, "I believe what I see." But that is really an abuse of language. We believe what we hear, we know what we see. Now little children believe what they hear. Yet soon they learn that they can be teased and even lied to. So as we proceed in life testimony is often not enough. We need confirmation.

In fact, the greater the testimony the greater the need for confirmation. We want to make sure of the testimony. But consider this. What kind of confirmation is required for supernatural testimony? For example, a fact occurs; Jesus came from heaven to earth to save mankind. The gospel is testimony to that fact. But why should it ever be believed? And would normal confirmation be sufficient? No, God seems to recognize that supernatural testimony requires supernatural confirmation. Regarding the gospel we have a supernatural fact (Jesus came from heaven to earth). We have testimony to that fact (the gospel). We have supernatural confirmation (miracles). And all that together produces faith. But does the Bible teach all this? Are miracles really done to authenticate the gospel message? Do miracles function as a sign to prove testimony? Let's look at the miracles of Jesus and see if what we have stated is biblical and true.

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

The disciples of John the immerser came to Jesus and asked if He were the One for whom they were looking and waiting. He answers this way, "Go and tell John the things which ye hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find no occasion of stumbling in me" (Mat. 11:2-6). That's how He answered John. He seems clearly to say, "I'm Him and you know it by the miracles I perform." Miracles prove it. If so, is not that then the reason He did them? Let's look further.

JOHN 2:23

This says of Jesus, “Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed on his name, beholding his signs which he did” (John 2:23). They beheld the signs and so believed. The effect of signs was to produce belief.

JOHN 3:1,2

We read, “Now there was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: the same came unto him by night, and said to him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:1,2). Signs had their proper effect. They were like credentials from God which authenticated that one had come from God. Notice more.

JOHN 2:11; JOHN 4:53; JOHN 5:36; JOHN 11:45

When Jesus, in Cana, turned the water into wine we read, “This beginning of his signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested his glory; and his disciples believed on him” (John 2:11). Miracles are to be thought of as signs. They manifest glory in order that one might believe on an individual.

A nobleman had a son ill at Capernaum even at the point of death. He asked Jesus to come down and heal his son. Jesus said, “Go thy way; thy son liveth” (John 4:50). Servants came to the nobleman and told him his son liveth. He was told when the son got well. We read, “So the father knew that it was at that hour in which Jesus said unto him, Thy son liveth: and himself believed, and his whole house” (John 4:53).

And Jesus explained that such works were like a testimony regarding whom He was. He told the Jews, “But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me” (John 5:36). The miracles were not just miracles; they were signs which bore witness regarding the station of Christ and whether He was more than a mere man. They bore witness of Him.

In John chapter eleven Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. He, after being dead four days, came out of the tomb bound hand and foot

in answer to Jesus' command: "Lazarus, come forth!" (John 11:43). What was the effect of the miracle? Did it teach anything? Did it produce faith? We read, "Many therefore of the Jews, who came to Mary and beheld that which he did, believed on him" (John 11:45). So the miracle confirmed Whom Jesus was to the point that faith was produced.

Over and over we have seen that the miracles Jesus did functioned as signs and produced faith by authenticating that Jesus came from God. But does the Bible say more? Yes. It actually says the very thing we have been affirming and in almost the exact language. In the first gospel sermon after the resurrection of Jesus Peter affirmed this: "Ye men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God unto you by mighty works and wonders and signs which God did by him in the midst of you, even as ye yourselves know" (Acts 2:22). Yes, Jesus was approved by God by signs and wonders and mighty works. That is why God did miracles by Jesus Christ, to show that He was approved. And such miracles would be recognized as being from a good God if they were benevolent. So Jesus did many healings. Many miracles contained the element of compassion.

ROMANS 1:4

Something else is important. Romans 1:4 says, "who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 1:4). Jesus proved He was the Son of God by the resurrection. Does He need to be resurrected each generation to prove it again and again? No, once declared always declared. And once confirmed, always confirmed. He does not need to be resurrected again, nor does He need to confirm Who He is by signs any longer. Notice John proves this. He says, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). Once written they produce faith just as if they were witnessed, according to John. So it is a faithful saying, "They were written for the same reason they were wrought."

WHY DID THE APOSTLES WORK MIRACLES?

The apostles worked miracles to authenticate something also, that the word they preached was really from God. Jesus said, "and these signs shall accompany them that believe: in my name shall they cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents, and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall in no wise hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mark 16:18,19). But why did they do such miracles? Right there in the same context we have our answer. The text says, "And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen" (Mark 16:20). They did miracles to confirm for all time that the word they spoke came from God. Well, did they finish the job? Did it get confirmed? Notice: "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? Which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard" (Heb. 2:3). As clear as it can be the Bible says the word was confirmed. If so, we have seen once confirmed, always confirmed; and we have noticed that once written they serve the same purpose as that for which they were wrought They produce faith in the messenger by confirming the word.

Yes, God did not work miracles just to be doing them. He had an ulterior motive. He wanted to stamp His approval on His Son and to confirm the word of the apostles. This all is not unusual. We see miracles were to confirm the word in the Old Testament. See Exodus 4:4-5; I Kings 18:24.

So, though God intervenes in this life and answers prayer in many marvelous ways, He no longer works miracles. A miracle is a violation of natural law so that it could serve as a wonder and a sign. Today God no longer violates natural law; He works through natural law in order to give us our requests.

CONCLUSION

In studying such doctrines, pray hard for truth. Study God's word carefully. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them" (Mat. 7:15,16). And He said, "For there shall arise

false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the elect" (Mat. 24:24).

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (9)

ARGUMENTS REGARDING

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ANSWERED

There are certain arguments used which attempt to establish that miraculous spiritual gifts continue on in our day, that we continue to have prophecy, tongues, and various miracles. We have contended that God answers prayer, gives daily grace, and exercises providence in the world. We just argue that He does none of that in a miraculous way today, that miracles once were used to confirm the word of God (Mark 16:20), but since the word is now confirmed (Heb. 2:3), He works through natural law and no longer violates natural law in miracles. However, it is left for us to reply to certain arguments which are used by some to try to establish that spiritual gifts operate in our day. Let's view them.

ARGUMENT ONE

"There were 120 present in Acts 1. They all received the baptism of the Spirit as recorded in Acts 2:1-4, so the baptism of the Spirit was not just for the apostles."

Here we simply exhort you to notice the context carefully. The day of Pentecost in Acts 2 is different from the day regarding which the 120 are mentioned. Too, Acts 1:26 mentions the apostles. The next verse (Acts 2:1), says they [the apostles] were all together in one place. "They" receive the baptism of the Spirit. All the pronouns used in Acts 2:1-4 where the baptism of the Spirit is recorded refer back to the nearest antecedent noun which is the word apostles in Acts 1:26. This is also in accord with Acts 1:2-5. Verse 2 says He gave commandment unto the apostles. Verse four says He charged them [the apostles] to tarry at Jerusalem and wait for the promise of the Father, "for John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit not many days hence" (Acts 1:5). So the baptism of the Holy Spirit was specifically promised to the apostles, and we see the apostles receive it on the day of Pentecost (Acts 1:26 - Acts 2:4).

To verify all this, when they spoke in tongues that day we read, "But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and spake forth unto them, saying...." (Acts 2:14). Peter stood up that day along with the ones speaking in other languages. It clearly says he stood up with the eleven, not with the 120. And when the listeners were pricked in their heart, they said "unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do" (Acts 2:37). They didn't address the 120

for only the apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit and were speaking in tongues that day.

ARGUMENT TWO

"John 7:38,39 promised the baptism of the Holy Spirit to everyone."

John 7:38,39 has Jesus promise that if one believes on Jesus "from within him shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believed on him were to receive" (John 7:38,39). But who said this is speaking of the baptism of the Spirit? The text does not say it. We have showed before that there are three separate and distinct measures of the Holy Spirit. Every time the Spirit is mentioned we should not think it must talk of the baptism of the Spirit. Matthew 7:11 has Jesus say that if you ask of the Father He will give good things to you. The parallel verse in Luke 11:13 says if you ask of the Father he will give the Holy Spirit. Both are true and talk of the same thing. We hear the voice of the Spirit in the word of God, obey it, and receive blessings from God. So He gives the Spirit to us in the sense of giving the Spirit's message to us which brings a good, blessed, and happy life, all from the Spirit, and all welling up from within us springing from our obedience to the voice of the Spirit in the word of God. That's why Acts 2:38 says we receive the Holy Spirit when we are baptized for remission of sins, and its parallel passage says when we "turn again" and our sins are blotted out, we receive "seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). So there is a stream of good works and fair blessings which come through abiding in the truths of the Spirit of truth (John 16:13; Rom. 8:26). And surely, when we become a child of God, the Spirit makes intercession for us. So all in all, we do not believe John 7:38, 39 speaks at all of the baptism of the Spirit.

ARGUMENT THREE

Then it is argued, "wind" in John 3:8 (speaking of the new birth), and sound in Acts 2:2 (speaking of the baptism of the Spirit), are the same Greek word, so when Jesus talks of the Spirit's part of the new birth He teaches we receive the baptism of the Spirit.

First, we would reply that stating such a thing does not make it so. The contention must be proved true. Then the "wind" of John 3:8 and the "sound" of Acts 2:2 have nothing to do with each other, though the same word is used. The word is not used in the same way in the two verses. In John three Jesus is merely saying that like the wind, the new birth is invisible. In Acts 2 there was a loud noise, like a mighty wind, when the apostles received the baptism of the Spirit. There were also tongues of fire as part of the sign. And Acts 2:1-4 is not talking of the new birth as is John 3:1-5. So this argument doesn't prove anything regarding spiritual gifts continuing on in our day.

ARGUMENT FOUR

It is further argued: "John 3:34 says He gives not the Spirit by measure. You say the Spirit was given in measures."

However, it is obvious that God doesn't give the Holy Spirit to Jesus by measure, though others received the spirit by measure, Jesus is the One under discussion. He is the One sent and to whom God has given all things into His hand. The New International Version translates it, "To him God gives the Spirit without limit." Phillip's Translation has, "There can be no measuring of the Spirit given to him." The American Bible Society translation, the TEV version has, "for God's Spirit is upon him without measure or limit." Barclay has, "For God gives him no meager share of his Spirit."

Then again, we invite you to read Numbers 11:17-25 Where God took of the Spirit on Moses and gave to the seventy. If the Spirit was not taken in measure then Moses had none left. If the Spirit is not given in measure, how does He rest on seventy of them? Then in 2 Kings 2:9 Elisha asks for a double portion of the Spirit to fall on him as was on Elijah. So yes, we are not thinking wrongly when we think of the three measures of the Spirit.

ARGUMENT FIVE

Notice I Corinthians 1:7: "so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1:8). It is argued, "I Corinthians 1:7 says spiritual gifts were to last till the coming of Christ."

However, I Corinthians 1:7 does not say the gifts were to last till the second coming. It merely says that the word was fully confirmed in them while they were waiting. Christians were to always wait for the Lord, and incidental to that they had in the first century the ability to confirm their words by miraculous spiritual gifts. All it says is that they had their testimony, in a brief age of miracles, confirmed while they waited. It never says such gifts were to last to the second coming, and in fact, from other passages we have learned that these gifts were not designed to last.

ARGUMENT SIX

They say, "I Thessalonians 5:19, 20 says despise not prophesying."

Well, when we believe prophecy ceased, we do not despise it. Too, Paul gave this command while prophecy still existed. While it existed they were not to despise it. In like manner, we do not despise Christ just because we believe His life here on earth ceased. We do not despise the apostles just because we believe their office finally came to an end. So also we do not despise prophecy just because we believe it ceased just as I Corinthians 13:8 said it would. When prophecy existed however, they could despise prophecy by not letting the prophets speak, and by not listening to the prophets when they did speak. But now we have the Bible, so prophecy passed away and is no longer needed.

We have carefully looked at six arguments used to try to establish that spiritual gifts continue in our day. We feel none of the arguments are very convincing. We pray we all will continue to study this subject with honest and good hearts (Luke 8:15).

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (10)

ARGUMENTS REGARDING

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ANSWERED (2)

ARGUMENT SEVEN

Sometimes I Corinthians 14:39 is argued from where Paul says, "Wherefore, my brethren, desire earnestly to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues" (I Cor. 14:39).

We believe that passage as we believe the whole Bible. As long as spiritual gifts existed in the first century, they were to be desired and they were not to forbid to speak in tongues. Later the church got the Bible and it was fulfilled what Paul said, "whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:8). When the perfect came, the completed word of God as we saw earlier, the partial was done away.

ARGUMENT EIGHT

I Corinthians 14:2 says, "For he that speaketh in a tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God; for no man understandeth" (I Cor. 14:2).

Thus it is argued that we can't understand tongues today; they are like the language of angels. We have felt that tongue speaking today is pseudo or false language. Actually the verse doesn't mean he can't speak at all for I Corinthians 14:28 says the man could speak to himself. When I Corinthians 14:2 said "no man understandeth" it only refers to the fact that there was no interpreter present. They had to interpret (I Cor. 14:27). All it means is that no one understood the language.

In Acts chapter two when the apostles spake in tongues the listeners said, "we hear them speaking in our tongues the mighty

works of God" (Acts 2:11). In verse eight they say, "and how hear we, every man in our own language wherein we were born" (Acts 2:8). So tongues were languages, languages wherein one was born, and what we have in our day certainly are not languages.

ARGUMENT NINE

Then I Corinthians 14:28 says, "but if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God" (I Cor. 14:28).

Now it is argued that if tongues are really languages and men could really understand them, and the man could speak to himself, why couldn't he be his own interpreter? The solution is the word interpret, it is not the word translate. He could understand the language and the words, but he did not know the interpretation. Even in our day one can easily read a passage, but he doesn't always understand it and know the meaning of what he reads. So if one was not present with the spiritual gift of interpretation, God did not want him to speak at all, lest he give a wrong interpretation. So yes, tongues are languages in the Bible, but they had to be interpreted.

ARGUMENT TEN

As we saw, I Corinthians 13:10 says when that which is perfect is come that which is in part shall be done away. We said the perfect was the completed word of God in scripture form so that the partial, spiritual gifts, had now passed away. But someone will say I Corinthians 13:12 answers I Corinthians 13:10 in this way. We will not know fully until we get to heaven. It reads, "For now we see in a mirror, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know fully even as also I was fully known" (I Cor. 13:12). When the perfect comes we will know fully, they say, but we will not do that until heaven so the "perfect" must be talking about heaven.

However, there are a few things which need to be pointed out. First, we will not know fully in the absolute sense even in the next life. Omniscience is a mark of Deity. Secondly, we can now fully know God's wisdom in a mystery (Cor. 2:6-9). That is what is under discussion. Third, however, some in the New Testament are described as knowing fully. See Colossians 1:9 and 2 Corinthians l:13. This

shows it is possible to have a full knowledge. The original word is *epignosis*. It can not only be obtained, it can be increased. Paul said to the Colossians, "to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge [Greek *epignosis,* the word used in I Corinthians 12] of God" (Col. 1:10). One's knowledge or *epignosis* can even go through a renewal process. See Colossians 3:10.

ARGUMENT ELEVEN

Then it is argued that I Corinthians 13:10 can't mean the Bible for the letter killeth but the Spirit makes alive according to 2 Corinthians 3:6.

However, "letter" in 2 Corinthians 3:6 refers to the letter of the law of Moses. It killed in the sense that no one could keep the law perfectly and the law pointed out sin so one who sought salvation by law keeping was lost. See Romans 4:15 and 7:8,9. But the Spirit of truth (John 16:13) preaches a system called the gospel (I Peter 1:12). It is called the law of the Spirit of "life" (Rom. 8:1,2). It made alive. The law killed but the gospel made alive (Rom. 1:16; Rom. 7:13; Rom. 8:13). Paul said the gospel was the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). So since it gives life it can be referred to in I Corinthians 13:10 as part of completed scripture.

ARGUMENT TWELVE

But someone argued that Paul died 20 years before the New Testament was completed. How could he fully know as we said one could do in this life?

We would reply that much was revealed before it was written down. But again we have before shown that one can have an *epignosis* and not know everything. The word *epignosis* is translated "fully know," but *epignosis* can even be increased.

ARGUMENT THIRTEEN

We have argued that once the word of God was confirmed it would always be confirmed. Yet one would argue that I Corinthians 1:8 teaches doctrine must be confirmed until the end. It says, "Who

shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye be unreprovable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Cor. 1:8).

However, I Corinthians 1:6 says "the testimony of Christ was confirmed." Verse 8 says Christ "shall also confirm you unto the end" (I Cor. 1:8). This talks of people being confirmed in their faith until the end. It does not speak of the word of God being confirmed unto the end.

ARGUMENT FOURTEEN

Some believe that the baptism of the Spirit is still in force.

However, we reply that by the time Ephesians was written it had passed away. Clear passages of scripture show water baptism is to continue (Mark 16:15,16; Matt. 28:18-20). But when Paul wrote Ephesians he said there was only one baptism (Eph. 4:5). But some object. They say, "It takes three persons to compose one God-head, but water and Spirit cannot compose the one baptism of Ephesians 4:5. We simply refer them to John 3:3-5. Jesus clearly says the new birth is by water and Spirit. The water obviously refers to water baptism. As the new birth is to continue, so then must water baptism. And since there is only one baptism, Holy Spirit baptism must have

ARGUMENT FIFTEEN

We said that spiritual gifts passed away and we quoted I Corinthians 13:8 which says clearly, "Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away" (I Cor. 13:8). It is argued that they can't be done away for knowledge is mentioned, and if it is done away then we would not know a single thing. We reply however, that I Corinthians 13:8 is situated in a miraculous context and so it is talking of miraculous knowledge, that given to prophets by revelation and inspiration. It is in the company of tongue speaking and prophecy and so is not talking of our common knowledge. There was a spiritual gift of knowledge and one also of wisdom (I Cor. 12:8). Miraculous knowledge is that Paul spoke of when he said of his gospel, "For neither did I receive it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came to me through revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1:12).

ARGUMENT SIXTEEN

We said that in Acts 2 only the apostles got the baptism of the Spirit and only they spoke in tongues that day. But it is argued that on that day more than twelve nations were represented so more than the twelve apostles had to be speaking in tongues for the people to hear the message in their own language. However, the apostles could have very well spoke in more than one language. Too, Parthians, Medes, and Elamites all spoke Persian. Pontus, Asia, Phyrgia, Pamphylia all spoke Greek. Only nine languages or so were needed.

CONCLUSION

So evidence mounts that spiritual gifts passed away.

THE WORK OF THE SPIRIT (11)

ARGUMENTS REGARDING

SPIRITUAL GIFTS ANSWERED (3)

God is still active today. He answers our prayers and gives us daily grace to help us in time of need. But now the purpose of miracles and spiritual gifts are served by the Bible. Spiritual gifts passed away as Paul said they would in I Corinthians 13:8-10. We continue to reply to arguments that are used to claim that spiritual gifts exist today. Let's see some more.

ARGUMENT SEVENTEEN

Sometimes, to argue that tongues are not languages, it is asserted that ecstatic utterances are the language of angels as mentioned by Paul in I Corinthians 13:1.

Well, we know Paul spoke in human languages, but we do not know he ever spoke in the language of angels if there is such a thing. When Paul mentioned the language of angels he was using exaggerated language or a figure of speech called a superlative. It is used for emphasis. Manna was called angel's food (Psa. 78:25) by a figure of speech. It does not prove angels actually ate. But if Paul just spoke what sounds like gibberish and false, fakey, language, how could it ever function as a sign to the unbeliever? See I Corinthians 14:22.

ARGUMENT EIGHTEEN

Then it is said that there are different kinds of tongues (I Cor. 12:10,28) and "ecstatic utterances" is just one of them.

No, kinds of tongues as seen in Acts chapter two were various human languages. Never are tongues defined in the Bible as ecstatic utterances. Once a definition is given, all instances retain that definition until a new definition is given. Never are tongues ever defined as ecstatic utterances. But they are defined as languages in Acts 2:6-8. Too, we notice that tongues are learnable. And *genos* or "kinds" means a kind, sort, or class or family. There are different kinds of languages, but they are still languages, not gibberish.

ARGUMENT NINETEEN

Some argue that since the tongues on Pentecost did not need interpretation they are different from the tongues of I Corinthians 14. However, the reason the tongues of Acts 2 did not need interpretation is that the language was understood. See Acts 2:6,8,11. And the tongues of I Corinthians 14 were not without meaning for they included praise and thanks (I Cor. 14:16,18).

ARGUMENT TWENTY

If tongues were understood by the speaker, it is argued, there would always be an interpreter present and the tongue speaker would never have to be silent for want of an interpreter as commanded in I Corinthians 14:28.

We would reply that there is a difference in them knowing the words they spoke and knowing the meaning or interpretation of a divine revelation given by God. They would understand the words, but God wanted one with an inspired interpretation to be present or else let the tongue speaker be silent. Today we get the inspired interpretation by comparing scripture with scripture.

ARGUMENT TWENTY-ONE

We have demonstrated that these gifts came through the laying on of the hands of the apostles (Acts 8:18), and that no one can meet the qualifications to be an apostle today. But it is argued that Paul said to pray for the gifts (I Cor. 14:13), so they come by prayer and not by the laying on of the hands of the apostles.

We would reply that if prayer were involved, it would not be involved separate and apart from the laying on of the hands of an

apostle. The ones to pray for gifts were the ones who had had hands already laid on them. The context so argues. But to confer a gift to the saints at Rome Paul said he would have to go there (Rom. 1:11). Evidently they couldn't get these gifts by mere prayer alone. See also Acts 8:15-17.

ARGUMENT TWENTY-TWO

It is naturally argued that there are apostles today who can lay on hands. It is further said that there were other apostles than Paul and the twelve (2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25; Acts 12:1-3; Acts 14:4,14).

First, to be an apostle of Christ one had to meet the qualifications laid down in Acts 1:21,22. One of the qualifications was to see the resurrected Christ so that one could be a witness of the resurrection. These witnesses have given their testimony in the Bible so no more are needed today. Their testimony is now said to be sufficient to produce faith (John 20:30,31).

Too, the word apostle means "one sent." It can be used in a general sense, even of "one sent" by a church. Paul and Barnabas were apostles of the church at Antioch. But only Paul and the twelve were apostles of Christ. They were apostles in the specific sense. See Galatians 1:1 and Acts 1:26.

ARGUMENT TWENTY-THREE

Some say there are specific scriptures concerning spiritual gifts but none concerning their cessation. Yet this is negative evidence. You can't build a case on what the Bible does not say. Where is a specific scripture which says God ceased to make people out of the dust of the ground? Yet more so, Paul gave a representative list of spiritual gifts and flatly said they would cease and be done away (I Cor. 13:8- 13).

ARGUMENT TWENTY-FOUR

Some insist that Paul's command to desire spiritual gifts (I Cor. 14:39) is as specific as any other command. True, Paul said to desire to prophesy and forbid not to speak in tongues. But this was during a time when spiritual gifts were still needed. Now the "perfect" has come (I Cor. 13:10), the Bible, and spiritual gifts have been done away as we demonstrated.

ARGUMENT TWENTY-FIVE

It is argued that Acts 4:29-31 shows that all the brethren received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, for "filled with the Holy Spirit" is identical with Acts 2:1-4. But Acts 4:29-31 does not say the entire church was filled with the Spirit. "Their own company" is most likely the apostles. Too, the Bible reveals none working miracles except the apostles until Acts 6:6. See also Acts 4:33; Acts 5:12; Acts 5:16. And notice there seems to be a distinction between "they" of Acts 4:23-31 and "the multitude of them that believed" in Acts 4:32. All Acts 4:29-31 is, is a reaffirmation at the beginning of the Spirit's power and a demonstration for new converts that it would continue so that the apostles could fulfill their mission.

ARGUMENT TWENTY-SIX

Mark 11:22-25 and Matthew7:7-11 and 21:18-22 say that if you ask believing you will receive, it is argued. However, it is a principle in scripture that some passages are limited by other passages. For example, Jesus flatly said "judge not" (Mat. 7:1). But in John 7:24 He said "judge righteous judgment." The second amends the first, helps to put it in context, and alerts us that we must take the whole bible on any one subject to get the truth. Mark 11 and the passages in Matthew given above are amended by James 4:2,3 here we must not ask "amiss" in prayer. I John 5:14 says He ears us when we ask for things according to His will. We cannot receive by faith in prayer that which is against the will d purpose of God.

ARGUMENT TWENTY-SEVEN

Then it is argued that Luke 11:11-13 says the Spirit will be given. Yes, the Spirit is given when we ask. But Matthew 7:7-11, a parallel passage, shows the Spirit is given the sense of what He effects, i.e., "good things." We follow the voice of the Spirit of truth (John 16:13),

and we get good things, spiritual and otherwise, which refresh us. We must put Matthew 7:7-11 with Luke 11:11-13. By a figure of speech called Metonymy where the subject can be put for the work the subject does we have Spirit sometimes put to stand for what the Spirit gives — "good things." Compare Acts 2:38 with Acts 3:19.

ARGUMENT TWENTY-EIGHT

Some argue that Mark 16:17 says miracles would follow believers. But we would reply that they did only until they had confirmed the word (Mark 16:20). The word has now been confirmed (Heb. 2:3), so signs need not and do not follow any longer.

ARGUMENT TWENTY-NINE

Sometimes we ask a "miracle worker" to demonstrate their signs as Paul said he did (2 Cor. 12:12). It is replied that signs cannot be worked where there is no faith. However, the verse they use to try to show that — Matthew 13:58 — only shows that Christ saw no point in working miracles where men were too hardened to believe. Elymas did not believe yet Paul worked a sign and struck him blind (Acts 13:10-12). Lazarus was dead and could not believe yet Jesus worked a sign and raised him from the dead.

ARGUMENT THIRTY

It is argued that Romans 8:14 says we are led by the Spirit. We are. The Spirit of truth, working through the truth leads us (John 16:13; Eph. 6:7; Psa. 73:24). Some resist the Spirit as He preaches in men (Acts 7:51).

ARGUMENT THIRTY-ONE

Finally it is argued that tongues would not be needed for Greek was widely known. Yet we would reply, "why then did the apostles speak other languages" (Acts 2:4,6,8,11)? They did so to serve as a sign (Mark l6:17; I Cor. 14:22). Too, many did not know Greek.

CONCLUSION

Well, this is sufficient. We sincerely feel it is wrong to assert that miracles, spiritual gifts and tongues go on today as they did in the first

century. However, God loves us and answers our prayers and fills our needs today by providence and grace, working through natural law.

WHAT'S BEHIND

TONGUE-SPEAKING?

One of the thorny problems which concern us as we approach the tongue-speaking movement is the problem of their personal experience. Many of them claim that they did not learn to speak in tongues (though I have eye-witness proof that many are merely taught to imitate sounds they have heard). They claim that their speaking is involuntary and overwhelming. Well, are they lying? Perhaps not. Perhaps they have a real experience which should be met with patience and love and concern. That it is a religious experience we are prepared to deny whenever we find one who has conviction enough to defend his cause publicly in formal debate. However, in some cases they might have a psychological or emotional experience which is very real to them. An individual in Michigan told me of his experience. He was asleep in a chair when he awoke at the sound of his own voice, speaking a language he had never heard. He did admit though, that it sounded a lot like what he had heard recently from the lips of other tongue speakers. Anyway, let us explore this.

PSYCHOLOGY OF TONGUE-SPEAKING

J. D. Thomas, in The Spirit and Spirituality, quotes Dr. Stuart Bergsma, a practicing psychiatrist. Thomas says, Bergsma first points out that physiologically, the human brain is somewhat similar to a computer, though more intricate. If a computer is overloaded,

however, it will become erratic and will demonstrate "neurotic" symptoms, acting like it is "possessed of demons," and thus "may spew out nonsense if pushed beyond its limits" (p. 13). By the same token, the human brain has limits and under high emotional strain may "rattle off nonsense syllables, broken phrases, pseudo language." Thomas then quoted at length from Bergsma, and we will print for your information, some rather lengthy extracts:

"Cutten (4) mentions the hysteria; the ecstasy of emotion based on the lack of normal self-control; the personality disintegration, which is temporary (during speech); the take-over of the speech or word center with the subject under the control, not of his rational higher cortical centers but in the control of and obedient to subconscious function; and auto-matic behavior. The approach of all these resulting phenomena to actual psychosis with visual and auditory hallucinations; the tremendous power which suggestion by leaders has, and the power the expectation of the audience has, on the glossolalist; the progression from inarticulate speech using formed words, and disconnected foreign words of which the speaker himself is not even conscious that he has a memory of the words; all resulting in a production that is unintelligible to both speaker and audience. In fact the incomprehensibility is an asset, it is maintained; it proves the genuineness, for nothing else would prove that this is really the Holy Spirit who speaks and not a man!...

"The speaker takes the shortcut of a reflex action, bringing a dissociation upon himself, by which the words do not go before the rational cerebral cortex for inspection, reflection and judgment as to whether they make sense, but are sent out directly by the efferent nerves as speech. Bess ... states the drawing power of the glossolalia movement among the present day intellectual types is the unconscious need all people have to solve their personality conflicts, to shed their feelings of inadequacy and guilt. Glossolalia gives such folk instant salvation' the easy way, like a cup of 'instant coffee.'

As to motivation, Bergsma says, "Many religious minds yearn for a closer contact with God, for a more intimate contact with the Holy Spirit. . . Identification with leaders in a group is psychologically very compelling. Religion with action, be it one that promises voices, visions, miracles, or the reward of becoming a person distinguished

by almost supernatural powers of special access to the Holy Spirit by conversation in ecstasy conferred on only some of the flock, is alluring to many a mind. One is a member of an inner circle. One is looked upon with awe. Honor and respect become one's portion. Especially to a religious person denied other attainments, low on the totem pole as to education or scholastic attainment, whose opinion is seldom asked in spiritual affairs, it is a distinct triumph for him to learn that he can speak in tongues... There is the stimulus of the group, the expectation, the highly pleasurable excitement, the exultation as the urge to speak becomes almost intolerable."

Well, this may have been a little technical, but it gives us a good idea of some of the research being done on the phenomenon of tongue-speaking.

FALSE EUPHORIA

One does not need to be around neo-Pentecostalism very long before he is confronted with the "happy glow" portrayal of life. Now we are certain that everyone knows that a Christian is to be joyful, peaceful, and victorious in this life (Phil. 4:4-6; John 14:1-3; John 14:27, etc.). But that a Christian is to bubble over with unendurable pleasure which is prolonged indefinably is something we do deny. Paul had physical and mental discomforts which he had to "endure" (I Cor. 4:12). He spoke of "patient enduring" (I Cor. 1:3). He spoke of his "distresses" and his "tumults" and his "watchings" (II Cor. 6:4-10).

Our Lord never got through His sojourn on earth without mental struggles. Truly, as Isaiah 53 (our 5th gospel) says, He was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief' (verse 3). His words recorded in Matthew 26:38 forever rebuke the "always cloud nine" front some are expected to constantly present us with. There Jesus says "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." The inspired writer uses words like "sorrowful and sore troubled," and "agony" to describe His mental condition.

Yet some are taught to always bubble and glow, bubble and glow, uninterruptedly, undiminished, world without end. It just is not scriptural! Nor is it healthy psychologically.

“PSYCHOLOGIST FAULTS CHRISTIANITY ‘GLOW’”

The above was the caption of an article in the "San Antonio Express-News," Saturday, July 19,1975. Following are some excerpts from the article which quotes Dr. Standley Linquist, professor of psychology at California State University at Fresno:

> "Christians sometimes try to "give the impression that God's presence keeps us always on 'cloud nine,' when we know we also have times of depression...
>
> "When we misrepresent we build up false expectations in others for themselves which creates the problem for them, too," he said in an exchange of correspondence.
>
> "We need to develop more honesty about the state we are in...
>
> "One can fool himself by this sort of emotional dishonesty some of the time, and one can fool others much of the time by a vibrant testimony to what is a partial reality in his life...
>
> "However, we eventually have to deal with this misrepresentation in other ways, such as, possibly, a conversion to a physical disorder that seems to appear mysteriously...
>
> "Each time we are emotionally dishonest and try to convey a false picture of victorious Christian experience, we are depriving others of the opportunity to know us better and to grow spiritually and personally in the process," he says.
>
> "Knowing that others have conflicts too and are coping with them gives hope to Christians who are in the midst of depression..."

Truly Christianity has its "valley of death" as well as the cup which "runneth over." We learn from the low spots in life. We emerge with greater patience and greater faith. We are "chastened sore" but it yields "peaceable fruits." Christianity simply doesn't make all problems vanish, nor does it make us completely unfeeling toward the shocks of life. The way Christ left gives us the ability to eventually overcome. That is enough.

A BOOK REVIEW

The Psychology of Speaking In Tongues

by John P. Kildahl

Dr. Kildahl, a psychotherapist, conducted interviews with "tongue-speakers" for about ten years. He let them describe their practice, listened to their utterances and came away with a firsthand study. His book has a historical as well as a psychological perspective. I want to spend some time sharing parts of his book with you. We think Dr. Kildahl's findings equip us to explain the "tongue speaking" experience. So let us see what he says.

HOW THE EXPERIENCE IS INITIATED

Dr. Kildahl relates the experience of Bill. "The leader asked him to make an effort to move his lips in a free and relaxed manner. 'Say after me what I say, and then go on speaking in the tongue that the Lord will give you.' 'Aish nay gum nay tayo. . .' prayed the leader and waited for Bill to repeat the same sounds..."' When Bill did repeat the sounds the leader prayed "Thank you Lord" and it was claimed that Bill received the Spirit. Now remember I told you that was precisely the method George Otis (who "baptized" Pat and Shirley Boone in the Spriit) used in my presence in Ludington, Michigan. Only the word sounds were not "Aish nay gum nay tayo" but "Eula Macha Sanna."

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

"Glossolalia, or speaking in tongues, is not restricted to Christian experience. Ecstatic utterances of a divinely inspired nature are mentioned in early Egyptian writings. The oracles of Delphi, Dodona, and Epirus among many others, which laid claim to prophecy, sometimes through the spirits of the dead, appear to be related to glossolalia. Plato extolled 'four kinds of irrational experience, the divine madness of love, prophecy, Dionysian ecstasy, and poetic intuition,' and both Plutarch and Virgil recorded phenomena similar to glossolalia." (p. 11)

"Montanus, a second-century deviate Christian preacher from Phrygia, practiced glossolalia to proclaim the imminent end of the world. His predictions proved false. His theology was deemed heretical, but some present-day glossalists quote Montanus and his sect as valid exemplars of tongue-speaking." (p. 14)

"Origen, writing in mid-third century, and Chrysostom a hundred years later both disparaged the accounts of glossolalia and claimed that if it had ever been a part of Christian practice, it was valid no longer.

"Augustine of Hippo asserted in the early fifth century that speaking in tongues was a sign adapted to Biblical times: 'That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away.'" (p. 15)

THEORIES

"Glossolalia as a psychological condition, ways Cutten, is usually ascribed to hysteria, ecstasy, or catalepsy. Hysteria is a condition in which the individual is extremely susceptible to suggestion and any sensations he feels are exaggerated." (p. 25)

"Speaking in tongues does indeed serve as a 'singular emotional outlet' Several in-depth studies of tongue-speaking Pentecostals indicate that they are very troubled people; they exhibit more anxiety and personal instability than non-Pentecostals or non-tongue-speaking Pentecostals." (p. 29)

"Lapsley and Simpson, in attempting to define the phenomenon in psychological terms liken it to the form of automatism found in trance states and sleep-walking, because all or nearly all the voluntary muscles are dissociated from conscious control. Automatisms are

considered to provide an escape valve for deep-seated conflicts within the individual." (p. 30)

"Oates asserts that tongue-speakers tend to have weak egos, confused identities, high anxiety levels, and generally unstable personalities. Neo-Pentecostals particularly are often members of the affluent middle class, professionals or quasi-professionals, suffering from the emotional deprivation common to our times. Sometimes individuals of this socio-economic level try to 'break through' their loneliness by means of alcohol and or drugs. Speaking in tongues, Oates feels, provides a form of breaking through which allows the psychically ill to communicate their deep and too-long-repressed religious emotions in a socially acceptable form." (p. 32-33)

NOTES FROM AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

Hypnosis

"There is a similarity between what happens when people are induced to speak in tongues and the process of hypnotism. When I hypnotize someone, I begin by saying to my subject, 'Lie back... shut your eyes... relax... breathe deeply... and listen to the sounds of your breathing. As you relax, you can feel yourself getting tired and drowsy...'

"The standard reference work by Ernest Hilgard, Hypnotic Susceptibility, makes it clear that hypnosis and glossolalia are induced in a similar manner." (p. 37)

RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Dr. Qualben and Dr. Kildahl, studying the psychology of tongue speaking, came up with five hypotheses or probable facts. They researched these and came up with some interesting findings. We now summarize two of their findings which are important to notice.

1. Tongue speakers are more dependent on an authority figure than non-tongue-speakers. They need approval from some leader to function well in their "experience." Kildahl writes: "In fact, it appeared absolutely necessary that they have a relationship of continuing trust and

confidence if they were to experience glossolalia as spiritually important and meaningful." (p. 44)

2. On page 47 Dr. Kildahl writes: "Linguistic scholars work with precise definitions of what constitutes a natural human language. Glossolalia fails to meet the criteria of those definitions. Specifically, the work by Charles F. Hockett (in Joseph H. Greenberg, ed., Universal of Language, 1963) details sixteen criteria for language. THE RESEARCH OF LINGUISTICS CLEARLY SHOWS THAT THE SPOKEN UTTERANCES OF GLOSSOLALISTS DO NOT MEET THESE CRITERIA."

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS IN THE GLOSSOLALIA EXPERIENCE

Dr. Kildahl points out another difference in tongue-speakers in the following: "Dr. Paul Qualben learned through careful interviewing that more than 85% of the tongue-speakers had experienced a clearly defined anziety crisis preceding their speaking in tongues. Their anziety was caused by marital difficulties, financial concerns, ill health, and general depression." (p. 57)

Regression

"Psychological regression was another emotional factor shown to be inherent in the development of the glossolalia experience. By regression is meant a reversion of an earlier level of maturity, during which the rational, common-sense, ego-controlled way of relating to life is somehow diminished. It is perhaps more child-like, less critical, and generally more free-floating in its nature. The glossolalia experience was generally introduced under the mass pressures of a group or a crowd, or the atmosphere was contagious because of the leader's charisma. The neophytes' critical faculties were subdued.

"Without exposure to a regressive group experience, glossolalia could not be induced. The glossolalia experience was rarely generated in the course of quiet, rational introspection." (p. 59)

FAITH HEALING?

In this essay we want to print excerpts from an article which appeared in one of the leading magazines in America. The title of the article is "In Search of A Miracle" by William A. Nolen, M.D. In this article he traces out how he, with a willingness to believe, investigated Kathryn Kuhlman, a noted faith healer.

BACKGROUND

Dr. Nolen begins, "Anyone who works with sick people, as I do, knows that there are many unpredictable, ill-defined factors that affect the healing process. The 'will to live,' for example... A couple of years ago I began to wonder how great a role faith plays in the healing process. Is faith in someone, or something, enough by itself to effect a cure?... I decided to take a closer look at the healing that was reportedly being done outside of the traditional Western school of medicine... But because of my Roman Catholic background, I was already convinced that faith played some role in healing and so I was certain I could approach the subject with an open mind. Since Kathryn Kuhlman is certainly the best-known and probably the most highly regarded of the Christian faith healers, I decided that my investigation should begin with her.

"Kathryn Kuhlman is an ordained minister. She has been 'healing' since 1946; in an average year she holds 125 'healing' services and treats approximately one and a half million patients. Her services are held in the largest auditoriums in the biggest cities in the United States. At each service hundreds of sick people claim to have been cured...

"Through a friend who knew I was writing a book about paranormal healing, I arranged to be an usher and was assigned to the wheel-chair division. After the service, I was able to interview Kathryn Kuhlman. So began my investigation of faith healing."

A SAMPLE CURE

Dr. Nolen described how the "healing" took place. He continues, "Occasionally Miss Kuhlman would turn to the audience and say, 'Someone with a brace - a brace on your leg - you don't need that brace anymore. Take it off. Come and claim your cure.'

"The first time she called for a brace, no one came forth. You could sense that the audience felt this was almost embarrassing for Miss Kuhlman. Finally, a very pretty young girl came up on the stage. She was waving her leg brace and standing, with her pelvis tilted badly, on one good leg and one short, withered leg. Kathryn Kuhlman questioned her. 'How long have you worn this brace?' Thirteen years. Since I had polio at seven.'

"'And now you're cured. You don't need it anymore. You've taken it off.'

"'Yes,' she said. 'I believe in the Lord. I've prayed, and He's curing me.'

"Everyone applauded. The girl cried. This scene, to my mind, was utterly revolting. The girl's leg was just as withered as it had been ten minutes earlier. Now she stood in front of 10,000 people, giving praise to the Lord - and indirectly to Kathryn Kuhlman for a cure that hadn't occurred and wasn't going to occur. I could imagine how she would feel when the hysteria of the moment had left her and she again had to put on the brace she had worn for 13 years - and would wear for the rest of her life. This was the case that first made me skeptical of Kathryn Kuhlman and her organization."

INVESTIGATION

"During the service, as those who had 'claimed a cure' came down off the stage, two legal secretaries I had enlisted to help me, wrote down the names and addresses, phone numbers and diagnoses of everyone who was willing to cooperate in a follow-up study. We got 82 names - almost everyone who was approached. . . A few weeks after the service, letters were sent to the names on the list, inviting them to come to Minneapolis on Sunday, July 14, and tell us about . their experiences. Twenty-three people showed up, and I made arrangements to interview them individually over the next few months."

CONCLUSION

"In talking to these people, I tried to be as honest, understanding and objective as possible, but I couldn't dispense with my medical knowledge and my common sense. I listened carefully to everything

they told me and followed up every lead that might have led to a confirmation of a miracle. I was led to an inescapable conclusion: Of the patients who had returned to Minneapolis to reaffirm the cures claimed at the miracle service, not one had, in fact, been miraculously cured of anything.

"And what about the cancer patients who had claimed cures? None of them had returned to Minneapolis. Since I was anxious to find out what had happened to them, I contacted everyone of my list. . . Mrs. Sullivan died of cancer four months after she had been 'cured' at Kathryn Kuhlman's miracle service. (Etc., J.C.M.)

RES IPSA LOQUITUR

"I'm inclined to rest my case on the axiom, often used by the defense lawyer in malpractice cases when a sponge has been found in the patient's abdomen after an operation: Res ipsa loquitur (The thing speaks for itself)."

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

PSALLO, OLD TESTAMENT USE,

HARPS IN HEAVEN, SONGBOOKS

AND PEWS, AND THE LAW OF EXCLUSION

Sometimes when visitors worship with the Churches of Christ the first thing they notice is that there is no instrumental music. In truth, the only reason we do not use instrumental music is that we can find no authority for it and we seek fervently to not add to or take from God's word (Deu. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:6; Gal. 1:6-9; 1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 22:18,19).

When we search all the passages which talk of music in the worship of the church we find they specify singing. For example, Ephesians 5:19 says, "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Investigate also Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26; Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; James 5:13.

Yet someone will say that the Greek word for sing in Ephesians 5:19 means to play on an instrument. However, Abbott-Smith, a common Greek authority says Psallo (sing) means 'To pull, twitch, twang (as a bowstring) hence to play a stringed instrument with the fingers... later to sing praise." It is obvious the word has evolved in meaning. The English word nice in Shakespeare's day meant "foolish." Words change. Let's chart a brief history of the word. In classical Greek the word meant "pluck or twitch as with a carpenter's red line." Later it was associated with an instrument. By the time the Septuagint version was written psallo included "singing." This was about 200 years before Christ. But the word kept changing. By New Testament times the word had shed its literal meaning of "plucking" and meant only "to sing." This is borne out by Vincent and Thayer, common Greek authorities.

However, in 1957 a Greek Lexicon or dictionary, edited by Arndt and Gingrich, came out and it was believed it might be so good it would replace the classical lexicon by Thayer. In it, it said the word psallo in the New Testament meant "to pluck a stringed instrument." Since Arndt and Gingrich were passed away, J. W. Roberts and Hugo McCord wrote the scholar in charge of revising it and asked him about the definition. Dr. Danker wrote back saying, "I see by comparison with Baur's first edition that the editors Arndt and Gingrich have incorporated the obvious Old Testament meaning into the metaphorical usage of the New Testament. Baur did not make this mistake and we will be sure to correct it in the revision." This letter was published in the Gospel Advocate journal, November 1,1962. So New Testament evidence for instrumental music is still lacking.

Often someone says that instruments of music are found in passages such as Psalm 150:3. David said, "Praise him with trumpet sound: Praise him with psaltery and harp" (Psa. 150:3). Yet we must point out that such evidence is from the Old Testament, Judaism, not Christianity which is the religion found in the New Testament. The Old Law was more carnal; the New Law is more spiritual. The Old Law is done away and Christians today are only under the New Law, the New Testament. Paul said, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). And again he said, "For there is a disanulling of a foregoing commandment

because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect)" (Heb. 7:18,19). And again he said, "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:9,10). So Paul could say, "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). So one cannot find authority for instrumental music by going to Judaism and the Old Covenant, which Covenant has been done away.

REVELATION 5:8

Sometimes an appeal is made to Revelation 5:8 where it says, "and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense" (Rev. 5:8). But the first thing we should notice is that this is all symbolism. The four and twenty elders represent Christians. The bowls of incense represent prayers. The harps represent praise. Revelation is a book of symbolism. In Revelation 16:13 out of the mouth of the Dragon and the beast come three unclean frogs. None of that is to be taken literally. Yet even if it were literal, Revelation is not talking of worship in the Church here on earth but rather praise in heaven. Too, they even in symbolism never pluck the harps. It says they "sang." So on instrumental music a more appropriate scripture is "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophecy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). And Jesus added, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:13).

BLACKBOARDS, SONG BOOKS, AND PEWS

It is sometimes argued that you have as much authority for instrumental music as you have for blackboards, song books, and pews to sit on. These are aids to study and worship so it is said that instrumental music in like manner is just an aid. No matter what case can be made for instrumental music being an aid, it is wrong because it is an addition. We are not to add to God's word (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Mat. 15:13). When you add an element of the same nature as that commanded you have an addition rather than an aid. For example,

God told Noah to make an ark out of gopher wood. If he used a hammer, he would merely use it as an aid for he had not added something of the same nature as that commanded by God—wood. However, if Noah put in cedar wood, he would have an addition to gopher wood, for he would have added something of the same nature as that commanded, wood. For another example take the Lord's Supper. The Lord commanded that the elements be bread and wine or fruit of the vine. When we use many cups we have them as an aid, for they add nothing of the same nature as that which Christ commanded. You still have just the two elements which Christ specified—bread and wine. But if you add ham and eggs you have an addition and not an aid for you have added things of the same nature as that commanded by the Lord—food. Now you have four elements in the Lord's Supper instead of just two. You have an addition and not an aid. And the Bible condemns such additions as we have seen. And we strive to be right even in the smallest things to please Him who died for us. We abhor the idea of going beyond His doctrine whereby we would lose God (2 John 9-11).

Now take instrumental music. God said sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). He specified one type of music — singing. If we use a song book we still have only one kind of music — acappella or mere singing. But if we add an organ we have an addition and not an aid for we have added something of the same nature as that commanded—another type of music. We now have two types of music when God commanded one, so we have an addition and such additions are condemned (Deu. 4:2; Gal. 1:6-10; 2 John 9-11). When you use a hammer you still have just kind of wood so you have an aid. When you use cups you have an aid for you still just have the two commanded elements of the Lord's Supper. But when you add instrumental music you have an addition to God's word for you now have two types of music when He commanded only one.

LAW OF EXCLUSION

Let's look at it another way. We would say to specify is to exclude. If I stood in class and told Joe to raise his hand no one else should or would. Only Joe was specified so only Joe would raise his hand. Then at the tomb of Lazarus, Jesus said "Lazarus come forth." Had he not specified he may have had a whole graveyard come up, if

there were as we suppose other tombs at the location. To specify is to exclude. If I say to my son, “Jeremy, please bring and hand me the pliers from my tool chest,” I do not have to say: “Not the wrench; not the hammer; not the screw drivers, not the saw," etc. To specify to exclude. If I said, “bring the tools” then anything goes. If I looked at the class and said “stand up,” all would stand. But if I specify, “Mary, stand up.” Only she would stand. What we are saying is fundamental human thought and reasoning. To specify is to exclude. And when God specified singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), it excluded all other types of music for to specify one is to exclude all others. If God just said make music, you would not add to God’s word by using several types. But He specified in the New Testament singing, so that excluded all else. This is such a true principle that God argues from it regarding Christ. Often someone will say, “God didn’t say not to use instrumental music.” Yes, He did! When He specified what to use he excluded and said thereby not to use any other type. For example, Hebrews 1:5 says, “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my son, This day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a son?” (Heb. 1:5). Why could not an angel say “You didn’t say I wasn’t your son, therefore I am.” But when God specified Jesus He excluded all the angels.

Hebrews 1:13 says, “But of which of the angels hath he said at any time, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet?” (Heb. 1:13). No angel could say, “you did not say I couldn’t sit at thy right hand. Therefore I will.” No, when God said Who was to sit at His right hand it excluded all the angels and all mankind as well. To specify is to exclude.

So, you can see that we do not use instrumental music in Christian worship because we sincerely feel it is wrong. We don’t want to add to God’s word. And instrumental music does that very thing.

THE SILENCE

OF THE SCRIPTURE

One of the saddest times of Bible history was the period of the Judges. Judges 21:25 says, “In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 21:25). In other words it was, religiously, every man for himself. That is precisely the state of affairs when the silence of scripture is not observed. Today there is a King over us: Jesus Christ. To obey Him we must respect the silence of the scriptures. We must try to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. Today we will study the silence of scriptures under several propositions.

PROPOSITION ONE

Proposition one is: common sense and fundamental human reasoning urge respect for the silence of scripture. For example, if the doctor gave you medicine and told you to take one pill daily, would you then take three daily and explain to him that you did so because he didn't say not to? God talks to us in ways we normally comprehend. We don't abandon reason, intelligence, and plain old common sense, and common sense tells us that to specify is to exclude. Jesus stood at the tomb of Lazarus and commanded: "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43). Even the dead in other tombs knew to stay down, for to specify Lazarus was to exclude all else. And when God specified what elements were to be used in the Lord's Supper, bread and fruit of the vine, that excluded ham and eggs and all else. That's because to specify is to exclude.

Too, in worship, God did not say make music. He specified "singing." Ephesians 5:19 says, "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). When He specified singing that excluded every other type of music. Common sense tells us that and though it may seem to some like a small thing we want to be right even in small things for our life may depend on it

Some say instrumental music is an aid to singing and not an addition. But let's explore that. Listen to this statement:

> **"When you add something of the same nature as that which God commanded, you have an addition and not an aid."**

For example, God commanded fruit of the vine and bread for the Lord's Supper. If you add meat and potatoes you have an addition and not an aid for you added something of the same nature as that which God commanded, i.e., food. But what if you use plates and trays and plastic cups? You have aids to the Lord's Supper and not additions for you included things which are not of the same nature as that which God commanded—food. This is seen in the fact that you still have just two elements in the Lord's Supper, bread and fruit of the vine.

The same is true of music. You can include song books and microphones, but they are an aid and not an addition for they are not of the same nature as that which God commanded—music. But instrumental music is an addition and not an aid for when you include it you have added something of the same nature as that which God commanded — music. You now have two types of music and not one, so you have an addition. All this is common sense and fundamental human reasoning. And though it may seem like a small thing, small things can be displeasing to the Lord and keep us out of heaven. Biblical examples show us that, and Jesus said, "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much" (Luke 16:10).

PROPOSITION TWO

Proposition two is that God explicitly says to respect the silence of the scriptures. Listen to God's word:

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deu. 4:2).

"What thing soever I command you, that shall ye observe to do: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it" (Deu. 12:32).

"Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Pro. 30:6).

Paul said, "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:6-9).

Peter said, "If any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God" (I Pet. 4:11).

And in the Book of Revelation, serving as a sort of sentinel, we read, "I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy

of this book, If any man shall add unto them, God shall add unto him the plagues which are written in this book: and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the tree of life, and out of the holy city, which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18.19).

Language can be no plainer. Biblical intent can be no clearer. Don't add to nor take away. Adhere to the oracles of God. But when we cast an eye on the religious world around us we see all these additions. There is instrumental music, prayer to saints, counting of beads, burning of incense, the sign of the cross, dedication of babies and much more, all of which are additions to the word of God. Friends, such things ought not to be.

PROPOSITION THREE

For proposition three we would point out that biblical examples warn us to respect the silence of the scriptures. In Leviticus Moses is setting up the priesthood with all its functions and its duties. But as recorded in Leviticus 10, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron and Priests to God, take their censors, added fire thereon, and put on incense. God says they added strange fire which God had not commanded them. Fire came down out of heaven and devoured them. God said it was strange for He had not commanded it. They added to God's word and died for it. And Paul said such things happened by way of example and were written for our admonition (1 Cor. 10:11). God never authorized it so He made an example out of them. This tells us to have authorization for all we do. And if we had time and space we could add other examples.

PROPOSITION FOUR

Proposition four, in regard to the silence of the scripture, is that God Himself argues for it by using the argument from silence. Notice two passages. Hebrews 1:5 says, "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?" (Heb. 1:5). Hebrews 1:13 says, "But of which of the angels hath he said at any time, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet?" (Heb. 1:13). Here, several things are affirmed of Christ. He is the begotten Son of God and he may sit at the right

hand of God the Father. This is all true because it is said in Psalm 2:17 and Psalm 110:1. In context, the Holy Spirit is making an argument that Jesus is better than the angels. He is better because God said the above things to Him, that He was a Son and that he could sit at the Father's right hand. Yet we notice that these statements are also a denial. They show that angels are not the Sons of God and cannot sit at God's right hand. Why? Because God specified another. Since God specified Who, all angels are excluded. The Holy Spirit is not concerned that angels might say, "you didn't say I was not the Son of God, so I am." Nor is He concerned that an angel might say, "you did not say I could not sit at your right hand so therefore I will." They could not say such a thing for it would be a violation of a law of silence, contradict common sense, and fly in the face of fundamental human reason. To specify Who is to exclude all others. God is arguing from the silence of His Word. And the truth is, God specified what type music He would have — singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). That excludes all else.

PROPOSITION FIVE

Now let us look at another item. It is the proposition that when it comes to His own covenants, God Himself, much less us, does not add thereto. The Holy Spirit said, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). Why was the change of the law a necessity? Evidently it is because God will not add to His covenant. Paul said, "Brethren, I speak after the manner of men: Though it be but a man's covenant, yet when it hath been confirmed, no one maketh it void, or addeth thereto" (Gal. 3:15). And back in Hebrews God said, "For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests" (Heb. 7:14). So one must respect the silence of scripture, and it seems God Himself; chose to do so. Jesus was to function as a Priest. Yet in the law of Moses, Moses is silent regarding priests of Judah. That silence is respected, and God changes to a New Covenant which allowed for a Priest forever after the order of, Melchizedek. See Hebrews 7:17. Jesus could not be a Priest under the Old Law for it specified priests of the tribe of Levi. But the Holy Spirit said, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). If the priesthood was to be changed, it was

necessary also to change the law. When Levi was specified, so also Judah was excluded regarding the Old Law.

CONCLUSION

So we have seen five reasons why we must respect the silence of scriptures. One, common sense tells us to do so. Two, the Bible explicitly says to do so. Three, biblical examples caution us to do so. Four, the Holy Spirit argues from the silence of scripture. And five, the Holy Spirit respected the silence of scripture enough to change the covenant when He changed the priesthood. A lot of division would evaporate if all men would respect the silence of the scriptures.

CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

Today we live in a world of religious division and contradicting doctrines. We have supposed, however, that we can go back to the Bible, use it as a blueprint, and establish pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity, without addition and without subtraction. In other words, we feel it is possible to be in the Lord's Church without ever joining a human denomination. But to do that, we know, will take a lot of Bible study, a strong desire to be right as well as righteous. And our study and determination to not go beyond God's word leads

us into some positions and stands which may seem strange to those who have not yet made the commitment to be bound by the Bible. One such thing we have come to is the sincere belief that instrumental music in worship to God is unauthorized by God and thereby wrong. Today we want to study an argument used in behalf of instrumental music in worship. Basically it argues that the scriptures are silent on congregational singing, so it cannot be required or not required. It is therefore said to be a matter of free choice.

One, Don DeWelt said, "I say only that the New Testament is silent concerning congregational singing . . . Since there is no congregational singing, it could hardly be required or not required."

SILENCE DOES NOT PERMIT

First, we have seen before that the silence of scripture must be respected. By this we meant that when God specified, He by that also excluded. We saw that when He said Jesus was His Son it excluded all angels (Heb. 1:5,13). Now if God just told us to worship, anything we did in worship would be all right. But we have seen that God specified how we were to worship, naming singing, prayer, the Lord's Supper, preaching, and giving. Since He specified how to worship, it would exclude all else. And if He did not specify singing, to add it would be adding to God's word which we are regularly admonished in the Bible not to so do (Deu. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; I Pet. 4:11; Rev. 22:18,19). But we believe God has authorized congregational singing. Let's notice.

EPHESIANS 5:19

Ephesians 5:19 says, "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Here it is argued the verse applies to the individual and not to the whole congregation. However, we would notice first that Paul wrote the letter to the whole church. He said, "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus through the will of God, to the saints that are at Ephesus, and the faithful in Christ Jesus" (Eph. 1:1). So Ephesians 5:19 would apply to the saints as a whole.

Too, Ephesians 5:19 does not apply strictly to the individual for we notice it says sing to one another. So it presupposes other than individual worship. If two, why not two thousand? So the worship must be corporate, more than one. And we notice that in the rest of the chapter the whole church is discussed in the figure of the church being the bride of Christ So it is in a context of the church as a whole. Let's look further.

COLOSSIANS 3:16

Colossians 3:16 says, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts unto God" (Col. 3:16). Verse 13 says forgive each other. And this letter, too, was written to the church at Colossae, the saints (plural) and faithful brethren (Col. 1:1). Verse 15 says they were called in one body. They are told to admonish one another. Who in the congregation would be left out? And notice Colossians 3:17: "And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col. 3:17). The word "ye" is plural, meaning the whole church and not mere individuals. Too, if Colossians 3:16 specified individuals were to sing, it would be an addition to God's word to add congregational singing. We have studied before how when God specifies, he excludes all else of the same nature. It is just as if you tell Tom to stand. That excludes all else in the room. To specify is to exclude. If God specified individual singing that would exclude congregational singing. And the truth of the matter is, in the New Testament God authorizes both. But since He specified singing, it excludes instrumental music. To specify is to exclude, as we studied earlier.

RECIPROCAL SINGING

But next it is wondered how you can sing to someone who is singing. Yet we do it all the time. We not only sing we also listen at the same time. When we read scripture and the congregation reads along, are we not reading to those who are reading? But let us take a look at congregation singing.

It seems some realize they can't prove instrumental music was used in New Testament worship, so they hope to prove singing was not used in New Testament worship. Then if you can do one, they reason, you can do both. However, if successful in proving singing was not used in New Testament worship, all you have done is throw the baby out with the bath water. The truth is, if you prove singing is unauthorized in the worship, it could not be done without violating the law of God and adding to God's word. He forbade adding to His word as we have seen (Deu. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18,19).

And first we notice that early Christians did come together and assemble in part to sing. Paul said, "What is it then, brethren? When ye come together, each one hath a psalm, hath a teaching, hath a revelation, hath a tongue, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Cor. 14:26). And regarding psalms, they were sung and are commanded in a context of singing. See Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. Notice: "speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). Too, at the same time we notice that we are commanded to sing one to another. So at least two are present when the singing takes place. If two why not two thousand? Then we can show where groups sang the same hymn in worship. Notice Jesus and the twelve apostles at the last supper as recorded in Matthew 26:30. One might say that was not an assembly of the church, but that is a distinction without a real difference. It establishes that saints or disciples can sing to each other at the same time. And if it could be done by Christ and the apostles, why cannot it be done in worship today? It shows that what we do in worship today was done then, and by no less than Jesus and the apostles. Group singing existed in worship. They did not sing one at a time.

HEBREWS 2:12

But Hebrews 2:12 settles the matter. Pointing out that Christ calls the saints brethren, He says, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren. In the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise" (Heb. 2:12).

Paul is quoting a prophecy from Psalm 22:22. It is a prediction fulfilled in the New Testament church. It could not have been fulfilled in the personal ministry of Christ for the church was not in existence at that time. It was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ as recorded in Acts 2 of the New Testament. In assembly, Jesus partakes of the Lord's Supper with us. At the last supper Jesus said, "I shall not drink from henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come" (Luke 22:18). And in Hebrews 2:12 Jesus says He will sing in the congregation. Some say it is a solo. Have you ever heard this solo? When do we remain silent to hear this solo? No, Christ sings through us just as He evangelizes through us. Ephesians 2:17 says, "And he came and preached peace to you that were far off, and peace to them that were nigh" (Eph. 2:17). Those afar off are the Gentiles. When did Christ preach to them? He did so through the church. He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation" (Mark 16:15). And in that context He said, "and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:20). Christ is the Church. It is His Body. When Paul persecuted the church Christ said, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" (Acts 9:4). Christ sings through us all, through His body, in worship, in the congregation. If He only sang through one individual that would make two, Christ and that individual. So we have aggregate singing proved. So it is proved that congregational singing is authorized. But what of instrumental music? There is no way to find it authorized. God specified singing and so all else is excluded.

This new argument is an admission that instrumental music is not authorized. It tries to justify it by saying congregational singing is not authorized either. We have showed however that singing in the church is authorized. Our plea to ourselves and to all is this: Let's do nothing that is not authorized. We have seen Luke 16:10: "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much: and he that is unrighteous in a very little is unrighteous also in much" (Luke 16:10).

So let us give attention even to little points of righteousness. For He loved us and died for us.

LIBERALISM (1)

Historic liberalism started in Germany. It was a kind of German rationalism which eventually denied every major doctrine of Christianity. It rejected the Bible as being inspired and free from error. It attempted to explain away the miracles of the Bible. Jesus didn't walk on water, liberalism said; there was a sand bar out there. He didn't feed the five thousand; they each had a little food in an inner pocket and just brought it out. Peter didn't find an actual coin in the fish's mouth; Jesus was just telling Peter he could earn money by fishing. And when i it comes to Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, liberalism pleads ignorance. Something happened, but they can't make out what. So basically liberalism is a kind of intellectual unbelief. And in a conservative body such as the churches of Christ, liberalism will not be that extreme at first. It will exhibit rebellion and self-will toward whatever doctrines are f held, and it will first attack those least documented in the Bible. But eventually, we sincerely believe, it will end up with i the same results of historic liberalism. We believe liberalism is a threat to the faith and in this manuscript we want to sincerely explain why we so believe.

INTELLECTUAL PRIDE

Liberalism seems to exhibit a kind of intellectual pride, maybe because it is impressed with its own scholarship. It ridicules "Bible toting, Bible quoting backwoods preachers" who never got a grand education. I want to state that we are not anti-education. I have two higher degrees besides a degree from a school of preaching. And I know that when it comes to truth, it is only the Bible that counts. Too, truth does not penetrate a keen intellect so much as an honest and good heart (Luke 8:15). Notice the words of Paul:

> "For the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us who are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning will I bring to nought. Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through

its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of the preaching to save them that believe. Seeing that Jews ask for signs, and Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto Jews a stumbling block, and unto Gentiles foolishness; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For behold your calling, brethren, that not many wise after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God chose the foolish things of the world, that he might put to shame them that are wise; and God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put to shame the things that are strong; and the base things of the world, and the things that are despised, did God choose, yea and the things that are not, that he might bring to nought the things that are: that no flesh should glory before God" (1 Cor. 1:18:29).

So, we think liberalism's downfall is human pride, that pride we must all guard against. Pride is in opposition to God and the Bible (Jas. 4:6; I Pet. 5:5,6). On human wisdom and pride see also 1 Cor. 2:1-8 and 1 Cor. 3:18-23.

MORALS

Liberalism is a threat to the faith regarding morals. Paul said, "Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (7:1) Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Cor. 6:17-7:1). And notice again God's word through the apostle Paul, "put to death therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry; for which things' sake cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience: wherein ye also once walked, when ye lived in these things; but now do ye also

put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, railing, shameful speaking out of your mouth: lie not one to another; seeing that ye have put off the old man with his doings, and have put on the new man, that is being renewed unto knowledge after the image of him that created him: where there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bondman, freeman; but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:5-11).

The liberal doesn't much preach on divorce and remarriage, social drinking, dancing, smoking, modesty in dress, dress codes and mixed swimming, pornography, indecent movies, and homosexuality. Yet we want, with all our heart, to create and sustain the most moral, holy, and healthful environment for our children. Paul said, "And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before him" (Col. 1:21,22). It is the judgment of this writer that liberalism will ignore and war against strict morals just as it does regarding miracles. Morals are Victorian and prudish, it says. It is being "holier than thou," "goody, goody," and judgmental. Even cursing and fornication are condoned.

DOCTRINAL ERROR

Liberalism doesn't want to be ill-spoken of, so it will strip the church or even Christianity of all that is distinctive. Yet such was not the case in the early church. Jude said, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). When Judaizers tried to bring their false doctrine into the church Paul the apostle said, "to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). Early Christians were combative when it came to truth and error because they had witnessed combativeness in their Great Example, the Lord Jesus Christ When it came to the Pharisees and the scribes, He said, "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). And He added, "Every plant which my

heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Mat 15:13). When it came to the false doctrine of the Sadducees, Jesus said, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God" (Mat. 22:29). He debated with the Sadducees and the Pharisees over matters of truth. And we read, "Jesus therefore said to those Jews that had believed him, If ye abide in my word, then are ye truly my disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32). And let us not forget that He prayed, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes: yea, Father, for so it was well-pleasing in thy sight" (Mat. 11:25,26). Of Apollos in the early church it was said, "And when he was come, he helped them much that had believed through grace; for he powerfully confuted the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was the Christ" (Acts 18:27,28).

No, the early church debated doctrine. They knew there were false teachers and that false teaching would damn. Notice the Lord said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them" (Mat. 7:15,16). So those who listened to Christ didn't accept all things, willy-nilly, swallow everything, stand for nothing. Jesus said, "For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; so as to lead astray, if possible, even the very elect" (Mat. 24:24). So the apostle Paul said, "But the Spirit saith expressly, that in later times some shall fall away from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men that speak lies, branded in their own conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by them that believe and know the truth" (1 Tim. 4:1:3). And again he said, "But evil men and impostors shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13). And of elders Paul said, "holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9).

The idea that doctrine mattered, that there was truth and error, light and darkness, sound doctrine and false doctrine, and that Christians were responsible to find truth is a constant theme in the

New Testament. The apostle Peter said, "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the Master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not" (2 Pet. 2:1-3). Though liberalism may condone, ignore, and wink at false doctrine, true Christians cannot. To go beyond the doctrine of Christ is to lose God (2 John 9-11). So in the lesson we have seen a few of the faces of liberalism.

LIBERALISM (2)

LIBERTY, LOVE,

DOCTRINE, TRUTH, CAREFREE

We continue looking at Liberalism. We claimed it was a threat to faith due to its fostering false pride and human wisdom, that it inhibited good morals, and that it condoned doctrinal error. Now let's go further.

LIBERTY FROM RULES AND REGULATIONS

Liberalism is a threat to the faith because it seeks liberty from rules and commandments of God. It chides conservatives for wearing — they call it — a "cold pack of legalism." They misuse 2 Corinthians 3:17 and James 1:25. 2 Corinthians 3:17 says, "Now the Lord is the Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Cor. 3:17). James 1:25 says, "But he that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing" (Jas. 1:25). But these verses are not talking of liberty from commandments. They are speaking of liberty from sin. Jesus said, "and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The Jews said they were not in bondage to any man. Jesus replied, "Every one that committeth sin is the bond-servant of sin" (John 8:34). And Paul said, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:1-2).

The idea of commandments is not a harsh or dirty concept. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). And again He said, "ye are my friends, if ye do the things which I command you" (John 15:14). The apostle John said, "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar; but whoso

keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected" (1 John 2:4,5). That disciple of Jesus who searches minutely for God's will in every small detail is not a legalist; he is a lover of God and Christ.

LIBERALISM PERVERTS LOVE

To talk on love constantly is not love. The apostle John said, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither with the tongue; but in deed and truth" (1 John 3:18). The apostle Paul said, "Let love be without hypocrisy (Rom. 12:9). We don't love because we go around telling everyone how loving we are. Nor do we show love merely by hugging the person standing next to us. We love in deeds and actions. We love through holy characteristics, discipline, works, and self-denial. The apostle Paul said, "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. 13:1-8). But more.

LIBERALISM ATTACKS ESTABLISHED DOCTRINE

Before German liberalism was through it accepted theistic evolution and held that the first eleven chapters of Genesis were mythical. I am not ashamed to state that I believe the earth is about six thousand years old. I believe around six thousand years ago God made a ten billion year old (or some such) universe. I am not ashamed, therefore, to believe the earth was made in six literal days. I feel no urge, therefore, due to geology or any science, to retreat to the gap theory or the day-age theory or any other theory. I believe God created, about six thousand years ago, a full-grown universe with some signs of age on it.

German liberalism eventually denied that there was a hell or eternal torment. It denied the universal flood. It could not accept the supernatural so it got rid of the miracles in the Bible. Jesus, in the eyes of liberals, was no longer the Son of God (John 3:16) or God the Son

(Heb. 1:5,8), but became a great teacher, a great philosopher, a marvelous leader, a good man, but not the Son of God who worked miracles.

Liberalism will accept anyone in fellowship. Yet John said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11). And Paul said, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Truth doesn't fellowship error.

Liberalism, noting that pure Christianity is more strict than the world is willing to accept, will not preach and stand by what Jesus taught on marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Jesus taught there was one cause for a divorce and a remarriage, fornication or more specifically, adultery. If one's spouse is unfaithful, one does not have to divorce them, but scripture says one has the right to divorce and remarry. Jesus put it this way, "And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery. And he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Mat. 19:9).

In the churches of Christ, liberalism would attack such things as a woman's role in the church, no instrumental music, say we are not under law but only under grace, say baptism is not essential to salvation, teach repentance and confession of sins are not required for sin's removal (that sin is automatically forgiven). Liberalism in the Churches of Christ would say the Lord's supper need not be taken each first day of the week. It would attack the authority of elders, claim the Bible has error and is not inspired.

TRUTH

Then again, liberalism believes we cannot know truth, and so teaches. So there is no criticism if one holds a false doctrine. But Jesus said to Jews That had believed on him, "If ye abide in my word, then

are ye truly my disciples; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31,32). That clearly says one can hear truth and know it. How can liberalism say we cannot know truth? It seems they expect us to understand them when they tell us we can't understand the Bible. Paul said, "For we write no other things unto you, than what ye read or even acknowledge (understand)" (2 Cor. 1:13). And again he said, "wherefore be ye not foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

A CAREFREE ATTITUDE

It is true, when a saint walks in the light (1 John 1:7), he should have confidence, joy, and boldness. But it is also true that Satan would have us over confident, complacent, and without vigilance. Peter warned us. He said, "Be sober, be watchful: Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). And Paul said, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). Paul also meant what he said when he taught, "So then, my beloved, even 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).

But to diminish our love for truth and create a more carefree attitude a liberal will say, "How do we know God won't change His mind concerning the lost? In His great love He may permit the unbaptized and even the sinful into heaven, even those who reject Christ."

But what if He doesn't!? Jesus clearly said, "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Mat. 13:41-42). Isn't it a matter on which it is too dreadful and important to merely speculate? If we love souls we must encourage them to live in accordance with what has been revealed. Jesus said, "Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby. For narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it" (Mat. 7:13,14). And

again He said, “Strive to enter in by the narrow door; for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able” (Luke 13:24). No, God is not subject to change in such matters. He is immutable (Heb. 6:17). He warned Adam and Eve. Did He not follow through with His threat? He warned of the flood. Did He not do it? If God accepts them who do not reach out by faith, repentance, confession, and baptism to take hold of the blood of Christ, did not Christ then die in vain? Why did Jesus die if you can go to heaven without taking hold of His death? No, all in the Bible tells us that God will not change His mind. We cannot give hope to sinners. Here is the plan of salvation as we see it in God’s word, the Bible. One must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 3:16; John 8:24). One must repent of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19). Repentance is a change of mind regarding sins with a view to leave them off and amend one’s life. He dies to sin. But then one should make the good confession, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Mat. 10:32; 1 Tim. 6:12; Rom. 10:9,10). And finally one must be immersed in water by water baptism for remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16). Jesus said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). And once one is saved, he must take care he doesn’t go back into sin and lose his salvation and fall from grace (Gal. 5:4; 2 Pet. 2:20-22). Liberalism doesn’t really care much whether God’s plan of salvation is brought up.

If we had space and time we would notice that liberalism puts the emphasis on this world, fun and games and the social gospel. He is like the world, emphasizes its social ills, ridicules fervency and zeal, hates negative preaching, embraces denominationalism, and de-emphasizes the Bible.

Don’t live carelessly. There is danger in the religious world out there. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12).

THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

No one should doubt that we Christians are a race which cares for the needy. James said, "Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27). Everywhere the gospel has gone, the widows have been cared for, the orphans taken in, the hungry fed, and the needs of all met the best possible way. Yet more requires to be said than this. Should this be the emphasis of the church, and how far should the church go in meeting the needs of man? Are we really to minister to the whole man? This article may answer those questions, but its design is to reprove and negate the so-called "social gospel."

DEFINITIONS

Strictly speaking, the Social Gospel was a liberal theological movement whose leaders no longer believed that the purpose of religion was to deliver the soul from spiritual death. Rather it was to elevate people physically and promote social well-being. In the United States it was centered in the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. More generally in the church it is now a term which is used to describe the philosophy of brethren whose emphasis in the church is on the ills of this present life rather than life beyond the grave. This writer believes that when a church builds gyms, calls off worship on Super-Bowl night, has psychology films shown on Wednesday

evening, and hires a pediatrician to speak to the young married couples, that church is right in the thick of the social gospel.

Those who are affected by the Social Gospel tend to de-emphasize certain things. They minimize, for example, truth. We hear, "It is better to be righteous than right." Now how can you be righteous and wrong? They de-emphasize the blood of the covenant. The use of the word blood is most inelegant. Such liberals, in their usual urbane way, accuse conservatives of having a "slaughterhouse religion." "Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood" is not heard much from Social Gospel quarters. They are too genteel and sophisticated for all that.

There is a de-emphasis of the resurrection. First, the resurrection involves miracles, and they have a "sanctified" anti-supernatural bias. Second, to them, our resurrection is "pie in the sky by and by." Peter was not as smart and suave as they, because he spoke of getting a "living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Pet. 1:3). One brother told me we were not given the great commission because the world was lost without it; we received it so that we could reach out to give them a better life here on earth!

THE EMPHASIS OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

What is the Social Gospel emphasis on? It is on psychology, interpersonal communication, physical health, social needs, the environment, fun and entertainment, and with great relish, politics. They are interested in poverty more than purity, health rather than seeing God, education rather than Christian edification, South Africa instead of Jerusalem, the peace movement more than fighting the good fight (II Tim. 4:7). Notice the Biblical emphasis:

"If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory" (Col. 3:1-4).

If such has its way in the church, there will be a church of Christ little league team, a church of Christ boy scout troop, church of Christ

fishing tourneys and tennis matches. There is a work of the church which is clearly specified in the Bible, and it doesn't include any of these. Individual Christians as individuals may engage in these and many other good things, including politics. But these are not the work of the church. The church's work is to evangelize (Matt. 28:18-20), edify (Acts 20:32), and care for the needy (Gal. 6:10).

SIN AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

According to the social gospel there is sickness but little sin, mental disease rather than wickedness. A criminal act and a broken leg are about the same. Delinquencies are misfortunes, not faults. Homosexuality can't be helped. There are no rank sinners; there are only victims of circumstances. I tell you brethren, there is such a thing as being sick, but there is also such a frequent thing as wickedness. AND THE TWO ARE NOT THE SAME! Paul said, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hinder the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18).

Where will it all end? The emphasis is fun and games, the social, the physical. Will we have gyms and fireplaces, and big cathedrals? Will we have a minister of jogging, minister of swimming, minister of firewood, a tape by a denominationalist, a film by Dobson, a young people's class in Karate, auto mechanics for women, a ladies class on how to recycle old sweat shirts?! When I see all this I almost could wish that I myself were a legalist, and with but little persuasion they would fain make me a Pharisee!

THE EMPHASIS IN RELIGION

Preparing a meal for Jesus, Martha's attitude was like the poem:

Lord of all pots and pans and things,

Since I've no time to be A saint by doing lovely things,

Or watching late with Thee,

Or dreaming in the dawnlight,

Or storming heaven's gates,

Make me a saint by getting meals,

And washing up the plates.

Mary wanted to give attention to the words of the Lord. So Jesus said, "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her:" (Lk. 10:42).

It seems Martha didn't understand that Jesus had "meat to eat" that she knew not of. The sad fact is, the emphasis on the physical can get in the way of the "good part." Giving in to the items of the social gospel can send the wrong message to saint and sinner. As we get used to one thing, it breaks the ground for the next And Jesus was so radical that He said to Martha, "One thing is necessary."

Alas, some in the church see the good part as social and they crave entertainment. And when it is not forthcoming, godly elders are abused by the words, "You're not meeting my needs."

Jesus walked on the water after feeding the multitudes. On the morrow the multitudes found Him again and He said to them: "Ye seek me, not because ye saw signs, but because ye ate of the loaves, and were filled. Work not for the food which perisheth, but for the food which abideth unto eternal life" (Jn. 6:26-27). Yes, the natural pangs, even, are nothing when compared to spiritual needs, how much less entertainment programs. Indeed, this life is as nothing when compared to eternity.

The apostles knew where the emphasis should be. The Grecian Jews murmured against the Hebrews that the Grecian widows were neglected in the daily ministration. The apostles wanted others to see to the distribution. They said, "it is not fit that we should forsake the word of God, and serve tables.... But we will continue steadfastly in prayer, and in the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:2-4).

In this life, churches are going to have to make some hard decisions. To keep the church pure and sound and with the proper emphasis, a congregation may have to witness a large drop in contribution and see up to fifty percent of its members leave. Yet priorities must be ordered (Lk. 14:26- 33), and first things put first (Matt. 6:33). Brethren must learn to deny themselves (Mk. 8:34) and

put up with persecution (Matt. 5:10,11). We must all fairly weigh this life against the next. When we reach the point where redemption is no longer our absorbing theme on earth, we forfeit it as our song in glory. We are no longer a congregation of the Lord; we have become a glorified social club, merely a close-knit, fun-loving bunch. May all elders arise! Awake! or be forever fallen.

WHY I DON'T HAVE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WITH DENOMINATIONAL "PASTORS" AND CATHOLIC PRIESTS

Now wait, please! You will notice I didn't say we should not love them as all are to be loved (Mat. 5:44). Be certain that I didn't say we should be ugly or rude to them. Nor are we to conduct ourselves toward them in a haughty way, or refuse to pray for them, that they might come to the truth and be saved. In fact, we love them enough to want to study with them. Yet all that being sincerely believed, there are some godly-felt reasons why I sincerely refuse to have fellowship with them. I know I may be accused of being unloving and mean-spirited, but due to love, I don't mind at all. Please be warned, out of love I am going to be frank, candid and clear. Trying to lovingly please God, let me list some reasons why I refuse to join the ministerial alliance, participate in their Easter sunrise services, or join with them in their National Prayer Day, or fraternally exchange pulpits with them.

IF I DON'T DRAW LINES I DISOBEY JESUS

Denominational preachers teach the doctrines and precepts of men (Mat. 15:7-9). I cannot believe that any preacher in the Lord's church would deny that, and it is so easy to demonstrate and has been proved so often that it is fundamental and common knowledge. Regarding this very thing, Jesus said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit" (Mat. 15:13,14). Yet some brethren say, "We will not let them alone!" And by the way, look again at Jesus' words. If some of our faithful preachers used such language as Jesus used in the Bible they would likely be called unloving, mean-spirited, and plain ugly toward denominationalists.

IF I FELLOWSHIP DENOMINATIONAL PREACHERS I DISOBEY THE HOLY SPIRIT THROUGH THE APOSTLE JOHN

John said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11). Now it is evident to me that the "teaching of Christ" is not only what He personally taught but includes that which He taught through His holy apostles and prophets. Though it gives us no pleasure to announce it, we can't fellowship the Baptist "pastors." Among many other additions they teach "faith only," and "eternal security," and go beyond the doctrine of Christ and have not God. We cannot fellowship the Presbyterians. Besides many other contradictions to God's word, they teach infant baptism, damn souls, go beyond the doctrine of Christ, and have not God. We cannot fellowship the Christian church. Besides an unscriptural teaching toward the authority of God's word, they teach instrumental music is acceptable in worship to God, hence they go beyond the doctrine of Christ and have not God. We can't fellowship the Methodist "pastor." Besides much more false teaching and doctrines of men, they teach sprinkling for baptism, cause souls to be lost, go beyond the doctrine

of Christ and have not God. We cannot fellowship Pentecostal "pastors." They contradict the Bible on when miracles and spiritual gifts passed away, go beyond the doctrine of Christ and have not God. We can't fellowship the Lutheran "pastor." Among many other errors, they teach total hereditary depravity, go beyond the doctrine of Christ, and so they have not God. And on and on we can go with each cult and denomination.

Now John said of false teachers, that we should not even give them greeting. If you do, you partake of their evil works. You also disobey God. How is it then that weak, liberal, compromising preachers in the church are willing to disobey God's word, and some weak brethren slander as unloving those who do obey it? I ask, how is it so?

And please do not think I am merely name calling with my sharp and pungent speech. I am a simple person who likes to be frank and candid, especially when I suspect people will give me the benefit of the doubt. In such matters, there is no room for guile, or finesse. We showed why because of certain false doctrines we cannot therefore fellowship even what some call mainline denominations. Now I want to come back to such scriptural commands regarding not fellowshipping denominations, but first, let's do a little honest reasoning.

If I get up in fellowship at a Prayer Service with Baptist Methodist, Presbyterian, and Lutheran "pastors," doesn't it indicate to all that I believe they are Christians in good standing with the Lord? Could not some poor soul say, "Jerry serves with them. He would not do that if he thought their doctrines would damn one to hell. So I can join their churches and go to heaven." Would not the same be true with a cordial exchange of pulpits with a Baptist? Considering "sects of perdition" or "destructive heresies" (2 Pet. 2:1), is it not true that evil companionships corrupt good morals: (1 Cor. 15:33)? And yet by joint participation with false teachers our weak or unthinking preachers would leave the wrong impression, lull the unwary and unlearned, and stamp the approval of the Churches of Christ on religious false teachers and false churches. Do we want fellowship at the price of damning souls? Do we really believe doctrine doesn't count with God, especially after reading 2 John 9-11? These denominational preachers

teach error which convinces people they are saved when they are not, and that they can never be lost again, though they can, or that they can have a second chance to save themselves down in Hades, or that they can burn out all their sins in purgatory, and other damnable doctrines. Would you understand any preacher who by his influence would guide unsuspecting brethren into their clutches by acting as if these false teachers are in no danger and themselves harmless and benign in their worship with them?

NOTICE SOME PRINCIPLES

Now it is clear — and I will accept a debate challenge if any preacher of good standing wants to really disagree—that denominational "pastors" and churches teach false doctrine which will damn souls. They oppose God and His clear teaching in the Bible. I would love not to say that, but when it comes to light and darkness, truth and error, they are on the side of the devil. I sincerely believe they are as the Holy Spirit said: "deceitful workers" (2 Cor. 11:13), "ravening wolves," (Mat. 7:15), "grievous wolves" (Acts 20:29), who with "smooth and fair speech" (Rom. 16:17) serve "their own belly" (Rom. 16:18). They are "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18), and substitute the pure word of God for their "philosophy and vain deceit" (Col. 2:8). They are "evil men and imposters" (2 Tim. 3:13), who ought not be fellowshipped, but "whose mouths must be stopped" (Tit. 1:10). Their word will "eat as doth a gangrene" (2 Tim. 2:17), and so they "overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:18). They "bring in destructive heresies" (2 Pet. 2:1-3), and so the faithful servant of Christ will "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3), and not be traitors to Christ by promoting and aiding the enemy. In the military they take you out and shoot you for such things.

Jehoshaphat helped wicked Ahab. Jehu the son of Hanani the seer said, "Shouldest thou help the wicked, and love them that hate Jehovah? For this thing wrath is upon thee before Jehovah" (2 Chr. 19:2). The problem we have, I believe, is not lack of love or fellowship, it is lack of strong conviction and enemy identification.

We have pointed out that we want to love all men, but we must regretfully, vigorously oppose some. Fellowship condones, and serving with denominational preachers stamps one's approval on them

even while they are evil, and enemies of the cross of Christ as inspired writ says. After all, will not people rightly ask, "Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Now let's look at some more scriptures which teach us Bible principles on fellowship.

AHAB AND BEN-HADAD

Ahab defeated the Syrian King Ben-hadad because God delivered Ben-hadad up. But after the battle with this enemy of God, Ahab spared Ben-hadad and said, "he is my brother" (1 Kings 20:32). God by a prophet said to Ahab, "Thus saith Jehovah, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand the man whom I had devoted to destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people" (1 Kings 20:42). Are not these things written for us (2 Cor. 10:6,11; Rom. 15:4)? The fact is, denominational preachers are not our brethren; God has devoted false teaches to swift destruction (2 Pet. 2:1), and would not their punishment fall on you if you call them "brother" and let them go Scot-free religiously, with no opposition, no reproof, no condemnation?

KORAH, DATHAN, ABIRAM

Denominational preachers are false teachers. We pray some are not so rebellious toward God that by the power of God's word we cannot convert them. However it is rare as an "ancient Egyptian find" to see such a case. And when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled at the teaching of Moses, God said through Moses, "Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins" (Num. 16:26). Was this not written for us (Rom. 15:4)? This is the attitude of God. But we have liberal preachers who want to have denominational high tea so they can rub elbows with them, rather than have a doctrinal festival where they can tutor and reprove. I would love to study the Bible with these "pastors," and if you know of any that will do so let me know and I will contact them. Teaching truth, however, is not the same as fraternizing with the enemy and getting "matey" with those who have rebelliously defected from truth. They have the same Bible we have so there is no excuse for their heresy and their false teaching.

THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMUNICABILITY

False teaching is like the disease gangrene (2 Tim. 2:17). It eats and spreads. Paul said, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?" (1 Cor. 5:6). He said, "Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33). David said Israel, "mingled themselves with the nations, and learned their works" (Psa. 106:35). No wonder we now have our own preachers who say baptism is not essential to salvation, that we have advocates of women preachers, organs, dedication of babies, penance, and such like. Whatever happened to the mind-set, "Depart from me, ye evil-doers, that I may keep the commandments of my God" (Psa. 119:115). Why is it now impolitic and politically incorrect to so cry, 'Through thy precepts I get understanding: Therefore I hate every false way" (Psa. 119:104). One of the reasons I hate false doctrines and am a Christian adversary to those who have been a turn-coat to truth is because false teaching is not only like a damning disease; it is infectious and contagious. How can preachers and elders love so little as to expose their brethren to it? We have so many weak, bloodless, delicate and ungrounded preachers who are long on emotion and on cute little tales, and weak on truth and Bible knowledge, that they seem to be dubious about doctrine, filled with self-doubt, perplexed about truth, and who live and preach in world of half-belief and uncertainty. Who clipped their wings? And brethren, that's simply not the way of Christianity. Christianity is a religion of uncompromising conviction, we've never seen a false teacher yet who needed a silver bullet to bring him down doctrinally. God's word has anticipated very error Satan can think up.

Well, in giving reasons why I don't fellowship denominational "pastors" in the Ministerial Alliance, or Easter sunrise services, or national prayer days, or neighborly pulpit exchanges, etc., I mentioned that Jesus said to leave "blind guides" alone, that John said give them no greeting or you partake in their evil works, that they are false teachers and enemies of truth, that fellowship condones and participation tamps approval, that false doctrine not only damns but that its contagious, and communicable to brethren. It is fraternizing with the enemy, and contrary to the attitude of a pious child of God to hob-nob with the wicked and those who by false doctrine are on Satan's side. Brethren, I'm aware I'm using, the Bible often does, frank, pungent language. It is out of love for the brethren, but it is also intentional to make the menace we face graphic and seen in its

uncloaked reality. If ore brethren saw denominationalism unmasked it would force them too to the front line. They would no longer be weak, insipid, fence-sitting, excuse-making, non-partisans. At the first whistle they would go over the top with fixed bayonets, just like Peter, Paul, John, and Jesus. But let us continue to look at some commandments and Bible principles.

TO TOLERATE IS TO PARTICIPATE

There is no doubt that the Bible teaches the principle at acquiescence is complicity. God said, "When thou sawest thief, thou consentedst with him, and has been partaker with adulterers" (Psa. 50:18). Was Pilate complicit in the death of Jesus (Mat. 17:17-26)? Proverbs 29:24 says, "Whoso is partner with a thief hateth his own soul: he heareth cursing, and betrayeth it not." In Bible times when a theft was committed, a solemn curse on the thief and all who knew of it but gave no evidence was pronounced. Solomon says that to stand by silently made one partner with a thief. Too, God said to Edom, "In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that strangers carried away his [Israel's] substance, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them" (Obadiah 11). When my fellow preachers and brethren don't expose, mark, reprove and contend with a false teacher, they cannot say, "Well, I don't teach their doctrines so I am all right I just enjoy their fellowship." No, you are not all right with God. When you give no evidence against them you are a partner with them. You are as one of them! They are a street merchant with death in the pot and you are complicit by being cheek by jowl with them in religious fellowship. How can that be love and compassion for denominational lost souls, much less new Christians and ungrounded saints? You are as guilty as are they. In the face of just that, how can a loving, committed Christian seek unity and fellowship with false teachers which without doubt denominational preachers certainly are, though we have no pleasure at all in saying it? We ask, "What communion hath light with darkness ... What concord hath Christ with Belial" (2 Cor. 6:14-16)?

ALL CHRISTIANS ARE WATCHMEN

God commanded by the mouth of His servant Jude, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common

salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). Paul said, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith" (1 Cor. 16:13), and "let us watch and be sober" (1 Thes. 5:6), and "watch thou in all things" (2 Tim. 4:5).

God told Ezekiel that when the sword came on the land the wicked would be taken away in his own iniquity, but regarding the watchman who sounded no alarm, the man's "blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (Ezek. 33:6). Paul said he was only pure from the blood of all men for he "shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26,27). Those Satan captures with false doctrine he puts to the sword. Truth and error are not just "to each his own," they regard eternal life and eternal punishment.

Brethren, when souls are threatened by false teachers, it is no time for pink tea and fellowship. It is time to reprove (Tit. 1:13), contend (Jude 3), and mark (Rom. 16:17). Would not God say, "thine eye shall not pity them" (Deut. 7:16).

Involvement is complicity (Psa. 50:18; Mat. 27:17-26; Pro. 29:24; Obadiah 11). We are not to fraternize with the enemy; rather we are to be watchmen (Jude 3; 1 Cor. 16:13; 1 The. 5:6; 2 Tim. 4:5; Ezek. 33:6). If not, we can be guilty of the fallen's blood (Acts 20:26,27). But let's say a little more.

THERE ARE CLEAR SCRIPTURES

WHICH PROHIBITS SUCH FELLOWSHIP

Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Mark 16:17). The word for "mark" is skopeo which means to "watch" in the sense of a warning in this passage. Then Paul says "turn away from them." Why? They teach doctrine contrary to God's word and in doing so over-throw (Katastrophe) whole houses (2 Pet. 2:6; 2 Tim. 2:14).

Of these that teach a different doctrine God said "turn away." Yet some of our preachers say "we will not turn away!" Now how are these

preachers different from rebellious Israel? When preachers, under the permission of their eldership, disobey clear teaching from God's word can it not be said of them, "ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in hear and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit" (Acts 7:51). What did Paul mean to elders when he said "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). When elders watch — much less does the flock watch — their preacher have social and religious comraderies and fraternization with those who stand against the truth in so many areas, I say those elders are abandoning the flock to ravening wolves and the preachers are disloyal to Christ and traitorous to the very word of God. If they don't believe any longer in pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity, without addition, without subtraction, if they don't believe undenominational Christianity is not only possible and right, but the only way to please Christ, I say they should quit their insincere hypocrisy, change the name of their church, and boldly announce publicly what they ignorantly but deep down think is honorable and right. I tell you, guile, duplicity, deceit, devious boring from within, playing the treacherous role of a fifth column in the Churches of Christ are not virtues from above. They are the vile weapons of the evil one who is beneath. I would rather die hard and be carried out of the battle on a bloody shield than love unity and compromise more than honor and truth. To all you who agree, rise up and do your part!

"IS UNITY IN DIVERSITY POSSIBLE?" A RESPONSE

This article is in response to one written in the Firm Foundation.[1] We are going to review the main arguments used to promote "unity in diversity" in that article.

DIVERSITY, A BY-PRODUCT

OF NON-DENOMINATIONALISM

Here the author contends that non-denominational people are not bound by human creeds, so they will be diverse in their beliefs. But will we not still be bound by God's word (Heb. 2:1)?! Will not adherence to God's word promote unity rather than division and diversity?! The sheer truth is, God not only gave us a faith (Jude 3), he expects us to be able to maintain UNITY when we receive that faith (Jn. 17:21; I Cor. 1:10; Phil. 3:16).

SEARCHING FOR TRUTH IS

AN OPEN-ENDED PROCESS

It is argued that we grow in truth, and that our diversity is caused by being at different points in our spiritual journey as we study truth. According to that reasoning, Paul never should have withstood Peter to his face (Gal. 2:11-14). They were simply at different points in their spiritual journey. Then we shouldn't refuse fellowship to a heretic, withdraw from the disorderly, have no company with the disobedient, or mark them who cause division (Titus 3:10; II Thess. 3:6, 11-14; Rom. 16:17). We are just at different points on our spiritual journey! The truth is no two teachings of God's word contradict each other. So one with a little knowledge of God's doctrines should not be very long diverse from one with much knowledge.

THE MESSAGE THAT NO TWO PEOPLE ARE IDENTICAL

Is God sending a message to us that we may be diverse in doctrine because he never created two identical people? Surely not, since we are to be one man in Christ (Gal. 3:27). The message the Bible gives is that we are all to conform into the image of one man (Rom. 8:29), and imitate him - Jesus Christ (I Cor. 11:1; I Pet. 2:21). What a grand message it is, too! Isn't it better to do that, than make excuses for diversity?!

PLURALITY OF ELDERS

Then the contention is made that we should expect diversity because we have a plurality of elders. No, there is strength in numbers, and all elders are to hold to the same "word of his grace" (Acts 20:32), the one faith (Eph. 4:5), the one gospel (Gal 1:6-9). Whoever is diverse

from it has gone beyond the doctrine of Christ and has not God (II John 9-11). Too, the "doctrine of Christ" is not doctrine about Christ, but the doctrine he delivered.[2] What a weak argument, that a plurality of elders will cause a diversity of doctrine such as the issues which have divided the church in the past.

FORCING CONFORMITY CREATES A CREED

Timothy was left at Ephesus to charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine (I Tim. 1:3). Vincent says, "The charge is not to teach anything contrary to the sound teaching (verse 10) or irreconcilable with it."[3] Will Timothy's charge create a "creed"? We are to continue in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Does commanding that create a creed?! We are to follow the good doctrine of God (I Tim. 4:6; II Tim. 3:10), and keep the commandment without spot (I Tim. 6:14). Does that create a creed?! Brethren, if it did, it would be God's creed, and that would be all right with me.

IT IS LOVE THAT BINDS US TOGETHER

Finally, it is argued that our love for God and each other - not agreement - binds us together. But love for God means that we will keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15; 15:14), and love for each other means we will strive to have unity in faith. For believing a lie will result in the damnation of a soul (II Thess. 2:8-12; Mark 16:15,16). Love will cause us to walk in the light (I John 1:7), hold the pattern of sound words (II Tim. 1:13), and all speak the same things (I Cor. 1:10). True love cannot ever cause real unity in diversity, much of what is diverse will damn a precious soul. Love will not stand by and see it happen.

CONCLUSION

Unity in diversity is an unscriptural concept. Agreement precedes fellowship (Acts 9:26-28; Gal. 2:1-10). Unity can only come through adherence to the apostles' word (John 17:20,21; I John 1:3). The ultimate ends of "unity in diversity" is open fellowship and a setting aside of truth as not being really important. Unity is not cheap, and we cannot have it by throwing away truth. To have unity one must first be born again into the family of God (John 3:3-5), and then live in

harmony with the gospel (I John 1:3; Phil. 1:27; Acts 2:40-42). The old slogan is still good: "In matters of faith - unity; in matters of opinion - liberty; in all things - charity."

ENDNOTES

1 Richard N. Ady, "Is Unity in Diversity Possible," Firm Foundation (5/11/82): 3[291].

2 Ron Halbrook, The Doctrine of Christ and Unity of the Saints (Marion: Cogdill Foundations Publications, 1977) pp. 30-38.

3 Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1973), pp. 202, 203,

PART II

CULTS

Here we have included some of the main doctrines which are commonly useful in dealing with the cults. A cult is usually described as a sect of Christianity. For example they deny Jesus is God or the personality of the Holy Spirit or the existence of hell, etc.

WHAT THE CULTS TEACH (1)

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

THE TRINITY

This chapter begins a rather long series concerning "What the Cults Teach." By using the word Cult we do not wish to be unkind or even militant. We just use the word as most modem writers use it to describe those churches who hold doctrines foreign to the doctrines of Christianity held from the very beginning in the first century. "Cults" is used with no slur intended. It is only meant to describe churches which hold views foreign to mainline Christianity. Such views might include such unusual doctrines as there is no 'Trinity," as the denominational world uses that term, that there is no hell fire, that man has no immortal soul, that the Holy Spirit is not a person, that there are many gods, that other books than the Bible are inspired, and so forth. By definition, a cult is a church which holds views strange to historical Christianity, and the word cult should be used only in a descriptive sense and not in any derogatory sense. The people in cults are sincere, moral, God-fearing people who only as Paul said of the Jews, "have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2). Our inspection of their doctrines should not reflect on their moral stance in the world, and they surely have many good doctrines, only they themselves are worthy of a better cause.

First we would look at the teaching of the Jehovah's Witnesses that "the Trinity" is a false doctrine. Now in the churches of Christ we do not much use the word "Trinity" for it is a word not found in Scripture. Our friends among: the Witnesses are right when they point that out. The word we use to describe three Persons in one God is the word Godhead (Col. 2:9). However, though the word Trinity is not in the Bible, the teaching that there are three Persons in one God is found in the Bible. It is your task to see if that is so as we present our investigation of this doctrine. Let's view five statements some use to try to nullify the doctrine that there are three Persons in one Godhood.

ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE THERE IS ONE GOD

True, I Timothy 2:5 says, "there is one God." We find the same teaching throughout Scripture (Deu. 6:4; I Cor. 8:6; Isa. 44:6; Isa. 45:18; Isa. 46:9). Yet since Jesus is called God (John 1:1,2), and since the Holy Spirit is shown to be God (Acts 5:3,4), that means that the one God has three Persons in one.

THE PERSONS ARE NOT EQUAL

It is then generally argued that when the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are found together in Scripture (Mat. 28:19), it does not say they are equal, co-eternal, or together, one God. However, in several instances in Scripture the three together are mentioned as being on an equal footing, a uniform plane, and are not distinguished. In Matthew 28:19, baptism is not only in the name of the Father, it is in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19). And again a shared unity is implied when Paul singles out the three and places them on an equal footing in his blessing when he says, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14). Peter does the same thing in I Peter 1:1,2. It is not so much that they are mentioned together in the same context, but that there is an evenness, an equivalence, and parity in their description and their activity.

ONLY JEHOVAH IS FROM EVERLASTING

Then it is argued that only Jehovah is from everlasting. For example, Jeremiah 10:10 says, "Jehovah is the true God; he is the living God, and an everlasting King." Similar sentiment is not found though in Zechariah 13:7; Hebrews 13:8; and Revelation 1:18; and Hebrews 9:14 where both Jesus and the Holy Spirit are seen to be eternal. We will view more on that later. But here it is only needful to point out that the Word Jehovah in the Old Testament includes the Father, the Word (John 1:1), and the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14).

THE UNITY OF TRUE CHRISTIANS

Then it is argued that the oneness of Jesus and the Father is no more mysterious than the unity of Christians. In John 10:30 Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." But in John 17:21 Jesus prayed that the disciples might be one. True, it is acceptable to say Christians are to be one. But it is a far different thing if a mere human being says he is one with God, and especially in the way Jesus said it. The import of what Jesus is saying is best understood by the Jews to whom He was speaking. When He said it, they tried to stone Him under a law of blasphemy found in Leviticus 24:16. They said to Him, "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:33). It is not just that Jesus said He and the Father are one, but that He said it in such a way as to

make Himself God. Even earlier the apostle John records this, “But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh even until now, and I work. For this cause therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only brake the Sabbath, but also called God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:17,18). I agree with John and the Jews; that’s exactly what Jesus did.

BIBLICAL AND LOGICAL ARGUMENTS

Again, let us say that Trinity is not a Biblical word. It is objectionable only because it is not in Scripture. But Colossians says of Christ, “for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). In Jesus is the absolute fulness of Godhead. We know this essence is also in the Father and cannot be applied to a mere human. And since there is only one God there must be more than one Person in Godhood.

But first, we are prepared that there is more than one person in the one God by reading the Old Testament. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” The word for “God” there is Elohim and it is a plural noun. But more than that, notice: “And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them” (Gen. 1:26, 27). What we want to point out are the plural pronouns: “let us make man in our image” (v. 26). Some say God was talking to the angels, but the context won’t bear that out for it then says, “God created man in his own image” (v. 27). It says “let us make man in our image” and then it says they did, “in the image of God.” So God must be speaking with God. It doesn’t say God made man in the image of angels. He made man in “our” image, the image of God. The Persons in God are speaking to each Other.

And when on Shinar man made that great tower God says “come, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another’s speech” (Gen. 11:7). The next verse says, “So Jehovah scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all

the earth" (Gen. 11:8). Who was going to go down and confound their language? God and the angels? The next verse tells us: The One who confounded their language and scattered them. Who did that? The next verse says it was "Jehovah." So when Jehovah said let us go down, Persons of God were speaking to Each Other. There again you have plural pronouns. Along this line notice Isaiah 6:8: "And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" In context the "us" refers to the Lord.

Then, several places in Scripture we have God distinguished from God. Listen: "Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness: therefore God thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Psa. 45:7). There, as clear as it can be; God talks with God. Then in Hosea 1:7 we read where God says, "But I will have mercy upon the house of Judah, and will save them by Jehovah their God" (Hos. 1:7).

Then we find that God, the Word, and the Spirit are co-causes of the same effects. Genesis 1:1 says, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him" (John 1:1-3). The first Scripture says the universe was made through God. The second passage says that everything made was made through the Word, which verse 14 says is the only begotten from the Father, i.e., Jesus. It was all made by God, but Job 26:13 says, "By his Spirit the heavens are garnished." So it was crafted in a beautiful way by the Holy Spirit. All was created by God, and so it was, we see, crafted by the Son and the Spirit Himself. So Jesus could appropriately say, "Before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58).

No, though the word Trinity is not found in Scripture, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit are found; and it is seen that the Three only made one God (Deut. 6:4; I Tim. 2:5).

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

JESUS IS GOD

In this study we will be looking at the Jehovah Witness Doctrine regarding the nature and essence of Jesus Christ. They sincerely believe that Jesus Christ is not the Almighty God. I want to investigate and respond to their arguments, since they believe Jesus is not one of three Persons in the One God.

THE FATHER WAS JESUS' GOD

First they say Jesus is not God because the Scriptures clearly say the Father was Jesus' God. For example, in John 20:17 Jesus tells Mary Magdalene "I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:17). Along this line they also use I Peter 1:3; Mark 15:34; and Revelation 3:12. Yet we would explain, when the Word became flesh (John 1:14), when He gave up equality with the Father in the sense that He emptied Himself (Phil. 2:6,7), He became not only God the Son but also the Son of God, the Son of Man. As such the Father was the Son of man's God. These passages refer to the human side of Jesus. But they do not take away His deity, for Even God the Father called God the Son God (Heb. 1:8,9).

THE ONLY TRUE GOD

But it is argued that in John 17:3 Jesus called His Father the "only true God." That excluded Himself, they would say. However, we reply that this was the Son of Man talking. As the Son of Man, the Father was the only true God. Therefore Jesus could say He was going to His God (John 20:17), and then later, as God the Son, He could turn around and accept Thomas' worship as Lord and God (John 20:28,29). We must remember that Jesus is all God and at the same time all man.

THE SON OF GOD

Yet it is argued that Jesus is not God; He is merely the Son of God. But we would reply that it is true that the word became flesh and as such He became the Son of God (John 1:14; Mat. 16:13-19; Luke 1:35; John 1:34; John 3:16; John 20:29-31). But as the Son of God He

still retained His deity and was even so the "fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

MEDIATOR

It is next argued that Jesus cannot be God for He is the Mediator between God and man (I Tim. 2:5,6). But the fact that He is Mediator does not exclude that He is God. One might as well say Jack is not a tennis player because he is a medical doctor. But that Jesus is a Mediator indicates that Jesus shared characteristics of both sides, so that He might be equal when He mediates.

A REPRESENTATIVE

Yet it is offered that Jesus only claimed to be God's representative. For example, in John 10:36 Jesus says, "say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest; because I said, I am the Son of God?" And John 5:37 has Jesus saying, "And the Father that sent me, he hath borne witness of me." Yet again we reply that as the Son of Man He performed a task as one sent by God. He was truly God's Representative. But such passages do not address the subject of His nature. He was also sent by the Father as God the Son, for as the Son He is called God (Heb. 1:8,9). He was the fullness of the Godhead bodily (Col. 2:9).

HE WAS SUBJECT TO THE FATHER

It is then argued that Jesus was not equal to the Father but subject to Him. He said in John 14:28, "I go unto the Father: for the Father is greater than I." In John 13:16 He says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, a servant is not greater than his lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him." And Paul says in I Corinthians 11:3, "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" (I Cor. 11:3). John 8:42 and John 5:19 and Luke 22:41 are also used. Yet we reply: this submission is as the Son of Man, for the purposes of the scheme of redemption. Regarding that side of Him called "God the Son" we have another matter entirely. He is the "fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

HE HAD A BEGINNING AND WAS CREATED

It is argued that Jesus had a beginning and was created. For example, in Revelation 3:14 we have, "These things saith the amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." But the word beginning argues the other way. In the original language, Greek, it is arche. Nestles Greek text renders arche in this fashion, "the chief of the creation of God" (Rev. 3:14). Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says of arche, "so arose the idea of a beginning, the origin, the active cause, whether a person or thing." So Christ would be the origin of creation, the active cause of it. Thayer's Greek Dictionary says, "that by which anything begins to be, the origin, active cause. . . Christ." Vincent in His word studies says, "The beginner or author" (Vol.2, p.469). Check the versions. They use "prime source," "origin," "primeval source," for the word arche. So He is the beginning of creation in the sense that He began it. It argues that He is God for Genesis 1:1 says God created the heavens and the earth. From arche we get architect. Jesus is the architect of the creation. Colossians 1:16 says, "for in him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: all things have been created through him, and unto him."

HE IS THE FIRST BORN OF CREATION

But it is said He had a beginning for He is the firstborn of all creation. Colossians 1:15 says, "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation" (Col. 1:15). A little background is in order. The term "firstborn" need not be used to convey the idea of the first one born. It can be used of rank. In the Old Covenant the firstborn son had authority over his brothers (Gen. 24:55,60). He ranked highest after his father. The right of the firstborn was highly prized and greatly appreciated (Gen. 25:29-34). Jacob bought it from Esau. The firstborn inherited twice as much as every other son. In 2 Kings 2:9 it is translated "a double portion," a portion of the firstborn. Among kings the right of the firstborn implied the succession to his father's rule (2 Chr. 21:1-3 regarding Jehoshaphat and Jehoram). The clincher is found in Psalm 89:27. David is said to be the firstborn of the kings of the earth. He was certainly not the first king ever born. Rather, God would rank him first, over all the kings on earth. So we read, "I also

will make him my firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth" (Psa. 89:27). In like manner, Jesus is ranked higher than all creation. The New Bible Dictionary says that Jesus was the firstborn of every creature. But it says, "The title 'firstborn' of every creature (Col. 1:15) points to His authority over all creation, but does not imply that He himself was created" (p. 423). "Firstborn" is a title of rank. It does not mean He was the first person born. The word just gives Him preeminence over all that He created.

JESUS WAS A GOD

John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the New World Translation of the Jehovah's Witnesses John 1:1 is rendered, "and the word was a god." God there is with a little "g." The Greek is such that it should be rendered "the word was God" and not "the word was a god," even though in some contexts the indefinite article should be supplied. Thus A. T. Robertson in his Word Pictures in the New Testament says "Thus in the Trinity we see personal fellowship on an equality" (Vol. 5, page 5). Almost all the versions render it, "The word was God" and not "the word was a god." The only one I am aware of with the latter ending is the Jehovah's Witness translation.

Then to teach that the Word was "a god" puts one in the unfortunate circumstance of having to defend the concept that there is more than one God. Notice: "I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God" (Isa. 45:5). Again, "I am God and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isa. 46:9). Again, "Is there a God besides me? Yea, there is no Rock; I know not any" (Isa. 44:8). To argue that there is a god (little "g") besides Jehovah is to put one in contradiction to Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; 43:10; 45:5; 45:6; 45:18; 34:21; 45:22; 46:9; 2 Sam 7:22; I Chronicles 17:20; I Corinthians 8:4; Deuteronomy 32:39; 2 Kings 5:15; I Timothy 2:5; Ephesians 4:6.

No, God, mighty God (Isa. 9:6), the Almighty, the Lord, God most high, Elohim, Yahweh are all the one God. There is only one.

MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL

Finally, it is argued that Jesus is not God; He is Michael the Archangel. These verses are used: Jude 9; Daniel 10:13; Daniel 21:1; Revelation 12:7,8. But these passages all mention Michael the archangel, yet none of them say Jesus is Michael the archangel. In fact, nowhere in the Bible is such a notion ever found. The Bible, as we have seen, calls Him God the Son and the Son of God, but never Michael the archangel.

BIBLICAL AND LOGICAL ARGUMENTS

Yes, Jesus is One Person in the One God. Recall we showed in an earlier manuscript that the Hebrew word for God in the Old Testament is Elohim and that in the Hebrew it is plural (Gen. 1:1). Too, plural pronouns were used for God (Gen. 1:26,27; Gen. 3:22; Gen. 11:7; Isa. 6:8). We showed where in some contexts God was distinguished from God (Psa.45:7;Hos. 1:6). So we argued that since there is one God there are three Persons in that one God.

But there are other passages which come right out and say Jesus is God. Again, remember John 1:1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." Notice also Hebrews 1:8,9. God talks with God and not only that, God the Father calls God the Son "God." It says, "but of the Son he saith, Thy throne O God, is for ever and ever; and the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of thy Kingdom. Thou has loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Heb. 1:8,9).

No wonder Micah 5:2 says, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2). Christ's goings forth are from everlasting because as God He is eternal. He always existed; He never not existed.

Then in Zechariah 13:7 we read: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith Jehovah of Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" (Zech. 13:17). Jesus said this passage applied to Him (Mat. 26:31). But the significance of it is found in the word fellow. It is a word that means one is on a par with another, a comrade, an equal, one who shares the

same position as the other. Who could be a Fellow of God, except God? In a subtle but clear way the Bible again teaches the divinity of Christ.

Finally, compare John 8:24 and John 8:58 with Exodus 3:14. Jesus said, "ye are from beneath; I am from above: ye are of this world; I am not of this world. I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:23,24). And then, when the Jews said Jesus was not even fifty years old, how could he have seen Abraham? Jesus said, "Verily, verily I say unto you, Before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58). The significance of that is found in Exodus 3:14. Moses was to go to the children of Israel and lead them out of Egypt. But Moses wanted to know the name of Him who sent him. God said, "I am that I am; and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I am hath sent me unto you" (Ex. 3:14). Well, someone might say, Jesus didn't mean He was "I am" when He said, "Before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58). He didn't try to make Himself God, and we need not put that interpretation on it. But yes we do. The ones who most clearly would understand what Jesus meant would be the one he tried to communicate with, the Jews. Notice their reaction: 'They took up stones therefore to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple" (John 8:59). Recall that in John 10 they again seek to stone Him. They tell why: "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God" (John 10:33). Yes, they knew what He meant by "I am." They knew that He was teaching that He was God.

Yes, Jesus is the Son of God. But He is also God the Son. May God help us do Him the honor He is due.

WHAT THE CULTS TEACH (3)

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSONAGE

In our series on "What the Cults Teach" we are particularly looking at doctrines held by our good and sincere friends among the Jehovah's Witnesses. We certainly do not wish to offend, but we pray they will listen with an open mind and then, like the Bereans, examine the Scriptures daily whether these things are so (Acts 17:11).

AN INSPIRED EXPRESSION ORIGINATING

WITH AN INVISIBLE SOURCE

Our friends among the Jehovah's Witnesses say the Holy Spirit is not a person or personage, but an inspired expression originating from an invisible source. Now where they get that definition, I do not know, only I am fully aware that there is nothing in the Bible that says that. And if the central office in Watchtower says it, they are not inspired, but the Bible is inspired.

THE SPIRIT DOES NOT APPEAR IN

HEAVENLY VISIONS

They first say that when you see a vision of God and the Son recorded in Scripture you do not see the Holy Spirit for he is not a person. For example, in Acts 7:55,56 Stephen saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. But the Holy Spirit does not appear in the vision. The same is true of the vision of Daniel 7:9,13.

However, we would reply that the Holy Spirit formally descended to the earth (Acts 2:1-4), and has not formally ascended

since. Jesus said, “And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever” (John 14:16). But in Revelation 4:5, in showing the glory of God’s throne in heaven, the Holy Spirit is not left out, but He appears under the symbolism of the Seven Spirits.

THE MASCULINE PRONOUNS

On this issue, we often say the Holy Spirit is a person because masculine pronouns such as “He” and “Him” are used to refer to Him. But they argue that that does not prove He is a person for the antecedent to the pronoun, such as “Comforter,” or “Helper,” is masculine in the Greek text, and so the pronoun must be masculine to agree grammatically.

However, this argument will not hold up under investigation. In John 16:13 the neuter Spirit is used and a neuter pronoun is required to agree with it But John, evidently to show the Holy Spirit is a person, uses the masculine singular form. Actually, John violates Greek grammar, going out of his way to show that the Holy Spirit should be thought of as a personage. He only has to do that once for us to get the truth. So the Spirit is called “He” for He is a person, though not a human person.

NEUTER PRONOUNS ARE USED

Then it is argued that neuter pronouns are used to describe the Holy Spirit, such as which and itself in John 15:26 and Romans 8:24. It is true, but as we pointed out earlier, a pronoun, in Greek grammar, must agree in gender with its nearest antecedent noun. The noun “Spirit” is neuter, so, Greek grammar requires a neuter pronoun to agree with it. So in the English translation we have that and which used to refer to the person of the Holy Spirit. Too, may we add, do not be alarmed or impressed that the word Spirit is neuter in Greek. That does not mean that He is not a personality. Korasion is neuter in Greek, but it means “little girl,” or “maiden.” Teknion and paidion are both neuter in the Greek but they refer to the person of a little child, or infant or even of children of God.

BIBLICAL AND LOGICAL ARGUMENTS

Let's look at a lot of Scripture which demonstrates that the Holy Spirit is a person. These scriptures show that He has the attributes of a person and is surely not found in Scripture to be classed as something neuter such as fire, water, or electricity.

ACTS 13:2,4

"And as they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" Verse four says, "So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit, went down to Seleucia" (Acts 13:2,4). Now as clear as it can be the Holy Spirit talked and sent forth. Do rocks talk? Does electricity? No, but persons talk. They send! But let's look further.

JOHN 14:16,17,26; JOHN 16:7-14

"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may be with you forever" (John 14:16). Notice this Comforter, whom the context shows is the Holy Spirit, is called "He." It says, "He may be with you forever." Then verse 17 says, "even the spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive; for it beholdeth him not, neither knoweth him: ye know him; for he abideth with you, and shall be in you" (John 14:17). Verse 26 says, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things" (John 14:26).

Notice this lengthy passage in John 16: "7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you. 8 And he, when he is come, will convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment... 13 Howbeit when the Spirit of truth is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. 14 He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you" (John 16:7-14). Now in all these contexts He is called "he" about 13 times and "him" or "himself" around 5 times. That's because the Holy Spirit is a person. But more!

I CORINTHIANS 2:10-13

Notice how Paul speaks of the Holy Spirit. He says, "But unto us God revealed them through the Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words" (I Corinthians 2:10-13). Here it is said that the Spirit "searcheth," "knoweth," and "teacheth." Does electricity and water and such like search, know, and teach?

ACTS 16:6

Luke talks of the missionary journeys of Paul and says, "And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia having been forbidden of the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia" (Acts 16:6). Does a vapor, or a cloud, or steam, or such like forbid? No, but people do. Persons do. Personages such as God and Jesus do. And here the Holy Spirit does because He is a person.

ACTS 15:28

Luke records this: "For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things" (Acts 15:28). What the brethren did the Holy Spirit did. Too, what they both did was reason and approve a course of action. Does grass, rocks, and dirt reason and approve? No, inanimate things do not. But people do reason and approve. Reasoning and approving is an attribute of personality and even intelligence. So Stephen could say, "ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye" (Acts 7:51). Stephen mentions heart and ears because they not only resist Him, it is His voice which ought to be accepted by the heart and understood by the ears which was resisted. People can be resisted, especially resisted with the heart and ears.

EPHESIANS 4:30

Paul said, “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, in whom ye were sealed unto the day of redemption” (Eph. 4:30). What is this? The Holy Spirit grieves!? Can the words of a mere message grieve? Does a book grieve? Does some kind of inspired expression grieve? No, but living, intelligent, things of contemplation grieve. People, intelligent personages grieve. Grief is an attribute of personality. So we learn that the Holy Spirit grieves. He does so because He is a person.

JAMES 4:5

James agrees with all this. He said, “Or think ye that the scripture speaketh in vain? Doth the Spirit which he made to dwell in us long unto envying?” (Jas. 4:5). People grieve, but they also “long” and “envy.” God is jealous over us. He sees us following after the world and He is jealous. He wants our complete reservoir of affections. He does not want to envy the world because it claims our affections. Will Christians grow cold for God, hear and respond to the call of the wild and make God the Spirit long unto envy? Nevertheless, to grieve, one must have consciousness and intelligence, and personality. The Spirit grieves because He is a person.

I PETER 1:11

Talking of Old Testament prophets, Peter said, “searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them” (I Pet. 1:11). See, the Spirit points things out, testifies. Again, these are attributes of intelligent personality.

GALATIANS 4:6

Paul says, “and because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father” (Gal. 4:6). The Spirit cries “Abba,” Aramaic for Father; “Father, Father.” He does so because He is a person who can talk and beseech and cry.

CONCLUSION

We could go on and on. Genesis 6:3 says He strives. Romans 8:14 says He leads. Romans 8:16 says He bears witness. Romans 8:26 says He intercedes and groans. Romans 8:27 says He has a mind.

We have seen he talked, declared, revealed, guided, spoke, heard, knew, searched, thought, willed, forbade, felt, convicted, exhorted, strove, was resisted, grieved, envied, longed for us, bore witness, groaned and made intercession, cried out, and was called by the personal pronouns "he," "him," "whom." No, it is a strange doctrine which says the Holy Spirit is not a person. He is! He is God the Holy Spirit.

WHAT THE CULTS TEACH (4)

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

MAN HAS AN IMMORTAL SOUL

We want to test the Jehovah's Witness belief that man has no immortal soul. This is sometimes expressed by the old saying, "When man is dead, he is dead all over, just like Rover the dog." We will first look at three propositions used to sustain the belief that man has no immortal soul.

THE HUMAN SOUL IS SUBJECT TO

DEATH, THEREFORE IT IS NOT IMMORTAL

They quote Ezekiel 18:4: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze. 18:4). Along this line we have the following:

"He made a path for his anger: He spared not their soul from death" (Psa. 78:50).

"He shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12).

"Let my soul die the death of the righteous" (Num. 23:10).

"And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat. 10:28).

"And he saith unto them, my soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death" (Mark 14:34). See also Acts 2:41-43; Romans 2:9; Jas. 5:20; I Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 2:14.

"And it shall be, that ever soul that shall not hearken to that prophet, shall be utterly destroyed from among the people" (Acts 3:23).

We would simply point out that soul has an area of meaning, as do almost all words. Soul can refer to the total person as in the passages quoted, or it can refer to that immaterial, invisible part of man (Mat. 10:28; Acts 2:27; I Kin. 17:21). When it has this meaning it is used interchangeably with spirit (Luke 8:55). Let's notice a few of these references:

"And her spirit returned, and she rose up immediately" (Luke 8:55). Here when Jesus raised the little girl from the dead her spirit returned to her body. In fact, the definition of death in the Bible is when the spirit separates from the body. We read, "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, even so faith apart from works is dead" (Jas. 2:26). So there is more to a person than his physical body. There is that immaterial, invisible part of man. Notice, "but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat. 10:28). There is the body, but separate from it there is also the soul. So the word soul may refer to the total person, but it may also refer to the invisible part of man.

Notice again, "And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto Jehovah, and said, O Jehovah; my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again"

(I Kin. 17:21). There was something gone, which went out I from the child. There was something which needed to return. The Bible calls it the soul.

So the word soul in the Bible has various meanings. It can refer to the disembodied man (2 Cor. 5:3,4). But let's look at another assertion Jehovah's Witnesses make regarding the soul.

SPIRIT IS THE ACTIVE LIFE FORCE

WHICH IS SUSTAINED BY BREATHING

This is such a strange definition that I really do not know where they get it. It certainly is not a definition from the Bible. They use as a reference Ecclesiastes 12:7: "And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it" (Ecc. 12:7). But this passage supports our view. It shows that there is an invisible part of man separate from the body which returns to God. They use Psalm 104:29: "Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust." But this says nothing about a life source sustained by breathing. Spirit (Greek pneuma) also has a variety of meanings. It can mean wind (John 3:8), or it can mean breath (2 The. 2:8). But it can also refer to that immaterial, invisible part of man. When they stoned Stephen to death he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59). Was he saying, "Receive my breath"? See also I Corinthians 5:5.

Notice 2 Corinthians 5:3,4: "For indeed we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened; not for that we would be unclothed, but that we would be clothed upon, that what is mortal may be swallowed up of life." There is something that will make the body immortal. And again Paul said we have come, "to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). Is Paul saying we have come to the breaths of just men made perfect? No, that would be a little ridiculous. We have a spirit that is made perfect.

Notice the language of Peter: "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (I Peter

4:6). Now would Peter be saying that we live according to God in the breath? No, it would be nonsense. There is something different from the flesh by which we live unto God. It is called "the spirit" and there are many contexts in which the word breath simply will not fit.

Notice another. Daniel saw a great vision and he said, "as for me, Daniel, my spirit was grieved in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head were troubled (Dan. 7:15).

"Breath" won't fit. Was his breath grieved in the midst of his body? No, but his spirit was grieved. We simply cannot see how breath can grieve. But a spirit can, for it is the rational part of man. Paul said, "For who among men knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God" (I Cor. 2:11). See, the spirit is that part of us which knows and thinks and reasons. So it can feel and will. Jesus said, '"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mat 26:41).

And Paul said, "to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (2 Cor. 5:5). Does Paul just want the breath to be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus? No, there is an invisible part of man which survives die death of the body. But more.

THE SPIRIT JUST MEANS

A MENTAL DISPOSITION

Regarding the above assertion they use Genesis 41:8. When Pharaoh could not understand his vision it is said, "And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled" (Gen. 41:8). We do not deny that such a definition as "mental disposition" may fit some contexts where the word spirit is used. But it clearly will not fit all contexts. Take again Acts 7:59, "and they stoned Stephen, calling upon the Lord, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Their two definitions of "spirit" will not fit. Stephen is not saying, "Lord Jesus receive my breath," nor is he saying, "Lord Jesus receive my mental disposition." There is an invisible part of man that; goes to the care of Christ. So it is said at the death of Christ; these words: "And Jesus cried again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit" (Mat. 27:50.

Does that mean He yielded up His breath to God? Does it mean He gave God His "mental disposition"? No, there is a thinking, grieving entity separate from the body, and it survives death. That's why John could see souls in a vision after they had been slain. We read, "And when he opened the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of them that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held." (Rev. 6:9). The scene is after death. John sees souls. He doesn't see bodies, for those bodies are buried back down on earth. And who will argue that John saw was a "breath" or a "mental disposition"? Not only that These souls, separate from bodies, talked. It says, "And they cried with a great voice, saying, How long, O Master, the holy and true, doest thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth" (Rev. 6:9). They are dead. They are separate from them who dwell on the earth. Yet they cry for their blood to be avenged. Can their "breath" cry? Can their "mental disposition"? No, there is a soul, a spirit, and a body of man (I The. 5:23). All might be preserved at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ

WHAT THE CULTS TEACH (5)

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

THERE IS HELLFIRE AND

EVERLASTING PUNISHMENT

We have said a cult is a religious group which does not believe some of the tenants of historic Christianity. One of the clearest and long-held beliefs of Christianity is the doctrine of eternal punishment. The Jehovah's Witnesses deny that doctrine. Let's look at some of their arguments.

THE DEAD ARE UNCONSCIOUS

Witnesses teach there can be no eternal punishment because the dead are asleep and could feel no pain. They would use such passages as the following:

"For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not anything" (Ecc. 9:5).

"For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor: wisdom, in Sheol, whither thou goest" (Ecc. 9:10).

"His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; In that very day his thoughts perish" (Psa. 146:4).

"Let the wicked be put to shame, let them be silent in Sheol" (Psa. 31:17).

First we would say that we must keep in mind that revelation is progressive. The doctrine of an afterlife is mainly; developed in the New Testament. It is there that we should go regarding eternal punishment and eternal life. Yet we can notice that even in the Old Testament life after life is stated. Two, we should keep in mind the context of Ecclesiastes is discussing things on earth from the point of view of "observation" not "revelation." As far as we observe here on earth the dead know nothing of world events. They no longer use their knowledge and wisdom for they are gone. The passages in Psalms are the same way. Regarding life here on earth, the dead's thoughts perish. Regarding earth, they are silent in Sheol.

LAZARUS

We always, about this point, bring up the story Jesus told about Lazarus which was recorded in Luke 16. He died and so did the rich man who fared sumptuously every day. But in Hades, Lazarus is comforted in Abraham's bosom while the rich man is tormented. Then Abraham and the rich man hold a conversation. It is taking place after death and none of them are asleep or unconscious. To counter this story, they argue that Luke 16 is merely a parable or story. However, they gain nothing from such an assertion. We would first notice that Jesus did not call the story a parable, nor did the writer Luke. In no parable are real people and real names ever used. But in Luke 16 we

have Abraham and Lazarus, real people with real names. This indicates that it is a true story of what happened before and after death. Too, we would reply that even if it were a parable, which idea is refuted, parables speak of real events. Take the parable of the sower. He sows seed. Some falls on the footpaths, some on the rock, some amidst the thorns, some in the good ground. When you analyze all the parables of Jesus you find the same thing, i.e., they all speak of real things and true events. Just as the sower, the seed, the rocks and thorns are real in the parable of the sower, so is the flame, the torment, the great gulf, and the consciousness after death in the story of Lazarus.

It is then argued that Abraham was dead and in the grave so Lazarus could not literally have been in his bosom. However, the text says they all were in Hades, the unseen abode of the dead (Luke 16:23). Only the body is in the grave. The spirit is alive, conscious, and in Hades.

GEHENNA

We should explain that there are three wards in the original Greek of the New Testament which are translated hell by the King James Version of the Bible. They are Hades (the unseen abode of the dead), Gehenna (the eternal place of hell fire), and Tartarus (the temporary place of torment where the fallen angels now me placed). When Jesus uses Gehenna He is speaking of the eternal abode of torment in fire. However, those who deny eternal torment say Gehenna only alludes to a city dump and incinerator outside Jerusalem. It is true the word comes from the Valley of Hinnom where a continuing fire smoldered. But Jesus attached the word eternal to the word Hinnom to represent the fire of eternal punishment He said, “it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna; where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:47,48). This Gehenna of which the Lord now speaks, has an eternal fire to torment. That’s why on judgment day He could say to them on the left hand, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat. 25:41). Then He could say, “and these shall go away into eternal punishment: But die righteous into eternal life” (Mat. 25:46).

SHEOL AND HADES MEAN THE GRAVE

Sheol in the Old Testament corresponds with Hades in the New. Neither mean grave. They both come from a root word which means "unseen." We don't see where the dead go. They go to the "unseen" abode of the dead. W. E. Vine in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says "Hades ... corresponds to Sheol in the Old Testament... unhappily rendered "grave," Genesis 37:35 It never denotes the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost: in point of time it is, for such, intermediate between decease and the doom of Gehenna." Yes, it is as Vine says, the temporary unseen abode of the dead until judgment day when the final rewards of all mankind are announced.

THERE IS ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

First, when a person dies he is not unconscious or oblivious to sensations unless one wants to take the position that the dead weep and gnash their teeth in their sleep. Matthew 13:42 says, "and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth" (Mat. 13:42).

Secondly, something does happen to a wicked person after he dies. He is cast into Gehenna: "And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell (Gehenna)" Mat 5:29).

Next, we would point out that the doctrine of total annihilation contradicts a known biblical truth that there are degrees of punishment Jesus said it would be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment than for Chorazin and Bethsaida. We notice that in the parable of the faithful steward, Jesus showed that there are degrees of punishment. Talking obviously about events which come to pass when the Son of Man comes again (Luke 12:40), He says, "and that servant, who knew his lord's will, and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; 48 but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (Luke 12:47,48). If all the wicked receive annihilation, however, how could there be such degrees of punishment at the second coming of the Lord? And how could it be more tolerable for one city than for another?

Too, we cannot help but see that the punishment of the wicked is just as long as the life of the faithful. It is said that at the judgment Jesus will announce, “And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life” (Mat. 25:46). There is eternal punishment and there is eternal life. Who will believe that the Lord does not use the self-same word, in the self-same sense, when he uses it in the self-same verse. And by the way, if annihilation and oblivion are to be thought of as punishment, then we were in punishment for eternity before God brought us into existence. Were you aware of punishment?

Sometimes it is argued that there can’t be eternal fire for it would soon burn you up. But we see the example of a continuing fire which does not consume in Exodus 3:2 when Moses sees the burning bush. The bush is not consumed. And in Revelation 14:9-12 it is said of the wicked that, “the smoke of their torment goeth up forever, and ever, and they have no rest day and night.” This does not sound like instant annihilation. If the smoke of the torment rises forever and ever, then the torment has to also be continuing or there could not be smoke from torment.

No, friends, due to the holiness and justice of God, there must be eternal punishment. Our job is to avoid it by obeying the gospel of Christ. We must believe in Him (John 8:24), repent of our sins (Acts 3:19), confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (Rom. 10:9,10), and be baptized into Christ for the remission of our sins (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16). Then we must live faithful unto death. If not, we can fall from grace and be severed from Christ (Gal. 5:4).

WHAT THE CULTS TEACH (6)

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

WHERE IS LIFE AFTER LIFE?

In our study of the teaching of the cults we are reviewing some of the distinctive doctrines of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Here we wish to look at what happens after death, or the question, “Where will people spend eternity?” Let’s begin.

THE 144,000

Witnesses teach that only a limited number from among mankind are to be in heaven with the Lamb, Jesus Christ. Revelation 14:1 says, "And I saw, and behold, the Lamb standing on the Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty and four thousand, having his name, and the name of his Father, written on their foreheads" (Rev. 14:1). According to Witness doctrine these are to be the only people who go to heaven. The rest of the saved will be on a renovated earth. These are supposed to be the "great multitude" of Revelation 7:9. However, we would reply: The 144,000 represents saints of the kingdom as does the great multitude of Revelation 7:9. The first picture is to assure them that they are carefully protected or sealed. Though 144,000 is a symbolic number, it is to show they are precisely noticed and none are left out. The "great multitude" views the saints from a different perspective — that of number and purity. So in one vision they are seen from the point of view of safety. In the other vision they are seen from the vantage point of their vast numbers and with symbolism of purity. The two visions are of one people, just as the two different dreams of Pharaoh depicted one event (Gen, 41).

Here let us give six reasons why the 144,000 are not to be taken literally. One, there is a better interpretation. The threat of sore calamities coming from God as described in chapter 6 led to the vision of protection in chapter 7 of Revelation. Two, they are called servants in Revelation 7:3, and any follower of Jesus is a servant (John 12:26). Three, there is too much symbolism to take the number literally. And if one takes the number literally, why not the whole vision? Or, if you take the vision figuratively, why not the number? In the vision they are virgins (Rev. 14:4). There is no blemish on them (Rev. 14:5). They are all Israelites (Rev. 7:5-8). Why not take all that literally? Four, it says the 144,000 are purchased. All saints are purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:14; I Pet 1:18). Five, the number is too artificial to be taken literally. Sixth, it says they follow the Lamb everywhere He goes. But all Christians follow Christ. John 10:27,28 shows that and I Thessalonians says all saints shall be with Christ (I The. 4:16-18).

LIFE ON A LITERAL EARTH

Christians have always believed that they would spend eternity in heaven. However, Witnesses say all besides the 144,000 will spend eternity on a renovated earth, for the literal earth will stand forever. For example, "Psalm 37:9,11 says, "Evildoers themselves will be cut off, but those hoping in Jehovah are the ones that will possess the earth...'' (Psa. 37:9). "But the meek shall inherit the land" (Psa. 37:11). However, these passages and a quote from Jesus along this line, are merely saying that the child of God should not think he must do evil if he will be well cared for (Psa. 37:8), for if he is good, God will adequately bless him (Psa. 37:11,19,24,25). See also Romans 12:17-21. Too, nothing is said about when they will inherit the earth. The meek inherit the earth now.

PROVERBS 2:21

They teach that Proverbs 2:21 says the upright are the ones that inherit the earth. Yet again, it does not say when. The natural way to take it is now. And verse 20 speaks of the righteous walking in the way of good men. There is no indication that this is on a renovated earth.

II PETER 3:10-13

Peter said, "But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Pet. 3:13). So Witnesses teach there will always be an earth. Only it will be new (Rev. 21:1-4; 2 Pet. 3:10-13; Psalm 104:5; Psa. 119:90; Eccl. 1:4). But we know these verses are speaking figuratively for clear passages of Scripture says the world will be burned up and removed. Notice:

1. Revelation 6:14 says the heavens will be rolled up as a scroll.

2. Revelation 16:26 says every island fled away and no mountain was found.

3. Revelation 20:11 says no place was found for the earth. See also 2 Peter 3:10-13; I John 2:15-17; Mat 24:35.

Too, we would argue that Revelation 21:1-4 and 2 Pet. 3:13 are speaking figuratively for the abode of the saints will be in heaven, not

on earth. Christ will be in heaven and John 14:1,2 says we will be with Him. The only ones excluded from eternal fellowship with Him are the sinful (John 8:21). And, also, I Thessalonians says we will ever be with the Lord (I Thess. 4:16-18). We notice that the kingdom of the earth becomes the heavenly kingdom (I Cor. 15:24). That is its destination. And Scripture says our inheritance is reserved in heaven (I Pet. 1:4). There is where we put our treasures (Mat. 6:19-21). There our name is enrolled (Heb. 12:23 with Luke 10:20). There we have our citizenship (Phil. 3:20). There our hope is laid up (Col. 1:5).

PSALM 104:5 and PSALM 119:90

We have, "who laid the foundation of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever" (Psalm 104:5). And they use: "your faithfulness is for generations after generations. You have solidly fixed the earth that it may keep standing" (Psalm 119:90).

First we would say we know this is not the final word for the Bible does say the earth will be removed (2 Pet. 3:10-13). Too, there is no contradiction. God fixed the earth where it would stand forever. It won't fail, but it can be removed. We make a building to stand where it must finally be torn down later.

ECCLESIASTES 1:4

Ecclesiastes 1:4 is used. It says, "a generation is going, and a generation is coming; but the earth is standing to time indefinite" (Ecc. 1:4). The King James has "forever." But the Hebrew word for "forever" (Olani) does not always mean "without end." It can mean "time indefinite." In Exodus 21:6 it says a servant shall serve his master "forever." See also Exodus 12:14 and I Kings 12:7.

MEN WHO DIED ARE NOT IN HEAVEN

JOHN 3:13

John 3:13 is used. It says, "and no one hath ascended into heaven, but he that descended out of heaven, even the son of man, who is in heaven" (John 3:13). This is to prove people do not pass eternity in heaven. But we do not teach that men who die go directly to heaven.

According to Scripture the event is like this: When a person dies he goes to a place called Hades, though sometimes called hell in the King James version of the Bible. It is not however hell-fire. The word Hades merely means "unseen." It is the unseen abode of the dead. We can see a glimpse of it in the story of Lazarus and the rich man. They both die and are carried by the angels to Hades. But in Luke 16 we see two compartments in Hades. Lazarus is in one, comforted in Abraham's bosom. The rich man is in the other, in flame and torment. He wants Abraham to send Lazarus to cool his tongue but Abraham says there is a great gulf between them they can't cross. The rich man is in flames, but it is not eternal fire. It is a temporary place of punishment due to their wickedness here on earth. In 2 Peter 2:4 it is called Tartarus where the fallen angels are kept. On the other side of the great gulf is a place of comfort in Abraham's bosom. It is called Paradise by the Lord in Luke 23:43. Jesus said to the thief before He Himself died, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). Some think Paradise is heaven and Jesus and the thief were to go there that day. However, three days later Jesus told Mary Magdalene that He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17). So, when you die you are carried to Hades. In Hades there are two abodes: Paradise and Tartarus. An impassible gulf is between them. For Tartarus see Luke 16:23; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6. Then comes judgment day. Some say, if one is tormented in Tartarus before judgment day, he is tormented before he is judged. But Jesus said, "He that believeth on him is not judged: he that believeth not hath been judged already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). We should think of judgment day as sentencing day. After Judgement people go to Gehenna or hell-fire (Mat. 25:41, or they go to heaven (John 14:1-2).

But when John 3:13 says no one has ascended into heaven, the context demonstrates what is in mind is that no one has ascended into heaven to bring word back down regarding what he had seen. But Jesus is saying that He has done so. The same concept is true regarding David as mentioned in Acts 2:34. He truly did not ascend to heaven. He only went to Hades.

II PETER 3:7

We find that 2 Peter 3:7 clearly teaches the earth is stored up for fire. Witnesses teach that that is symbolical to represent wicked human society being burned up. The same is found in Isaiah 13:9. Truly, similar language is used in Isaiah 13:9 when God wants to show the eclipse of a nation. But that is not parallel to 2 Peter 3:7. No country is under discussion. The wicked are only mentioned incidentally. And 2 Peter 3:10 is too detailed for symbolism. It talks of these as being burned up: the heavens, the elements, the earth itself. Notice also verse 12.

Let's close with some passages which teach the earth is to come to an end: Rev. 6:14; Rev. 16:20; Rev. 20:11; 2 Pet 3:10-13; Psa. 75:3; Mat 5:18; Mat 24:35.

No, it is clear that there is life after life. But that eternal life will not be here on earth. It will be in heaven where Jesus is (John 14:1,2). In the air we will ever be with the Lord (I The. 4:16-18). Let us obey the gospel and live in such a way as to become a part of it.

WHAT THE CULTS TEACH (7)

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

We have been studying what the various cults believe and teach. We want to explore the Jehovah's Witness doctrines that the return of Christ would be invisible, and that He was raised a Spirit Creature. Let's begin.

CHRIST WAS RAISED A SPIRIT CREATURE

To argue that Christ was raised a spirit creature, Witnesses use I Pet 3:18. It says He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. We do not doubt that When He died on the cross His body was dead but His spirit was alive. In the spirit He went to paradise. Later His spirit was united with His body in a grand resurrection. Thomas would not believe it when he was told it. So Jesus appeared to him and said, "Reach hither thy finger, and see my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27). No, Christ had a bodily resurrection.

I TIMOTHY 3:16

They use I Timothy 3:16, which says He was made manifest in die flesh and declared righteous in the spirit. However, "Spirit" here refers to tire Holy Spirit The Spirit vindicated or justified Christ by raising Him up and authenticating it by the miracles and message of the apostles that He truly was the Christ. The passage says nothing about being a spirit creature at His resurrection. Besides Christ is Creator, not a creature (John 1:1,2; Col. 3:16). And to see that He really had a body all one has to do is notice John 20. Mary Magdalene finally realized it was the resurrected Christ she was talking to, and the text says she was clinging to His feet so that He told her to stop clinging to Him (John 20:17 in the original Greek).

II CORINTHIANS 5:16

Then II Corinthians 5:16 is used. It says, "Even if we have known Christ according to the flesh, certainly we know him so no more." But all this verse means is that we no longer view Christ as a figure of this world. He is not a worldly monarch. He is not a temporal prince in this world, but is now risen to sit on the right hand of God. But He had a

bodily resurrection. Of the women it was said, “And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring the disciples word, and behold, Jesus met them saying all hail. And they came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him” (Mat. 28:8,9).

I CORINTHIANS 15:42-45

Then they try to use I Corinthians 15:42-45. It says, “it is sown a physical body; it is raised a spiritual body... the second Adam became a life-giving spirit” (I Cor. 15:42-45). Paul sees Christ, unlike Adam, having an elevating spiritual nature which is capable of imparting life to mankind. That is not to say that He had no bodily resurrection. Too, in Luke we see Him resurrected. He plainly says, “Why are ye troubled? And wherefore do questionings arise in your heart? 39 See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having” (Luke 24:38,39).

HE GAVE HIS BODY

Not convinced, they try this argument. They say Christ gave His fleshly body for mankind. He would not take it back by returning in the flesh. Yet Christ gave His body in the sense that He died for us. It does not say He gave His body away. He gave it up in death for our sins. The passage we quoted in Luke goes on to say, “And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, Have ye here anything to eat? and they gave him a piece of broiled fish. And he took it, and ate before them” (Luke 23:41-43).

No, Christ is not a mere creature. Nor was He only raised a spirit. He had a flesh and blood body which begats a living hope of a bodily resurrection in each one of His disciples (I Pet. 1:3).

THE RETURN OF CHRIST IS INVISIBLE

Witnesses teach that the second coming of Christ would be invisible. First, they use John 14:23. Jesus says, “For I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:23). Then Jesus says, “yet a little while and the world beholdeth me no more; but ye behold me; because I live, ye shall live also” (John 14:19). So from those two passages they teach Christ’s return shall be invisible. However, Jesus says all that before His death and His burial. When He was resurrected He appeared unto

His disciples but not unto the world. This is not speaking of His second coming, for after He was resurrected it was promised that He would return again (Acts 1:11). Too, see the parallel verse in John 16:16-22. They did sorrow when He was gone, and they did rejoice when He returned. This was talking of His resurrection, not His second coming.

ACTS 1:11

After His resurrection Jesus was alive on earth for forty days, showing Himself alive by many proofs. He gave the great commission that they should evangelize the world. He was ready to return to God. We read, "And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; who also said, 'Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye behold him going into heaven'" (Acts 1:9-11). Witnesses say Christ's return is to be "in the same manner'' as his ascension to heaven, in the clouds, out of sight of physical human eyes. We would reply that Acts 1:11 says He shall return in the same manner that they "beheld" Him going. They beheld Him going to the clouds. We will behold Him when He comes back with the clouds. They saw His ascension. We will behold His second coming for He will come in full vision as they beheld Him going (Acts 1:11).

MATTHEW 24:30

Talking of the second coming Jesus said, "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun shall 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: and then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send forth his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Mat. 24:29-31). Some argue that we shall see the sign of the Son of man in the heavens. But we say read on. Notice all of verse 30 again. "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all

the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the son of man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Mat. 24:30). See, it not only says they shall see the sign; it says they shall see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven. The verse argues for our position, not for their's.

THE TEMPLE OF HIS BODY

When Jesus cleansed the temple we read this: "The Jews therefore answered and said unto him, what sign showest thou unto us, seeing that thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. The Jews therefore said, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou raise it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body" (John 2:18-21). Witnesses teach His body dissolved into gases. But here He says His body would be raised. So we are not surprised that when Thomas said he would not believe until he put his finger into the nail print in His hands and put his hand into Christ's side, that Jesus would appear and say, "Reach hither thy finger and see my hands; and reach hither thy band, and put it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing" (John 20:27). If He was not real with a real body, He was a deceiver. We have seen that Mary Magdalene was clinging to Him, the other women were later taking hold of His feet, and He ate in the disciples' presence.

SUMMARY SCRIPTURES

Was Jesus raised a spirit creature and is His second coming invisible? These two questions go together. Let's let the Bible speak.

"See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having. And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. And while they still disbelieved for joy, and wondered, he said unto them, have ye here anything to eat? and they gave him a piece of a broiled fish. And he took it, and ate before them" (Luke 24:39-43).

"And behold, Jesus met them, saying all hail. And they came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him" (Mat 28:9).

“To whom he also showed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3).

“Who also said, ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

“Behold, he cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they that pierced him; and all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over him. Even so, amen” (Rev. 1:7).

No, Christ is Creator not creature. He had a bodily resurrection which begets in us a living hope (I Pet. 1:3). And when He comes again it will not be invisible. All eyes shall see Him.

II PETER 3:13

Question: “What is the meaning of ‘new earth?’”

This is a good question because it often crops up in our studies with our religious friends. II Peter 3:12, 13 reads: “Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Most of the denominations and cults more or less differ in the details of this passage: who is to dwell on the new earth? Israel? the nations? for how long?

But most agree that the new earth is literal and not figurative. I disagree, believing it is merely a figurative statement representing heaven. Such figurative statements are common in the Bible.

Consider Ezekiel 36:26: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you:" This ancient prophecy was fulfilled in the Christian dispensation. The gospel, preached to the multitudes, led them to faith and repentance. Spiritually, it was as if they had a new heart - a wholly different attitude. But literally they had no literal new heart of flesh.

Reflect on John 3:3-5 where Jesus talked of a new birth. This was figurative also, depicting the great change of attitude and station of an obedient believer.

The "new heaven and earth" is merely figurative language of that abode for the faithful after the end of the world. The new abode is not here on earth (John 14:1,2). It is up in the air (I Thessalonians 4:16-18). It is in heaven! Our reward is to be in heaven (Matthew 5:12). It is there we are to lay up treasure (Matthew 6:20).

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

GEHENNA, AIONIOS, KOLASIS

I in no way intend to be disrespectful but I must honestly affirm that the average Jehovah's Witness is ignorantly instructed into a religion of half-truths and subtle error. It is depressing that such is taught, but more so that it is actually believed. We have been hammering away at the pillars which support their doctrine that there is no eternal punishment. We have shown that "hades" does not mean "grave" but "the unseen abode of the dead." We have seen that man not only is a soul but that he also possesses a soul.

However, to do away with their teaching of no eternal punishment, three other words get a "Jehovah's Witness" face-lift. Let's look briefly at them.

GEHENNA

Jesus said, "But I will warn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell (Gehenna); yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12:5).

Jehovah's Witnesses say this "refers to the valley of Hinnom outside the walls of Jerusalem. . . Jesus used that valley (Gehenna) of fire... as a proper symbol of destruction ... not conscious torment" (Truth, p. 44).

First, Watchtower doctrine assumes the words "destruction" and "annihilation" are co-equivalent terms. They are not. Annihilation means to bring to nothingness; but one can destroy property without it disappearing. Thus one can suffer eternal destruction without undergoing annihilation.

To say that Gehenna (or Geenna) merely represents death is to ignore the words, phrasing, and the symbols attached to it in the New Testament, and it is also to ignore the contexts the word is found in.

In the verse we quoted, Gehenna (hell) is contrasted with the killing of the body. To be cast into Gehenna is worse to be feared than mere death. In Matthew 18:8, 9 Gehenna is described by Jesus as being the “eternal fire.” Mark 9:43-47 is a parallel passage and there it is called the "unquenchable fire, where the worm dieth not." These figures are designed to bring to our mind the picture of eternal, perpetual punishment rather than instant oblivion. So, from the context in which the word "Gehenna" appears, we are assured that the fire is symbolizing a punishment which goes on and on. If one puts the context down beside the mere assertions of Watchtower, Gehenna will bring to mind eternal punishment.

AIONIOS

This is the word which is translated "eternal" in Matthew 25:46: "And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life."

Jehovah's Witnesses will assert that the word does not mean punishment will be without end. The above verse, however, is as good a stopping place as it is a starting place in our study. For the word "eternal" (Gr. AIONIOS) is used to restrict the word "punishment," in exactly the same way as it is used to restrict the word "life." Augustine said of this text. "If both are eternal, either both must be understood to be lasting with an end, or both perpetual without end. For like is related to like on the one side, eternal punishment; on the other side, eternal life." Dr. E. B. Pusey adds this to the words of Augustine: "any ordinary writer who drew a contrast between two things, would, if he wished to be understood, use the self-same word in the self-same sense. He would avoid ambiguity. If he did not, we should count him ignorant of language, or if it were intentional, dishonest. I ask, 'In what matter of this world would you trust one who in any matter of this world, should use the self-same word in two distinct senses in the self-same sentence, without giving any hint that he was so doing?'" Unanswerable!

KOLASIS

A third word which Watchtower needs to get rid of to sustain a "no eternal punishment" doctrine is the word "punishment" (Gr. KOLASIS). This word also appears in Matthew 25:46, "And these

shall go away into eternal punishment..." Here they try to define "punishment" as a mere "cutting off." They so render "KOLASIS" in Matthew 25:45 as "cutting off." To them, this rids them of the idea of being tormented. They are merely "erased" from existence! Now if you will take time to read Matthew 26:40-64 you will find that the "eternal fire" of v. 41 answers to the "eternal punishment (KOLASIS)" of v. 46. So the "punishment" of v. 46 is the "fire" of v. 41. Where does this leave room for the Watchtower definition of "cutting off?" Then turning to Revelation 20:10, we see that enemies of the church are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone "and they shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever." In Revelation 20 we have "fire" equal "tormented." In Matthew 25 we have "fire" equal or answer to "punishment." We know that "things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other." So, if the fire corresponds to punishment, and if the fire also corresponds to torment, the punishment corresponds to or equals torment So, evidently, "punishment" in Matthew 25:46 means the same thing as "tormented" in Revelation 20:10. This latter term means to "vex with pain, to torture." Things which equal the same thing really do equal each other.

Finally, Revelation 14:10,11 which talks of enemies of the church, sustains all this. It says the "smoke of their torment goeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day and night…" When the "torment" ceases, the smoke from it would cease. Since the smoke goes up "for ever and ever" the torment will be going on" for ever and ever." No indeed, we will not let anyone take away from us even the least motive for living the godly life! We, as Jesus, will even warn of "hell fire."

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

CHRIST WENT TO HELL?

The Witnesses sincerely believe that "hell" in the Bible means "the grave." This is another important support to their position that there is no eternal punishment. Another is that man has no eternal soul. Their tenacity in asserting these two propositions in the face of all the opposing evidence is in direct proportion to their disbelief in eternal punishment. If man has no eternal soul, and if there is no hell but the grave, then there is no eternal punishment! But that is enough background. The question is, "Is hell the grave?" In connection with this Witnesses often reason like this: "If hell is the fire of torment, then Jesus went to torment after He died for the Bible says He went to hell (Acts 2:27, 31)."

HADES, GEHENNA, TARTARUS

(HELL)

These are three Greek words which are used in the New Testament, and which are unhappily translated by the one English word "hell" in the Authorized Version. This fact leads to some confusion. Gehenna is a word selected by Jesus to symbolize the place of future punishment of the wicked. Tartarus is the word used in I Peter 3:19,20 and Jude 6 where it is described as the prison of the fallen angels. That brings us to the third word - Hades. Hades neither in its etymology nor its usage in the New Testament represents the word "grave." Wuest in Word Studies says, "The word itself means 'the unseen.' This was the technical Greek religious term used to designate the world of those who departed this life." So the meaning of the word in Greek culture and in scriptural thought; is "the unseen world, or abode, of the dead."

In Luke 16 (the parable of the rich man and Lazarus) we learn that this unseen world is divided into two compartments, one of torment and one of comfort. When Acts 2:17, 31 lets us know that Christ went to Hell (Greek Hades) it is no marvel. He went to the unseen abode of the dead. Being righteous we know He went to Abraham's bosom, a place of comfort. He called it Paradise (Luke 23:43). We know Paradise was not heaven for He told the thief they would be in it that day (Luke 23:43). Three days later He told Mary He had not yet ascended to the Father (John 20:17). He was simply in the "unseen" world. So there is no validity in Witnesses saying we believe Christ went to Hell-fire. "Hades" not "Gehenna" is used in Acts 2:27,31. We no more believe that Hades means "Hell-fire" than we believe it means "grave." That it does not mean "grave" is clear. Vine in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says of "Hades," "It never denotes the grave, nor is it the permanent region of the lost..." (p. 188). We can heap scholar after scholar on top of Vine, but we expect that Jehovah's Witnesses, in denying eternal punishment, will continue to assert Hades means "the grave."

JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

WHAT IS THE SOUL?

Watchtower doctrine teaches that the soul is not a part of man which separates from his body at death and goes on living! Notice carefully as I quote from their little blue book, Truth, which I have in my possession:

> "What then, is the soul? Let us see what the Creator's own written Word says about it. In Genesis 2:7 we read: "And Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul."
>
> Note, please, that after God started man breathing "the man came to be a living soul." Hence the man was a soul, just as a man who becomes a doctor is a doctor. (I Cor. 15:45). Since the human soul is man himself, then it cannot be some shadowy thing that merely inhabits the body or that can exist apart from the person."

I wish we had space to take up each passage they use in support of their doctrine, and individually answer each. However, I believe that all of them will be explained in the treatment we offer. But a few samples of their use of the Bible is in order. First, they will quote from passages which talk of the soul possessing physical qualities as "your soul craves to eat meat" (Deut. 12:20). So they say the soul is really YOU!

Then they quote passages such as I Peter 3:20, "wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." Thus they say the soul is the whole individual. Man, they say, does not possess a soul; man IS a soul.

W. E. VINE

In his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, W. E. Vine lists no less than eleven meanings of the word soul (Greek - PSUCHE) in New Testament usage. The Witnesses would have us select only one usage and promise to believe their doctrine on the basis of scriptures which only pertain to that one usage. For your study, allow me to list all eleven of these various meanings, listing plenty of scriptural references so you yourself can see if Dr. Vine in correct. They are as follows:

1. The natural life of the body, Matt. 2:20; Luke 12:22; Acts 20:10; Rev. 8:9; 12:11; cp. Lev. 17:11; II Sam. 14:7; Esther 8:11.

2. The immaterial, invisible part of man, Matt. 10:28; Acts 2:27; cp. I Kings 17:21.

3. The disembodied (or 'unclothed' or 'naked,' II Cor. 5:3,4) man, Rev. 6:9.

4. The seat of personality, Luke 9:24; explained as 'own self ver. 25; Heb. 6:19; 10:39; cp. Isa. 53:10 with I Tim 2:6.

5. The seat of the sentient element in man, that by which he perceives, reflects, feels, desires, Matt. 11:29; Luke 1:46; 2:35; Acts 14:2,22; cp. Ps. 84:2; 139:14; Isa. 26:9.

6. The seat of will and purpose, Matt. 22:37; Acts 4:32; Eph. 6:6; Phil. 1:27; Heb. 12:3; cp. Num. 21:4; Deut. 11:13.

7. The seat of appetite, Rev. 18:14; cp. Ps. 107:9; Prov. 6:30; Isa. 5:14 ('desire'); 29:8.

8. Persons, individuals, Acts 2:41,43; Rom. 2:9; Jas. 5:20; I Peter 3:20; II Peter 2:14; cp. Gen. 12:5; 14:21('persons'); Lev. 4:2 (‘any one’); Ezek. 27:13; of dead bodies, Num.

6:6, lit., 'dead soul;' and of animals, Lev. 24:18, lit., 'soul for soul'.

9. The equivalent of the personal pronoun, used for emphasis and effect: 1st person, John 10:24 ('us'); Heb. 10:38; cp. Gen.12:13; Num 23:10; Jud. 16:30; Ps. 120:2 ('me'); 2nd person, II Cor. 12:15; Heb. 13:17; Jas. l:21; I Pet. 1:9;2:25; cp. Lev.17:11; 26:15; I Sam. 1:26; 3rd person, I Pet. 4:19; II Pet. 2:8; cp. Ex. 30:12; Job 32:2, Heb. 'soul,' Sept. 'self.

10. An animate creature, human or other, I Cor. 14:45; Rev. 16:3; cp. Gen. 1:24; 2:7,19.

11. The inward man,' the seat of the new life, Luke 21:19 (cp. Matt. 10:39); I Pet. 2:11; 3 John 2.

We feel that Jehovah's Witnesses, once again, are too shallow in their word studies, too incomplete in their use of scripture. That is why we often think of their approach to scripture as the "beaten path" approach.

SUMMARY

A study of the inward man is not so simple as Witnesses would have us believe. There are passages which show that man is a composite of (1) body, Matt. 6:25; (2) soul, Matt. 10:38; (3) and spirit, I Thess. 5:23. In these passages we see a distinct difference in the three. However, the difficulty is compounded because soul and spirit both have several usages. As we have seen, "soul" has about eleven meanings and "spirit" would come close to equaling that. Also, soul and spirit are used interchangeably. Yes, soul means the whole man, but that is just one of the eleven ways the word is used. Let us let Vine give us something to think about. He says: "Generally speaking, the spirit is the higher, the soul the lower element. The spirit may be recognized as the life principle bestowed on man by God, the soul as the resulting life constituted in the individual, the body being the material organism animated by soul and spirit" (Vine, p. 54). What all this boils down to is this: when a man is dead, he is not dead all over - like Rover (the dog). There is an eternal part which lives so truly that it can undergo eternal punishment. Witnesses do not believe this.

VARIOUS MORMON DOCTRINES

THE APOSTLES, THE PRIESTHOOD,

JESUS' BODY, CHURCH DESTROYED, PEOPLE

IN AMERICA, THE BOOK OF MORMON

Here we will investigate various assertions made by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints. The first regards the apostles. Mormons often tell that their church has apostles and we do not. And it is true today that the churches of Christ, in the organization of the church on earth today, does not have an office of the apostles.

First, however, we would point out that we do have apostles in the church. They are in the foundation of the church. Paul said, "So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:19,20). The apostles are in the foundation of the church, where they are supposed to be. They are not supposed to be up in the superstructure today where we are.

Next, no one alive today can meet the qualifications of an apostle. Peter discusses the prerequisite required to be an apostle. One had to be a witness of the resurrected Christ. Peter said, "beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up from us, of these

must one become a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 2:22). No one today was a witness of the resurrection as was Paul. Too, if one claims to be an apostle today, we would require him to do miracles to prove it, as did Paul. He said to the Corinthians, 'Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, by signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Cor. 12:12).

MUST HAVE THE PRIESTHOOD TO ACT

We hear, "you must have the priesthood before you act I for God." We would wonder why. This is mere assertion. Did not Jesus say to the apostles to hand down the great commission, particularly one of the things they heard from Him? Jesus said, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:19,20). We are told to observe all things Jesus commanded the apostles. One of the things commanded was evangelism. That command is our warrant to act. We don't need to be of a priesthood which Christ never authorized anyway.

CHRIST HAD A SEVENTY

Then it is said by way of organization that Christ had a group of seventy as recorded in Matthew 21:1. He did. He also sent some out two by two. Does that mean we are to have an office of the two? No, the seventy was in existence under Judaism. We are never commanded to have it under Christianity. Nor do we ever, under the apostles, see an office of seventy in the New Testament. Too, the seventy Jesus had was under the jurisdiction and commands of the limited Jewish Commission. It never was part of the great commission (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15,26), which commission we are under today. The limited commission (preaching only to the Jews) was done away.

RESTORATION OF THE PRIESTHOOD

Then it is claimed that the restoration of the priesthood and that it was to be restored to the earth by messengers like Elias is all found in Acts 3:19-21; Revelation 14:6,7; and Matthew 17:11. In reply, we would just say you find no such thing in those verses. The "restoration

of all things" in Acts 3:21 is speaking about the second coming of Christ. In Revelation 14:6,7 the angel with eternal good tidings is merely symbolic of the gospel being sent to earth to be preached, which is exactly what is being done by the church today. And Matthew 17:11 is talking of the work of John the baptizer getting things ready for the Christ. Elias refers to Elijah, another form of the same word. John the Baptist came in the power and spirit of Elijah (Luke 1:17).

JESUS HAS A BODY OF FLESH TODAY

Then it is asserted that Jesus has a flesh and bone body today because when resurrected He had one as is recorded in Luke 24:36-39. True, when resurrected, Jesus had a body of flesh and bone. But Scripture indicates that He has such no more. For example, John saw the resurrected body of Jesus, but John says he did not know what we would be like (I John 3:2). If we were all going to be like Jesus, surely John, who witnessed the resurrection, would know. Then Paul tells us flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (I Cor. 15:50). And Paul said our body would be spiritual in distinction from flesh (I Cor. 15:44).

THE CHURCH WILL BE DESTROYED

Next it is asserted that the church would be destroyed and would need a resurrection or a restoration. This is found, they say, in Acts 20:29,30. Actually, Acts 20:29,30 does show that the church will be under attack by false teachers. But it never says the true church will ever be destroyed. In Matthew 16:13-18 the "church" and "kingdom" are used interchangeably. Jesus said, "I will build my church." Then He says He will give the keys of the kingdom to Peter. They are one and the same. And in Hebrews 12 Paul says we Christians have come to the general assembly and church of the firstborn" (Heb. 12:23). Then it says, "wherefore, receiving a kingdom that can't be shaken, let us have grace" (Heb. 12:28). When we come into the church we receive the kingdom. And did you notice, by the way, that Paul says in Hebrews 12:28 that the kingdom can't be shaken (Heb. 12:28). It must be that same kingdom mentioned in Daniel 2:44: "And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people; but it shall break in pieces and consume all these

kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Dan. 2:44). The kingdom and the church are the same, and the kingdom shall never be destroyed. It shall stand forever. No wonder that Paul would say, "unto him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

TWO PEOPLES - ONE IN AMERICA

It is asserted that in John 11:51,52 and John 12:20-32 two peoples are under discussion. One is the Jewish nation and the other is the race of people who came to the Americas around 600 B.C., which group of people were Jews from Jerusalem. Of course they say the story of all this is found in the Book of Mormon. However, John 11:52 is a reference to Gentiles who were then people of God by anticipation. In John 10:16 Jesus said, "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd" (John 10:16). The great commission was soon given and all nations were preached to (Mat. 28:19,20; Acts 2:39; Col. 1:23) and Jew and Gentile became one flock with one Shepherd over them. Jesus said when He died He would draw all men unto Himself (John 12:32). When He died He did draw them; Jew and Gentile were drawn to Him. Jew and Gentile were created together as one new man (Eph. 22:15). They were reconciled together in one body through the cross (Eph. 2:16). This all speaks of Jew and Gentile. But never does the New Testament refer to Indians on the North American continent who, added to the Jews, would become one flock. But the New Testament does say that Gentiles, as we have seen, are to be added to Jews in the church. We see it happen in Acts 10 and 11.

But it is said, this second flock was to hear Christ's voice and He appeared to the Indians over here after His death. Well, the Bible says nothing about that. Rather Scripture says that when Christ died He went instead to a place called Hades (Acts 2:27). That is the unseen abode of the dead. Actually, Jesus did say this second flock would hear His voice (John 10:16). They did! The Gentiles did hear Jesus. Notice, Jesus said to His missionaries: "He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me" (John 10:16). And speaking of the Gentiles Paul said of Jesus: "And he came and preached peace to you that were far off,

and peace to them that were nigh" (Eph. 2:17). Jesus is Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6). Those nigh God were Jews. Those afar off are Gentiles. Through apostles, prophets, and preachers, Jesus preached to both. There is absolutely nothing in the Bible about Jesus preaching on this continent between His death and resurrection.

TWO WITNESSES FOR CHRIST

It is then said we need two witnesses that Jesus is the Christ: The Bible and the Book of Mormon. However, we need not the Book of Mormon. In John 5:30-34 Jesus lists five witnesses on His behalf.

A MARVELOUS WORK AND A WONDER

True, Isaiah 29:13-14 speaks of a marvelous work and a wonder, but it is not talking of Joseph Smith and the origin of the Book of Mormon. The New Testament applies the verses to Jesus and to His ministry (Mat 11:5-6; Luke 7:22).

WE PROGRESS TO BECOME GODS

Mormon theology tells us we are to progress to become gods. Paul said we are to be conformed into the image of God's Son, Jesus (Rom. 8:29). In heaven we will be like angels (Mat. 22:30).

Well, regarding all these doctrines, so the Bible speaks. These doctrines, we say in all sincerity, are foreign to the doctrine of the Bible.

VARIOUS MORMON DOCTRINES

THE PRIESTHOOD

Here we continue our study on what the cults believe. By "cult" we mean no slander. Usually a cult is described as a group of religious people who, though good people and sincere believers, hold doctrines foreign to historic Christianity. Particularly we have been looking at those doctrines held by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, the Mormons.

THE AARONIC PRIESTHOOD

First, we want to discuss their belief in a priesthood. Chi September 22 and 23, 1832 Joseph Smith claimed he received a revelation from Jesus Christ regarding tire establishment of two priesthoods. The priesthood of Aaron was to continue forever along with the priesthood which is after the holiest order of God, called the priesthood of Melchizedek. You can read about it in their bode called The Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price.

However, as with all latter-day revelation, such prophecies get one in conflict with Scripture. Notice Hebrews 7:11,12: "Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:11,12). Now the Holy Spirit in this passage says that there was not perfection regarding the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood. There had to arise another Priest, who is Jesus Christ. He is a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, which priesthood we will speak of in just a moment. However, that Priesthood replaces the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood. Notice again verse 12: "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law." This clearly says there is a change from one priesthood to the-next. If the Levitical priesthood were to continue, how could there be a change from it to the priesthood of Melchizedek? Not only that, there is said to be a change also of the law. This also is in verse 12. Again we read, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). What is meant by "change" when it says the priesthood is being changed? Well, it means the same as it does when it says the law is to be changed. What does it mean that the law is changed? It means we are no longer under the Old Law. Christians are under the new law, for there has been a change. Notice in Hebrews the Holy Spirit's explanation regarding what occurred when the Old Law was changed. We read: "For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw night unto God" (Heb. 7:18,19). To disannul simply means to annul or cancel. So when the Old Testament was changed for the new, the Old was annulled or cancelled. And when the Levitical priesthood was also changed, it too was annulled or cancelled. The Old Law was changed. Again, what does the Holy Spirit say occurred when the Old Law was changed? The Holy Spirit says, "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Heb. 10:9, 10). So when the Old Law was changed, that meant it was taken away that the Second Law might be established. That being so, when the Levitical priesthood was changed, it too was

taken away so a second priesthood might be established, the priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek. And we might add that in fact, the first covenant or law went no further than the cross, for Paul said, "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14).

Yet someone may wonder why we use so many verses which teach that the Old Law was done away. Well, first we stablish what the Holy Spirit meant when He said it was changed. And if it meant cancelled when it said the law was changed, it must have meant cancelled when it said the priesthood was changed. But besides that, if the law is cancelled, so is the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood, for it was part of the Old Testament law, and if the law is nailed to the cross the priesthood is there with it. The Aaronic priesthood is part of the Old Law which was disannulled, cancelled, and nailed to the cross. So to teach that the Aaronic priesthood goes on today is to put one at odds with the Bible. It contradicts all the passages which say the law is done away and particularly Hebrews 7:12 which says the priesthood was changed.

THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD

However, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints also believe they have restored the priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. Not only that, from what we have already said, the Scriptures seem to indicate that that priesthood will go on. In fact, Hebrews 7:11-28 says there was a change from an imperfect to a perfect priesthood, the priesthood of Melchizedek. True, the Levitical or Aaronic priesthood was no longer needed because Christ offered up Himself. See Hebrews 7:27. He was the last sacrifice so that priesthood was done away. Truly Jesus was a propitiation or covering for our sins (I John 2:2). And notice Hebrews 10:4-10: "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me" (Heb. 10:4-10). No, the blood of bulls and goats was insufficient We are sanctified by the body of Jesus once for all. So we have no need of a sacrificial priesthood any longer. Yet still, what can we make of the Melchizedek priesthood? Let's notice Hebrews 7:22-25, "by so much

also hath Jesus become the surety of a better covenant. And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing: but he, because he abideth forever, hath his priesthood unchangeable" (Heb. 7:22-24). Notice the word, "unchangeable." In the original it is aparabatos. Vine in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says the word means "unalterable, inviolable," or "unchangeable." He adds the more literal definition, "that doth not pass from one to another though he doubts the more literal meaning obtains here in Hebrews 7:22-25. Thayer disagrees in his classic Greek Dictionary. He says it means not only inviolated or unalterable but this: "unviolated, or not to be violated, inviolable, unchangeable and therefore not liable to pass to a successor." Even Vine agrees that that is the literal meaning. We would have to accept that it has succession in mind because of the context Verses 22 and 23 say he is the surety of a better covenant because His Priesthood does not require many in number. In the Aaronic Priesthood priests die and need to be replaced. Jesus never needs a successor for He never dies. In fact verse 25 says, "Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). He doesn't need to pass His priesthood on because He never dies. Verse 24 says His priesthood is unchangeable because He abides forever, while the Aaronic priests were hindered by death from continuing. Really, to argue that we need priests of the order of Melchizedek to continue to serve today implies that Jesus cannot continue in the office because He is dead. But Hebrews 7:24 says the opposite because He still lives. And because He still lives, He doesn't need to pass His priesthood on to another.

Notice how the versions translate it.

a. T.E.V: "does not pass on to someone else."

b. Phillips Version: "But Christ, because he lives forever, possesses a priesthood that needs no successor."

c. Living Bible Paraphrased: "But Jesus lives forever and continues to be a priest so that no one else is needed."

d. The Living Oracles: "Has a priesthood which does not pass from him."

So we can see Jesus has a priesthood that is His peculiar possession. He alone lives forever, so no one is ever to succeed Him. In that, the Bible does away with the Levitical priesthood and exclusively designates the Melchizedek priesthood to Jesus. Figuratively, all Christians are a royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:9), and we offer up our own bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom. 12:1,2).

VARIOUS MORMON DOCTRINES

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

We are generally in a study of what the cults believe. Particularly we are looking at those doctrines held by the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints.

I CORINTHIANS 15:29

There is a strange verse in the Bible — I Corinthians 15:29. It is strange only because there are no scriptures in the Bible like it. Notice: "Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them?" (I Cor. 15:29). Yet nowhere in the Scriptures is such a baptism found. In the gospels, in the direct teaching of the Lord, we find no such thing. Jesus never talked about it, nor did He leave instructions on it. When we turn to the Book of Acts, we see people being baptized for the remission of their sins, but never do we have a case of someone being baptized for

the remission of the sins of another. And there are plenty of cases of conversion in the book of Acts. Surely if there was a doctrine regarding baptism for the dead, we would see the apostles and prophets of the New Testament administer it. Would we not find in Scripture why we were to do it? Would not the Holy Spirit tell us the need for it, the purpose or design of it? Would there not be admonition to do it, and would not consequences of such baptism be pointed out? But we have none of that, as we have with other doctrines and ordinances of The Way called Christianity. Yet Mormons have it as one of their doctrines. Notice:

"It is alike impossible for any spirit, in the flesh or disembodied, to obtain promise of eternal glory except on condition of obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel. And as baptism is essential to the salvation of the living, it is likewise indispensable to the dead. This was known by the saints of old, and hence the doctrine of baptism for the dead was taught among them... Herein is shown the necessity of vicarious work—the living ministering in behalf of the dead." That is page 145ff of Articles of Faith.

THE CASE FOR BAPTISM OF THE DEAD

First, Mark 16:16 says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16). But the problem is, they say, the gospel was not preached to very many. What of those before Christ; what about those who heard not the gospel in the dark ages? Well, it is taught that the gospel has now been taught in the spirit world below. Peter said, "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (I Pet. 4:6).

Then it is taught that the inaugural of this work was by Christ in the interval between His death and resurrection. When He died, before He was resurrected, His spirit went to the hadean world, the unseen abode of the dead. There He preached the gospel to the dead. Notice what Peter says: "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit: in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were

disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water: which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 3:18-21). "See," they say, "Christ went and preached to the lost dead. But they cannot be baptized in the hadean world. So we must be baptized for them, by proxy." To add to this, it is noticed that Jesus did not go to heaven when He died. Three days after He died, when Mary Magdalene saw Him, He told her, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father" (John 20:17). So if His spirit did not ascend to heaven, it must have gone to the realm of the dead, they teach, to preach the good news down there. In fact, all the dead go there and if they did not hear or believe the gospel here while on earth, they will have a chance down there.

Then they teach this was prophesied about in Isaiah 24:22: "And they shall be gathered together, as prisoners are gathered in the pit, and shall be shut up in the prison; and after many days shall they be visited" (Isa. 24:22). Also notice Isaiah 42:6: "I, Jehovah, have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles" (Isa. 42:6).

If baptism is indispensable to the living, it is equally so for the dead. Since the dead cannot be baptized in the hadean world, we should be baptized on their behalf. So they teach.

THE UNRAVELING OF THE DOCTRINE

Let us now present some refutation of this view of I Corinthians 15:29. Mostly it is accomplished by a correct understanding of the scriptures they use.

First, we would point out that the gospel was preached unto the dead, only it was preached in promise. Paul said, "and the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed" (Gal. 3:8).

Then we should notice that the blood of Christ was shed for them under the old law. Paul said, “and for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). And again Paul said, “For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe” (I Tim. 4:10).

Next, we would point out that I Peter 3:18-22 does not say Jesus in the Spirit preached to the dead while they were dead! Notice 2 Peter 2:5: “And spared not the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:5). Surely Noah was a preacher and a prophet to warn the ungodly world of coming doom. Then Enoch also delivered prophesies. Jude says, “And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Jude 14,15). Now, notice I Peter 1:10 and 11. The question is, how did the Spirit of Christ proclaim salvation to the ancient world? Peter says, “searching what time or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did point unto, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow them” (I Pet 1:11). The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets!

Now let’s tie all this together by showing what the truth really is. The Spirit of Christ in Noah and other prophets like Enoch, preached to ancient men before the flood, and these are in prison in the hadean world at the time Peter writes his epistle. Particularly, the preaching was while the ark was being prepared (I Pet 3:20). The Spirit of Christ did not preach to them after Christ’s death on the cross, at least as far as the Bible reveals. The Spirit of Christ in the prophets preached to them while they were alive on the earth. At the time Peter wrote they were dead true enough, in prison in the hadean world. But the preaching took place while they were alive, and it was done by the Spirit of Christ in the prophets (I Pet. 1:11).

Well, if all that is so, what does I Peter 4:6 mean when it says the gospel was preached to the dead? Well, let's let Ephesians 2:1 and 2 serve as a commentary on it Paul said there, "and you did he make alive, when ye were dead through your trespasses and sins, wherein ye once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the powers of the air, of the spirit that now worketh in the sons of disobedience" (Eph. 2:1,2). The gospel was truly preached to those dead in their trespasses and sins. It is spiritual death.

THE MEANING OF I CORINTHIANS 15:29

Well, we are brought back to square one. If their interpretation is far fetched, what is the real meaning of the text? I believe it means what it says. There was some little sect in Paul's day that practiced baptism for the dead. They were wrong in doing it, but if there was no resurrection from the dead why did they bother? So, at least they showed that in Christianity there was a vital concept of the resurrection of the dead, though Paul, when he was at Corinth, probably had taught the Corinthians about all the errors associated with that sect, including the error of baptism for the dead.

Support for this view is in the very passage, I Corinthians 15:29. Notice Paul writes, "Else what shall they do that are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they baptized for them? Why do we also stand in jeopardy every hour" (I Cor. 15:29,30). Paul makes a contrast between those who baptize for the dead and those who stand with Paul. He seems also to assume the Corinthians are aware of this difference. "They" is in contrast to Paul's "we." Those who baptized for the dead were distinguished from Paul and the Corinthians. There is a "they" and a "we." So I believe the text teaches.

Friends, there is no gospel of the second chance. It is in this life that you must prepare for the next by believing Jesus is the Christ the Son of God (John 20:30,31), repenting of your sins (Acts 3:19), confessing your faith in Christ (rom. 10:9,10), and being baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).

VARIOUS MORMON DOCTRINES

A PLURALITY OF GODS

Here we will look at the many-gods theory of the Mormon Church. If there is one cardinal principle in the Bible, it is that there is one God and that God is one. Jewish monotheism gave place to Christian monotheism. But Orson Hyde, in Journal of Discourses, Vol. 1, page 123 said, "Remember that God our heavenly Father was perhaps once a child and mortal like we are and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement, until He has arrived at the point where He now is." Orson Pratt, apostle, in The Seer, said, "In the heaven where our spirits were born, there are many

gods, each of whom has his own wife or wives which were given to him previous to his redemption while yet in his mortal state (Vol. 1, page 37).

However, let's just take time to read a few quotes from the Bible:

"Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah" (Deut. 6:4).

"Thus saith Jehovah, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, Jehovah of hosts: I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God" (Isa. 44:6).

"That ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me" (Isa. 43:10).

"I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God" (Isa. 45:5).

"That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none besides me: I am Jehovah, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:6).

"For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, the God that formed the earth and made it, that established it and created it not a waste, that formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah; and there is none else" (Isa. 45:18).

"Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22).

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isa. 46:9).

"Concerning therefore the eating of things sacrificed to idols, we know that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one" (I Cor. 8:4).

"For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5).

Now these passages are clear. I need not mar them with commentary and strained explanations. They speak for themselves and I can use them without effort. God says besides Him there is no God,

there will never be another God formed, besides Him there is no God, there is none else, there is not even any like Him; there is no God but one for there is one God.

THE MENTION OF GODS IN THE BIBLE

Well, if all that is true, why is Satan called a god? In 2 Corinthians 4:4 we read "in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of the unbelieving" (2 Cor. 4:4). But Satan is called a god by a figure of speech. He is a god in a figure. Since he exercises power in this world and the world serves him he is called the god of this world by a figure. He is not the one god of the whole universe.

We can also see this figure of speech at work in Exodus 7:1 and Exodus 4:16. Notice:

"And Jehovah said unto Moses, See, I have made thee as God to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet" (Exo. 7:1).

"and he shall be thy spokesman unto the people and it shall come to pass, that he shall be to thee a mouth, and thou shalt be to him as God" (Exo. 4:16).

God would put words in a prophet's mouth. The prophet stood between God and the listeners. Since Aaron stood between Moses and Pharaoh, Moses, by a figure of speech is a god to Pharaoh. Moses had a similitude of a characteristic of God and so he is symbolically a god to Pharaoh.

JOHN 10:34-36 and PSALM 82:6

Notice, when Jesus said He was the Son of God by calling God His Father, the Jews wanted to stone Him. But He said, "Is it not written in your law, I said, ye are gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came (and the scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest; because I said I am the Son of God?" (John 10:34-36).

Jesus had quoted Psalm 82:6 which says, "I said ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High" (Psa. 82:6). In context, this statement is made to Jewish judges. The word Elohim is applied to them. It is the word in Hebrew which we translate God. But God judges all men.

Since the judges in Israel share that attribute of God, by a figure of speech they are called gods. They stand in a similar relationship to the people as does God. Vine, in his Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words says, "The word is used of Divinely-appointed judges in Israel, as representing God in His authority; John 10:34 quoted from Psalm 82:6; which indicates that God Himself sits in judgment on those whom He has appointed" (p. 61). Too, we might point out that elohim is translated judges and not gods in Exodus 22:8,9,28. Other uses of the word god in the Bible is when it talks of what it sometimes calls "false gods" or "no gods." It is used in that manner to talk of the idols of the people.

No, clear passages of Scripture say there is one God. All passages seemingly to the contrary are easily seen to be figures of speech, where one shares in a small part an attribute of God.

THE ADAM-GOD THEORY AND

CELESTIAL MARRIAGE

What we have just pointed out regarding there being one God refutes other doctrines held by the church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints. Young said, "When our father Adam came into the Garden of Eden, he came into it with a celestial body, and brought Eve, one of his wives, with him. He helped to make and organize this world. He is Michael, the Archangel, the Ancient of Days, about whom holy men have written and spoken — He is our father and our God, and the only God with whom we have to do" (Journal of Discourses, Vol. 1,50). So it is taught that Adam was a spirit who was preexistent as the Archangel Michael. He helped God the Father and Jesus Christ make and organize the earth. Then he was given a physical body, started the human race (whose spirits had been previously begotten by Elohim), and he is subject to Christ and Elohim.

Tied in with this is celestial marriage. To reach full exaltation a man must have a wife. The couple must be sealed to each other for time and eternity in a temple ceremony. On all this refer to Doctrine and Covenants 132,14-21. People who are not married in the temple become angels. Those married in the temple become gods of their own planet. They bear children who come to the world as human beings to get bodies (Compendium [B] 287, Last Sermon 1844).

Of course, all this theory is refuted by clear Bible teaching that there is one God, no other, none before, none after, and not even any like Him, as we have seen from the passages which we previously quoted.

Besides all that, notice Mark 12:25: "For when they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; but are as angels in heaven" (Mark 12:25). All the dead are as angels; they don't marry. Jesus was not talking of a special class of people who don't marry in heaven. He was talking of all the sons of the resurrection, all the dead who are resurrected to be in heaven. Jesus said to the Sadducees, "ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as angels in heaven" (Mat. 22:29,30). Here He speaks of no special class. He talks simply of the resurrection of the dead. They, like angels, don't marry. But more.

THE NATURE AND SUBSTANCE OF GOD

The Doctrine and Covenants 130:22 says, "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit." The Articles of Faith says, "From the evidence already presented, it is clear that the father is a personal being, possessing a definite form, with bodily parts and spiritual passions... We are assured that Christ was in the express image of His Father, after which image man also has been created. Therefore we know that both the Father and the Son are in form and stature perfect men; each of them possesses a tangible body, infinitely pure and perfect and attended by transcendent glory, nevertheless a body of flesh and bones" (pp. 41,42).

However, the Bible says, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:24). In fact it was Jesus who said it. And to negate further the idea that God has a fleshly body, after His resurrection Jesus said to His apostles, "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you behold me having" (Luke 24:39).

Yet, someone might say, "why does the Bible talk of God having eyes, a right hand, feet, and so forth?" It's a figure of speech called anthropomorphism. In other words, God figuratively, in speech only,

takes on human characteristics so that we can contemplate Him. In speech He condescends to our level for we cannot contemplate Him well on His level. And this is corroborated by the fact that one of the characteristics of God is omnipresence. He is everywhere at once, which a fleshly body would not allow, and such fleshly body could be seen since it is physical. Well, think on all this.

VARIOUS MORMON DOCTRINES

LATTER-DAY REVELATION

We admire the zeal of our friends among the Mormons, the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints. We sincerely believe that they have a zeal worthy of a better cause. We want to look at some of their doctrines and see if they agree with what we find in the Bible. The first we will look at is the doctrine of latter-day revelation. Of course it is claimed that the Book of Mormon is inspired and it came in the latter days, hundreds of years after Christ, the apostles, and the writing of Scripture. But notice these passages.

JOHN 14:26

Jesus said, "But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you" (John 14:26). This is spoken to the apostles. Notice that in the first century Jesus claims the apostles will be taught "all things," and put in remembrance of "all" that Jesus spoke to them. Here the Lord clearly promised that they would have it all in the first century. What would be the need of latter-day revelation? In fact, if they had it All in the first century, how could there be latter-day revelation? But someone may say this is a fluke, and that it is inconclusive.

JOHN 16:13

"Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come" (John 16:13). Here Jesus emphatically says that the Spirit will guide the apostles into all the truth. If they had it all in the first century, how could Joseph Smith get more in the latter days? Not only that, but Jesus claims they will be guided by the Spirit in knowing future events. All this leaves no room for future revelation from God. And we will soon see that it was all written down (2 Tim. 3:16,17). But let's notice more.

2 PETER 1:3

Peter says, "seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Here we have another all-inclusive statement that under the teaching of the apostles who were guided by the Holy Spirit they had it all in the first century. Peter emphatically says that the had all things that pertain to life and godliness. There again in the first century they had all things. There could be nothing added in the latter days which at all pertained to life or godliness. Why would we need latter-day revelation? What they had in the first century they wrote down and so in Scripture today

we have all things which pertain to life and godliness. But to see that it was written down let's look at another.

2 TIMOTHY 3:16,17

Paul said, "all scripture is God-breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). This is a very strong statement regarding the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures. In fact, it is about as conclusive as it could ever be. First, it shows Scripture was not the work of men. They were mere instruments and tools. Scripture was breathed out by God. And besides being for teaching and all that, the verse clearly claims that by Scripture the man of God can become complete. Not only will he be complete, but he will be furnished completely unto every good work. Yes, they wrote it all down. It makes us all complete. We are fitted out for every good work. There is no room left for latter-day revelation. There is truly no need for it The concept of latter-day revelation contradicts all these Scriptures which teach revelation from God was all given in the first century. But let's notice more.

JUDE 3

Jude said, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). See, the argument is often made that, true, they had it all in the first century, but it was lost and has to be delivered again. In fact, it is claimed that the Catholic church left the "plain and precious things" out of the Bible, and the book of Mormon just restores them. This charge is totally refuted by history and manuscript evidence and all the ancient documents we have regarding such a notion. But more than that, it flies in the face of a very clear scripture, Jude 3. Jude says the faith was "once for all" delivered. "Once for all" is a good rendering. It translates the word hapax which in the Greek fully means "one time," "once," or "once for all," "of what is of perpetual validity, not requiring repetition." That last sentence was a quote from Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words, by W. E. Vine, page 819.

So, not only did they have it all in the first century, it would only be delivered to man once, or once for all, and that without repetition. So it cannot be claimed that new material had to be delivered in the latter days, and it cannot even be claimed that old material would be delivered again in the latter days. But to corroborate all this, let us look at one more.

ACTS 20:27

Paul is speaking to elders of the church who were from Ephesus. He thinks he will not see their face again. So he says, "Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26,27). There again, Paul had the whole counsel of God. Not only that, there in the first century he declared it all to the saints at Ephesus. There was none to come later. He had the whole counsel of God right there in the first century. If one has the whole pie, that means none is left out. And Paul said he had the whole counsel of God. That means nothing will be left out and according to all these inspired statements nothing was left out. They had it all and they delivered all in the first century.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION

However, the inquiring mind might wonder, "How could they have it all? How could inspired men make such claims? When they wrote, before A.D. 65, the Book of Revelation had not yet been penned by the apostle John?" All seem to believe that the Book of Revelation was not written until around 96 to 100A.D. True, but sober reflection answers the question and negates the problem. The truth is, there is no item of faith symbolized in the Book of Revelation which was not already in the possession of the apostles and even preached to the saints before A.D. 65. They had it all, preached it all, and if any of the items preached is not recorded in Scripture John recorded it in Revelation. But it was held and preached by many before written down in Revelation. Today it is all written.

REFLECTIONS

Someone once said that before Satan can win someone through false doctrine, he must first attack and lessen one's faith in Scripture.

Somewhere along the line, latter-day revelation will contradict God's word. At the very beginning it does so when it first claims there is such a thing as latter-day revelation.

It would behoove you to take such claims as latter-day revelation skeptically. Be like the Beroeans. They were called "noble." It explains why. It says, "in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11). After all, Jesus said to all, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them" (Mat. 7:15-16). And John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1). And recall what Jude said, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints. For there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of before-hand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 3,4).

Friends, take your religion seriously. Check doctrines out by Scripture. The first thing to consider is whether they try to hurt your faith in Scripture.

BAPTISM FOR THE DEAD

"Else what shall they do that are immersed for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they immersed for them?"

This passage in the writings of the apostle Paul has received a dual treatment. To many it represents the most difficult and murky passage of all the Bible. To others it is simple and clear.

In this brief study this writer will do the following: 1) treat the scripture as handled in the doctrine of the church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints; 2) present this writer's understanding of the passage and, 3) print an appendix: a list of 36 views by Fr. Bernard M. Foschini, in "Those Who are Baptized for the Dead," a Dissertation.

MORMON DOCTRINE

The belief of the Mormon church concerning baptism for the dead is found on pp. 145-153 of Articles of Faith.

They attempt to be logical on this point. Baptism is for all; is it not? (Mark 16:16.) But many died without ever having heard baptism preached. Think of the dark ages when never a soul heard Mark 16:16. There would be a tragedy except for one thing. The gospel was preached to the spirit world. I Peter 4:6 says, "For unto this end was the gospel preached even to the dead..."

Mormons go on to teach that the inauguration of this work by Christ was in the interval between His death and resurrection. His spirit ministered to the spirits of the departed. I Peter 3:18-20 says, "being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient..."

If anyone says Christ went to heaven at that time they point out that he had not, that John 20:17 records Jesus saying, after his resurrection, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father."

This visit of Christ to the hadean world, they say, was prophesied about in Isaiah 24:22 and also in Isaiah 42:6,7.

"Now," they say, "down in hades the unbeliever can hear the gospel and believe." The only thing they cannot do is to be baptized. "We," they say, "must be baptized for them." Hence they explain I Corinthians 15:29.

According to them, this true doctrine was once lost, but was restored by revelation to Joseph Smith at Nauvoo, Illinois September 6, 1842. See Doctrine and Covenants, Sect. 128.

SOME REFUTATION

1. I Peter 3:18-22 does not say Jesus preached in the hadean world to departed souls. In fact it does not say Christ preached to them while they were dead - physically - at all. Notice a few passages:

    a. II Peter 2:5 says Noah was a preacher of righteousness.

    b. I Peter 1:10, 11 tells us that the Spirit of Christ proclaimed salvation in the ancient prophets (prophets like Noah).

    c. I Peter 3:20 says that Christ preached unto the spirits in prison that aforetime were disobedient in the days of Noah.

When you put all of Peter's writing together you are led to the conclusion that the Spirit of Christ, in Noah, preached while the Ark was being built to the spirits who at the time Peter wrote were in prison, but they were exhorted by Christ in the prophet Noah while the ark was being built. There is no mystery in I Peter 3:18-20 that II Peter 2:5 and I Peter 1:10,11 does not clear up.

2. Isaiah 24:22 neither talks of hades nor the disobedient ones in the days of Noah. A much superior interpretation is that the people of earth lay as captives in spiritual darkness and sin, I John 5:19 and Matthew 4:16. But they were visited and released by the Son of God, Luke 2:32, John 3:19, Hebrews 2:13-16, Luke 4:18. The exact same thing is undoubtably the meaning of Isaiah 42:6,7.

3. The dead of I Peter 4:6 are those dead in sin, Ephesians 2:1. It is spiritual death, not physical death which is under consideration. I Peter 4:3, 4 enumerate trespasses which make a person dead in sin.

THE RIGHT INTERPRETATION

Being understanding and forebearing toward those who have a different view, this writer would simply like to state that the most reasonable interpretation of the passage, to him, is the one most clearly depicted by the usual import of the words of the text. That is, that there were some misguided souls of Paul's day who thought they should

practice baptism for the dead. Just as there were some who didn't believe in a resurrection (I Cor. 15:12), some who preached that the resurrection was past (II Tim. 2:18), and some who still practiced John's baptism (Acts 19:1-6), so there were some misguided souls who tried to baptize by proxy. Paul had likely taught sufficiently on their error on his first visit, so he didn't feel the need to condemn their error in his second letter. And we do notice that he didn't condone their practice. And, one who looks with an open mind cannot fail to see that Paul makes a distinction between "they" (the ones baptizing for the dead) and "we" (the apostles and the Corinthians), verse 29.

So it is believed that Paul mentions these erroneous brethren, who, as wrong as they were, still served to notice that there was such a thing as a resurrection of the dead. We might say the same today of the Mormons: "What shall they do that are immersed for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why then are they immersed for them?"

APPENDIX

From "Those Who Are Baptized for the Dead" (by Fr. Bernard M. Foschini; The Heffeman Press, Worcester, Mass., 1951).

1. I Corinthians 15:29 speaks of an immersion in prayer, fasting and penance on behalf of the dead.

2. "Baptism" stands for and means sadness for the dead. One is overwhelmed in sadness for the departed.

3. "To be baptized" means the labors and perils of the apostles on behalf of the ones who are dead to sin, i.e., the faithful.

4. "Baptism" stands for the suffering of persecution in order to help the dead by hastening the end of the world and hence hastening the resurrection.

5. "Baptism" stands for martyrdom or a baptism in blood in defense of a resurrection of the dead.

6. The verse means to wash the dead, to perform ablution upon the dead, as to wash dead bodies, before burial.

7. I Corinthians 15:29 means to be wet with the same water with which dead bodies are washed.
8. The ritual ablution used by the Jews before their sacrifices for the dead.
9. Ablution because of contact with the dead.
10. Vicarious purification for those who died in impurity.
11. The immersion of divers after the bodies of the ship-wrecked.
12. The ceremonies of baptism or rites analogous to these.
13. Vicarious baptism.
14. Vicarious baptism of the Mormons.
15. Vicarious eschatological baptism.
16. Baptism of the dead sought vicariously.
17. Baptism as suffrage for the dead.
18. Hastening of the Parousia and aid for the dead.
19. The defense of the dead and of their faith in the resurrection.
20. The baptized have something to do for the dead.
21. Baptism for the dead bodies.
22. Baptism of those who have already received the Holy Spirit.
23. The mortification of the passions.
24. Baptism of the dying or baptism which will avail after death.
25. Baptism will be useless after death.
26. Baptism by which we gain nothing beyond what the unbaptized have.
27. Baptism by which we take the place of the Christians who have died.

28. Baptism by which the dead Christians are received.
29. Baptism over the Sepulchers of the Martyrs.
30. Baptism for the dead means baptism for Christ.
31. Baptism for Christ and for the other dead.
32. Baptism received on account of the dead.
33. Baptism received for fanciful reasons.
34. Baptism which frees us from the fear of death.
35. Baptism received in order to obtain the kingdom of the blessed.
36. Baptism to be numbered among the dead who will rise again.

THE SABBATH

THE OLD LAW AND THE

SABBATH ARE DONE AWAY

Our friends among the Seventh-Day Adventists, as all know, believe that the Sabbath is the day on which Christians should

worship. And it is true that the Sabbath is Saturday and not Sunday. They believe a time will come when all will be enlightened on the Sabbath, and those who persist in Sunday worship will receive the mark of the beast and be damned. They sincerely believe the papacy or Roman Catholic Church corrupted Sabbath worship to Sunday worship on the first day of the week. It is our belief, however, that Christians first worshipped on Sunday and that is the teaching of the New Testament today. Let's study this.

THE OLD LAW IS DONE AWAY

We first knew that the old law was going to be done away because of prophecy. God said through Jeremiah, "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was a husband unto them, saith Jehovah" (Jer. 31:31,32). Now this is important because keeping the Sabbath was part of the Old Testament and it is never brought over and commanded in New Testament observance, worship, or commandment. So there was to be a New Covenant.

Then in the book of Hebrews, Paul argues that the old law is done away and in part he uses Jeremiah 31:31. He says, "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Judah" (Heb. 8:7,8).

Well, is it clear that the Old Law is done away? Let's first notice a few verses in Hebrews. Paul said, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). The law, we know, had to be changed for Christ to be a priest. He could not be a priest under the Old Law for Christ was out of the tribe of Judah and Paul said, "For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests" (Heb. 7:14). So, for Christ to be a "priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 7:17), there had to be a new law. And in context with this Paul adds "For there is a disannulling of a foregoing

commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw night unto God" (Heb. 7:18,19). The law, therefore was disannulled. That just means annulled or done away. That being true, we are under the New Covenant today. The old, which contains Sabbath worship, is clearly done away. And Paul continues with this theme saying, "But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as he is also the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second" (Heb. 8:6,7).

WHEN WAS THE OLD LAW DONE AWAY

First, we must remain in the book of Hebrews. Notice: "And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. For a testament is of force where there hath been death: for it doth never avail while he that made it liveth" (Heb. 9:15-17). So we must think of the Old Law and the New Law as a last will and testament. If one has two wills and testaments and then dies we know that the very last one goes into effect and all previous testaments are done away. God had two testaments. When Jesus died on the cross, the New Testament went into force and the Old Testament was abrogated, abolished, nullified, or done away. So Paul could say of the Old Law: "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). The Jews had a hard time understanding this. So Paul said to the Corinthians, "But their minds were hardened: for until this very day at the reading of the Old Covenant the same veil remaineth, it is not being revealed to them that it is done away in Christ" (2 Cor. 3:14). So we have often noticed that if the Old Law is done away, all its ordinances and laws and worship is done away. Three annual trips to Jerusalem, animal sacrifices, instrumental music, and Sabbath worship were all done away. To those who desire to keep the Sabbath we ask, Are you

a Jew? Are you under the Old Law or the New? How can you be under that which was done away?

OBJECTIONS

One way Sabbatarians seek to answer all this is to claim that the ceremonial law was done away, but the Ten Commandments were not done away. We claim that it is clear that the law was done away. For example, Paul said," For when we were in the flesh, the sinful passions, which were through the law, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we have been discharged from the law, having died to that wherein we were held" (Rom. 7:5,6). We all know what it is like to be discharged from something. But our Seventh-Day Adventist friends say that is only talking of the "ceremonial law." Now first, we know of nothing in the Old Testament or the New which divides the Old Law into two parts. While it stood it was one law. All of it was simply the law, the Old covenant, the law of Moses. Never is it ever said in God's word that part would be done away and part remain. But to disprove the notion that the ten commandments were to stand after we were discharged from the law, we need but stay in the same context and read only a little further. When Paul said we were discharged from the law, did he mean some type of "ceremonial law?" He continues on, talking of the law from which we are discharged, and says, "what shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Howbeit, I had not known sin, except through the law: for I had not known coveting, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7). So Paul said we were discharged from the law, but the law is not sin for he did learn sin by it Is it a ceremonial law he has in mind? He says in that law he learned, "Thou shalt not covet." That law on coveting, you will notice, is not part of any ceremonial law. It is one of the ten commandments (Exodus 20:17) just as is keeping the Sabbath. So the law Paul has in mind, from which we are discharged, is specifically the ten commandments. So simple! So clear! The law is just done away in I Christ.

IS THE SABBATH PERPETUAL?

Yet it is still objected that the Sabbath is to be a perpetual covenant for us. We are invited to read Exodus 31:16: "Wherefore the

children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant" (Ex. 31:16). We believe that was fulfilled. It was a perpetual law through their generations, or as long as the Jewish economy existed. It was not to be a perpetual law through all generations, but just as long as the Jewish worship was in force until Christianity superseded it. Let's notice several things. First, Moses pointed out that the Sabbath was to be kept by "the children of Israel." Nothing is said of any others. And verse 17 says, "It is a sign between me and the children of Israel forever" (Ex. 31:17). Olam ("forever") is used of definite periods of time like a servant could serve his master forever (Exo. 21:6). But again we ask, "Are you of the children of Israel?" Second, we notice verse 15 of Exodus 31: "Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day is a Sabbath of solemn rest, holy to Jehovah; Whosoever doeth any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death" (Exo. 31:15). This is another reason we know we are not under the Sabbath. It was part of the Jewish civil law and carried a death penalty for those who violated it. Those who claim to keep the Sabbath don't keep it as it was commanded. They don't exercise the death penalty for it as Jews were commanded, so we have seen these major problems with Sabbath keeping:

1. The Sabbath is part of the Old Law which was done away.
2. The Sabbath is part of the ten commandments which were done away. All the ten commandments, in one form or another, are brought over into the New Law except one - the Sabbath.
3. The Sabbath was just for the Jews. Are you a Jew?
4. While it was in force, a person that violated it was to be put to death.
5. Never is Sabbath worship commanded in the New Testament. Christians who went to the temple or into synagogues on the Sabbath day, as recorded in the New Testament, did so for they were still of the Jewish nation and also that is where they could find religious people to whom they could preach the gospel.

THE LORD'S DAY

Today the day in which to worship is Sunday, the first day of the week. It is the day on which Christ was raised from the dead (John 20). It is the day on which Christians met to take the Lord's Supper and commemorate the body and the blood of the Lord (Acts 2:42; Acts 20:7). Let's never forsake it (Heb. 10:25-27).

PART III

Following are a series of articles which defend against an attack on the church by Christian Research Institute (CRI). Preliminary correspondence is enclosed. As you will notice they never replied to my letter or my debate challenge, though they do reply when someone asks for information on the church. We feel this series of chapters are useful for they look at the church from a denominational viewpoint, and in answering the article we are able to bring out many things not used previously in our chapters on the church.

As to their not replying to our debate challenges, we are not surprised. Men love darkness (John 3:19). Public exhibitions of truth in a fair two-way contest are one thing. A one-sided debate is another. They prefer the latter. I think of what James said, "but resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jas. 4:7). Truth, has nothing to fear if one presents it with his might, and by total reliance on God as his One Source of Help.

Christian Research Institute report DC-60

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST THE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

CRI seldom publishes critiques of established Christian denominations which adhere to the essential teachings of the Bible. Normally we prefer to limit our published critiques to cults, heresies circulating among Christians, and controversial new Christian movements. However, the many questions we receive concerning the Churches of Christ, along with the related movements of the independent Christian Churches and the Disciples of Christ, and the confusion that exists regarding the teachings of these groups, necessitates this statement.

HISTORY

These churches stem from the "Restoration" movement (not to be confused with the Pentecostal "Latter-Rain" Restoration movement of the late 1940s) begun by (among others) Thomas and Alexander Campbell (father and son), Presbyterian ministers from Ireland, in the eastern United States in the early 1800s. Neither Campbells intended to found a new denomination, but were rather intent on promoting unity among all Christians. Nevertheless, many Christians, including whole Baptist churches, forsook their previous denominational ties and rallied behind the Campbells' teaching. These "Campbellites," as they were nicknamed (to their dismay), were united in a loose association of autonomous churches known as the "Disciples of Christ." Meanwhile, Barton Stone, a former Presbyterian minister who had been teaching along similar lines even before the Campbells came to America, formed an association of churches known as the "Christian Church." When Stone's and the Campbells' churches discovered one another, they united in 1832 (along with similar, smaller groups), and eventually came to be known by the name "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)."

As the new denomination solidified, and particularly after the Civil War, divisions began to arise over various issues, especially the establishments of institutions, (such as missionary societies) and the use of instrumental music in worship services. By 1906, the movement had divided into two groups, the Disciples of Christ and the Churches of Christ, the later of which decried the formation of institutions and

generally rejected instrumental worship. These churches of Christ themselves are subdivided over such issues as whether only one cup should be used in communion.

Later, a second group of churches began to pull away from the Disciples of Christ, primarily in reaction to liberalism and denominational structures. By 1971 these churches were listed separately in the Yearbook of American Churches as the "Christian Churches and Churches of Christ." This group is also known as the North American Christian Convention (NACC), a meeting of Christian churches which first convened in 1927 and has met annually since 1951. The NACC is generally "instrumental" (that is, they either favor or do not oppose the use of musical instruments in church). Meanwhile, a large number of churches in the Disciples of Christ (hereafter "DOC") have abandoned the evangelical faith and adopted the liberal theology so widespread in the mainline churches.

DOCTRINAL SURVEY

Keeping these three main branches of the Restoration movement straight (there are roughly two dozen other, much smaller, divisions) is not easy. All three branches include churches which call themselves "the Church of Christ" or "the Christian Church." There are non-instrumental and instrumental churches in both the Churches of Christ (hereafter "COC") and the NACC (though the former are largely non-instrumental and the latter mostly instrumental). The COC and the NACC both tend to consider baptism as necessary for salvation, though the COC are generally more insistent on this teaching. Because the COC and the NACC value the autonomy of the local church so highly, there is a great deal of diversity in the teaching of the individual churches, and generalizations, though valid and helpful to a point, may not apply in certain cases. With these qualifications in mind, we may turn to an analysis of the doctrines taught by these groups.

The original vision of the movement was that differences of opinion over doctrinal matters were not to become issues dividing Christians from one another. This did not mean, however, that the new movement did not have its doctrinal distinctives. Basic to "Restoration" theology is the call to return to "New Testament Christianity," the beliefs and

practices of the first century Christian church as documented in the New Testament. Only by rejecting everything not specifically found in the New Testament, it was reasoned, could true Christian unity be achieved.

Some Restorationists took this guiding principle further than others. The Campbells and Barton Stone were all agreed that belief in the creeds should not be required of Christians ("No creed but Christ"), and that it was best to preach and teach about God and Christ without reference to words like "Trinity." The Campbells, though, definitely believed that Jesus was God, and their understanding of the doctrine of God was at least roughly trinitarian, though they avoided using trinitarian language. Stone, however, flatly rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, and denied that Jesus was God. In the DOC and a small number of the COC and NACC churches, there is still a tendency to avoid references to the Trinity, although most churches in the latter two branches today accept the Trinity in substance if not in word.

On the basis that they are not mentioned in the New Testament, most of the COC reject the use of musical instruments in church services. Indeed, the issue of instrumental music is the main difference between the COC and the NACC. Again, it needs to be kept in mind that these are generalizations; varieties of opinions are to be found in all three major branches of the Restoration movement.

Also based on the silence of Scripture, many churches in the COC and especially the NACC object to certain denominational structures, such as mission agencies. One segment of the COC has separated itself because it insists on using one cup in communion services. A few take this line of reasoning to extremes, objecting to Sunday Schools, kitchens in church buildings, and the like.

Also in keeping with the principle of rejecting everything not in the Bible, the Restorationists historically have rejected the use of denominational names not found in the Bible (Lutheran, Baptist, Methodist, etc.) and argued that Christians should be known by "Bible names" only. Unfortunately, this stance did not always produce harmony within the movement. In the early years the followers of the Campbells and the followers of Stone disagreed over whether they should be known as Disciples or Christians. This minor controversy

eventually resulted in the compound name of "Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)." In any case, the Restorationists did not wish to found another denomination. When, then, it became evident that the DOC had become a denomination, the NACC broke away; and both the NACC and the COC refuse to consider themselves to be denominations.

The vast majority of members in all of the Restorationist churches reject the distinctive doctrines of Calvinism, especially predestination and the perseverance of the saints (popularly known as "eternal security"). While most in the DOC and the NACC appear to take a moderate view of these doctrines — neither accepting nor condemning — a strong segment (again, how strong in terms of numbers is difficult to gauge) of the COC actually regard the doctrine of eternal security as a damnable heresy implying that Christians have a license to sin.

Restoration churches tend to be amillennial (i.e., they believe that the Millennium of Revelation 20 refers to the history of the church between Christ's first and second comings), although one splinter group of the COC is premillennial (i.e., believing that the Millennium will be a period of Christ's rule on the earth after His second coming). The movement is almost, uniformly non-charismatic, and again in some circles of the COC the doctrine is actually anti-charismatic (as also in many Baptist churches).

Perhaps the best-known distinctive of the COC is its strong stance on the necessity of water baptism for salvation, a stance shared by at least some of the churches in the NACC. Most of the COC appear to teach that no one can be saved through faith in Christ who is not also baptized by immersion (pouring and sprinkling are considered absolutely unacceptable) upon confession of faith (infant baptism is also utterly condemned). This teaching, if held consistently, means that all Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and the majority of Protestants, even evangelicals, are not saved: this leaves only Baptist, Pentecostal, and independent evangelical churches, besides the Restoration churches, that are considered Christian. A significant number — perhaps a majority, though this is far from clear—of the COC go even further and teach that those who have been immersed as believers but do not regard baptism as essential for salvation are also not truly Christians. This rules out almost everybody except members

of the COC (and some of the NACC churches) as genuine Christians. Thus, although none of the COC (so far was we know) teach that only people baptized in the COC are saved, in practical terms their doctrine of baptism sometimes implies just that. CRI has received numerous letters from members of the COC, as well as testimonies of non-COC Christians, that

DOCTRINAL EVALUATION

The key to Restorationism is the teaching that only by abandoning every theological system and religious practice not found explicitly in the Bible can true Christianity be realized and Christian unity be achieved. As innocent and even "biblical" as this approach to Christian unity may sound, in our estimation it is seriously flawed in its understanding of Scripture. The Bible itself never suggests that Christians reject whatever is not found within its pages. Rather, it forbids adding anything to Scripture that would contradict Scripture (Matt. 15:6) or that would imply that Scripture was not itself an adequate guide to salvation and the Christian life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Theological doctrines which are not firmly rooted in Scripture should not, we agree, be accepted by the church; on this point we agree with the COC and the NACC. But this does not mean that Christians should not use extrabiblical terminology like "Trinity," "canon," or even "Bible," none of which contradict the Scriptures and each of which is in fact an expression of biblical truth. Furthermore, in the area of religious practices, whatever the Bible does not forbid (explicitly or implicitly) is not to be condemned or marked as less than Christian. In other words, the Restorationists' motto, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent," is actually violated when they speak against those things which Scripture neither mentions nor condemns explicitly or implicitly.

To some extent all of the COC admit in practice that not everything that is not mentioned in Scripture is to be rejected as part of the church's worship or religious practice. Thus, even the most conservative Churches of Christ will build church buildings, use microphones to amplify the preacher's voice, read the Bible in English translation, etc.—none of which can be found in the Bible. Because those things which are rejected are rejected upon the basis of silence, there is no objective basis for determining which things will be

rejected and which will not. Without an objective basis for making such determinations, disagreements and divisions are inevitable, as the two dozen or so splinter groups of the movement attest.

The depths of error into which this principle of Restorationism can lead is best illustrated by the fact that the early leaders of the movement were prepared to accept Barton Stone as one of them, despite the fact that he denied the Trinity and the deity of Christ. The rationale for not requiring their members to affirm the Trinity was that the word is not in the Bible, and that requiring adherence to the definition of the Trinity found in the creeds had produced divisions in Christianity. Actually, this is not true at all, except in the sense that the creeds did serve to divide orthodox Christians from heretics. Only if Arians or modalists are considered Christians would it make any sense to say that trinitarian creeds divided Christians. The precedent that was set by accepting Stone without any controversy over his doctrine of God is alarming. Indeed, the members of the Restorationist churches are a prime target of the Jehovah's Witnesses because of their weakness on the Trinity.

It is not only the principle of rejecting everything not found explicitly in the New Testament that is the cause of the many divisions in the movement. Also contributing to the problem is the emphasis, especially among the NACC and COC, on the absolute autonomy of the local church. This doctrine was actually inherited from the Baptists, which have also suffered numerous divisions in its history for the same reason. But it is the combination of this local autonomy with their "New Testament pattern" principle that has resulted in the fragmentation especially of the COC. Christian Research Institute does not condemn or even reject the Baptist and Restorationists belief in the autonomy of the local church. We simply point out that taken to an extreme, and combined with a disregard for creeds and confessions of faith, the potential for disunity is high.

Moreover, we are particularly concerned that there are some in the COC which regard any ecclesiastical structure not only as undesirable but even anti-Christian. It is becoming increasingly recognized today that the New Testament does not mandate any one system of church government. The three main types of church government are the episcopal (in which bishops preside over groups of churches and the

bishops meet together periodically to ensure unity), presbyterian (in which churches are semi-autonomous and are governed by elders), and congregational (in which the local church is completely autonomous and is governed by the entire body of members). It is arguable that elements of all three approaches can be found in the New Testament, and that the Bible never actually commands one system or condemns any of them. While we freely grant that the COC and the NACC have the right to adopt whatever system they choose, we are concerned about those extremists who

The anti-denominationalism of the Restoration movement is, among its more moderate representatives, perfectly understandable and acceptable. The more extreme variety, however, according to which denominations are not truly parts of the church, is actually divisive. The Restoration movement did not set out to become a denomination; but the historical fact is that it is now a full-fledged denomination along with a number of splinter movements which are denominations in reality if not in name. The word "denomination" simply refers to a group of churches that associate together under some common name. This means that not only are the Baptists, Lutherans, and Methodists denominations, but also the various "Church of God" groups, as well as the NACC and COC. It is not necessary for a group of churches to have a hierarchy to be a denomination; nor is it necessary for them to have an "unbiblical name" (e.g., the Church of God is a denomination, its "biblical name" notwithstanding). Any group of churches which has identifiable distinctive doctrines and practices is a denomination. Of course, the existence of so many divisions in the church is lamentable. But the solution is not to denounce all of the different groups and start a new one! The fact is that very few of the many Protestant denominations started out with the intent to form a new division. Rather, they were "just Christians" who felt it was important to take a stand on certain issues. Also, in most cases their "unbiblical names" were nicknames that became so ingrained that they were more or less stuck with them. This is certainly true of "Lutherans" (who are known simply as "Evangelicals" in German-speaking countries), "Methodists" (so-called for the Wesleys' methodical approach to religion), and even "Baptists" (so-called for obvious reasons).

The rejection of instrumental music in church is another matter in which moderates simply choose to adhere to the principle while extremists make it an essential doctrine. Opponents of the use of instrumental music in worship have noted that instruments were not used in worship until the late Middle Ages, and that so respected a Protestant theologian as John Calvin denounced the use of instrumental music in church. However, this historical argument gives no real weight to their position on instrumental music. A similar argument could be formulated in defense of infant baptism, for example, a practice which the Restorationists reject. As for the biblical argument, at best it is fallacious (since it is based merely on the silence of the New Testament) and at worst actually contrary to the New Testament. The apostle Paul specifically approved the use of "psalms" in church worship (1 Cor. 14:26; cf.Eph.5:19; Col. 3:16); and the word "psalm" in Greek generally means either instrumental music or singing accompanied by musical instruments. Admittedly, it can refer to non-instrumental singing as well, but there is no reason to restrict its meaning to exclude all use of instruments. It is also true that the word is used with reference to the Old Testament book of Psalms; but since those psalms were generally sung with instruments, this usage confirms the basic meaning of the word. Therefore, the utter rejection of instrumental music in worship is quite mistaken, even though so great a theologian as Calvin made this mistake.

The extreme position on water baptism held by many (if not most) of the COC is also unwarranted by Scripture. There are other Christian communions which regard baptism as more or less integral to the salvation process (Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, and Lutherans, for example), without holding that absolutely everyone who is unbaptized since Christ's resurrection or ascension is lost. And it is certainly wrong to hold, as some do in the COC, that even those immersed as believers are not Christians if they regarded their baptism as merely symbolic of their salvation, rather than an essential precondition of it. The Bible simply does not support such extreme positions.

As to whether or not the New Testament makes baptism essential for salvation, it is impossible in this statement to offer a complete exegesis of all the biblical passages relevant to this question. A place to begin

on this subject is our statement, “Baptism and Salvation." A more in depth treatment of the individual passages is found in Eternal Life and Water Baptism, by Eugene Bourland et. al. (Write to Waltham Evangelical Free Church, 21 Bruce Road, Waltham, MA 02154).

Finally, we do not consider the issues of charismatic gifts and eternal security to be matters essential to Christian faith. However, we strongly oppose the extreme condemnation of the charismatic movement and of the doctrine of eternal security by some in the COC. Those interested in pursuing these subjects further can contact CRI for additional references.

Christian Research Institute PERSPECTIVE

IS THE CHURCH OF CHRIST A CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

Some Christians believe that the Church of Christ promotes non biblical teachings and practices. Is the Church of Christ a Christian church?

The Church of Christ movement originally arose in the hopes of promoting unity among all Christians, but it eventually ended up separating itself from other Christian groups. Although the Church of Christ movement is basically Christian, it’s difficult not to categorize certain factions as aberrant because of some of their more extreme doctrines and practices.

Of all its beliefs, the Church of Christ movement is perhaps best known for its view that water baptism is absolutely essential for salvation. This is no doubt a “sub-biblical” view of baptism. Acts 10:44-48, for example, records that Gentiles were filled with the Holy Spirit (and therefore saved) before they were baptized. Water baptism is certainly a normal part of becoming a Christian and a member of the church; nevertheless, it’s still possible to be saved without having been baptized — especially when circumstances make baptism very difficult if not impossible (cf. Luke 23-39-43). Now, some of the more extreme factions within the Church of Christ movement go even further, and argue that anyone who views baptism differently from

them is not a Christian and is, therefore, lost — even if that person has been baptized!

There are also reports that heavy-handed tactics are employed by a number of more extremist groups within the Church of Christ. The Crossroads Movement, for example, which evolved from the Boston Church of Christ, is probably the most well-known of these authoritarian groups. This particular group goes so far as to say that other segments of the Church of Christ movement are non-Christian and will face eternal damnation. And so, while the Church of Christ movement is orthodox in many of the essentials of the Faith, it is plagued with a very loud segment whose views are so extreme that developing any type of Christian fellowship with them becomes almost an impossible task. But remember, don't throw the baby out with the bath water; there are many within the Church of Christ movement who are committed Christians.

On the church of Christ movement, that's the CRI Perspective. I'm Hank Hanegraaff.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

Available through CRI is Fact Sheet on the various groups and beliefs within the church of Christ (DC-600). We also have an article entitled, "The Boston Church of Christ" (DC-610). On the Authoritarian abuses within the Crossroads movement, we recommend the article "Dispelling the Myths! Psychological Consequences of Cultic Involvement" DC-950). On water baptism, we recommend our statement on Baptism and Salvation (DB-945). For a scholarly book on this subject, we recommend Baptism in the New Testament by G. R. Beasley-Murray (Eerdmans).

[Evidently Hank Hanegraaff has not read Beasly- Murray's book on Baptism. True, he is a Baptist, but his scholarly book is devoted to the theme that baptism is in order to obtain remission of sins so one can be saved. The best arguments for the essentiality of baptism for remission of sins are all strongly promoted and argued in the book. To be honest, if he is aware, Hank Hanegraaff should declare that G.R. Beasley-Murray has a "'sub-biblical' view of baptism." Jerry Moffitt]

Hendrik H. Hanegraaff Christian Research Institute P. O. Box 500

San Juan Capistrano, CA 92693-0500 Dear Sir,

A friend (R. Deene Milam of Pekin, IL) recently sent me a CRI article (DC-600) regarding the churches of Christ and the restoration movement. I know you join with me in sadness that religious division exists. Too, I'm sure it gives neither of us pleasure that we must disagree on doctrine and faith. However, you recall Paul said, "For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. 11:19).

Too, in the article, your Institute condemned as wrong and extreme and unbiblical various doctrines and practices cherished and esteemed vital by the churches of Christ. Of course we consider them such because we sincerely feel they are taught in God's word. Since you mail these articles out and CRI has taken a public stance on its opposition to the churches of Christ regarding these teachings, it is with all humility and conviction that I must challenge CRI to defend its article in public debate. In the churches of Christ we feel truth has nothing to fear, and the more who can hear BOTH sides of a controversy the better truth is served. We can correspond until we agree upon propositions, place or places, date, length, format, etc.

Let me assure you that I think we would both agree that the debaters should conduct themselves with Christian deportment, and that the occasion would be such that one and all could bring their Bibles and decide for themselves who is right and who is wrong. I trust you to accept that this challenge is not delivered to you with anger or a lack of love. It is a challenge given CRI only in the spirit of God's word which says, "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Some sample propositions which seem worthy of our discussion and which would point out our differences with the article are listed below. They are rough and can be adjusted. Too, we may not debate them all, but we can pick what we consider to be most vital. Others could be added. They are:

Please notice, these are challenges to CRI which are based on CRTs condemning article regarding the beliefs of the churches of Christ. If you can prove the charges contained in your article, you have nothing to fear by public discussion of the issues. If you will not defend your arguments and charges in a public discussion, we in the name of fairness and right call on CRI to withdraw the document and your one-sided debate and attack on the beliefs held by the churches of

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (1)

DANGER

What if you walked into a drag store and found that 95% of the products were deadly but the other 5% were necessary to life? Would you carefully inspect the labels? What if there were a book that described utterly necessary life- giving principles? Would you carefully read it? Yet that is the situation religiously. There are over 600 religious denominations. They all contradict each other. They all, I sincerely believe, have doctrines which contradict truth. The Bible says there is one church, and we would expect that one church to hold true doctrines. The apostle Paul said, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope of your calling" (Eph. 4:4). Ephesians 1:22,23 has, "And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22,23). There is one body and that body is the church, so there is one church. Only that one church was purchased by the blood of Christ. Paul said, 'Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

Friends, when it comes to doctrine, just anything won't do. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits ye shall know them"

(Mat. 7:15,16). He said just before that, “Enter ye in by the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many are they that enter in thereby, for narrow is the gate, and straitened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it” (Mat. 7:13,14). Notice a few other passages:

“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

“Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints, for there are certain men crept in privily, even they who were of old written of before hand unto this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 3,4).

“But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies, denying even the master that bought them, bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of. And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose sentence now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not” (2 Pet. 2:1-3).

So friends, when we listen to scripture we admit that not just anything will do. And it is your right, and it is necessary for you to ask questions about a church and the doctrines that church has. Are they clearly biblical? The true church, the one Jesus built, does not have as doctrines the traditions of men and teachings, maybe quite old, but clearly not found in the Bible. Paul said, “These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:14,15). So the church we read about in the Bible supports truth and not just any old teaching.

Your task is to search for truth and that church which supports it. You must be an independent thinker. The Holy Spirit said, “Now these

were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

To you God said, "Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15). And as someone who has no ill will toward you but only good will, I would encourage you to check your own heart Jesus said, "And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

Here we begin to take a closer look at that church of which we read in die Bible. We will ask questions on the church, on its doctrines, on its organization, its work and worship. We will see whether it is a denomination or not, and look at specific doctrines.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

First, let's ask, "What is the church?" The word for church in the original Greek is Ekklesia. It is a compound word composed of ek, "out of," and klesis, "a calling." Klesis is from kaleo which means "to call." So literally the church is the "called out." Greeks used the word of a body of citizens called to focus on affairs of state. In Acts 7:8 the word is used to refer to Israel. In Acts 19:32,41 the word is used to refer to a mob at Ephesus. In the New Testament, the church, the people of God, are called by the gospel, not in some mysterious way. Paul said, "whereunto he called you through our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 The. 2:14,15). So the church is the company of the redeemed. It certainly is not even locally a building. There is nothing holy about wood, bricks, or mortar.

Too, the church we read about in the Bible is not a denomination. Denominations were founded and built by men hundreds of years after Jesus said, "upon this rock I will build my church" (Mat. 16:18).

Rather than a denomination the church should be thought of as the house of God. The apostle Paul said to Timothy, "These things write I unto thee, hoping to come unto thee shortly; but if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the

house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Rather than a denomination the church can be thought of as the family of God, in the sense that God is the Father and Christians are brothers and sisters. Jesus prayed, "Our Father who art in heaven" (Mat. 6:9). And Peter wrote this way, "Honor all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Pet. 2:17).

The church, rather than a denomination, can be thought of as the kingdom of God. Jesus said of Peter's confession, "upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Mat. 16:18,19). Here Jesus uses "church" and "kingdom" interchangeably. They are one and the same.

Rather than a denomination, the church can be thought of as the bride of Christ. The apostle John wrote, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband" (Rev. 21:1,2). And Paul said, "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2).

And rather than a denomination, the church can be thought of as the body of Christ. Paul said, "Now ye are the body of Christ, and severally members thereof" (1 Cor. 12:27).

THE ORIGIN OF THE CHURCH

That is what the church is, but another question is, "What is its origin?"

First, it was in the mind of God from all eternity. The Holy Spirit said through Paul, "And to make all men see what is the dispensation of the mystery which for ages hath been hid in God who created all things; to the intent that now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he

purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:9-11). So the church was in the mind of God from all eternity (Eph. 3:9-11). It had a divine builder, as we noted. Jesus said, "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Mat. 16:18). Sometimes people speak of "my church" or "your church." That's all right if you are speaking of denominations and things man made. But the church is not made by man. Nor does it belong to man. It is made by God the Son. It is Christ's. In the Christian religion things made by man are in opposition to all God stands for. God said, "Except Jehovah build the house, They labor in vain that build it: except Jehovah keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain" (Psa. 127:1).

So when we talk about the origin of the church, if I may speak frankly, and more importantly, truthfully, let me say in all kindness, the church was not built by John the baptizer. Nor was it build by Peter or Paul. It was not built by Martin Luther, Joseph Smith, John Wesley, John Smith, or Alexander Campbell. The church of the Lord was built by Jesus Christ.

Friends, it's hard to think of all these things today without filtering it all through a denominational lens. Denominationalism came 1500 years after the Lord built His church, but most today can't think of Christianity without denominations. Really, can you conceive of being a Christian without ever joining a human denomination? Why not? You ought to be able to, just as did Peter, and Paul, and Luke, and John Mark. It bears contemplating, doesn't it? We will study on all these things.

IS THE CHURCH A

DENOMINATION? (2)

We are discussing the church Jesus built and denominationalism. The question is, "Is the church we read about in the Bible a denomination?" There are over 600 denominations in the world today. On doctrine they contradict each other. Yet we saw in the last chapter that the Bible says there is one church, and only that one church was purchased by the blood of Jesus. We saw that when it came to doctrine not just anything would do, and we saw traditions of men were condemned (Mat. 15:7-9,13). Further, we saw that in scripture we are warned that false doctrine would damn our souls (1 John 4:1; Jude 3-4; 2 John 9-11).

We have warned you that you must be an independent thinker and that you must study for yourselves (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15).

However, when we turn to the Bible, we have seen that the church are the people called out of the world by the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 The. 2:14). So scripturally, the church is not a church building, nor is it a denomination (Mat. 16:18). It can be understood scripturally as the house of God (1 Tim. 3:14, 15), the family of God or the brotherhood of disciples (1 Pet. 2:17), the kingdom of God (Mat. 16:13-19), the bride of Christ (Rev. 21:1,2), or the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:27).

In origin it was in the mind of God in all eternity (Eph. 3:9-11), and it was not founded by John the baptizer, Peter, Paul, Martin Luther, Joseph Smith, John Smith, or Alexander Campbell. It was founded by Jesus Christ (Mat. 16:18), on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:1- 4). Let's proceed further.

DENOMINATIONS DO NOT MAKE UP THE CHURCH

Denominations do not make up the church because they are not even mentioned in the Bible. The Jews came to Jesus to demand by what authority He did His work. They obviously were looking for something on which they could trap Him. So He asked them a question. Was the baptism of John the immerser from heaven or from men? They wouldn't answer, for if they said it was from heaven He would ask why they would not submit to it. If they said John's baptism was from men, they would get in trouble with the people for all the people thought John was a prophet. But still, in that context, Jesus got to the heart of many a religious matter with that one question. Again, He asked: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" (Mat. 21:25). Now when it comes to our subject, it is a good question to ask. Denominationalism — whence is it, from heaven or men? Now I do not wish to be offensive, but trust I speak out of love and concern for truth. From where are all these denominations, from heaven or from men? Is the Lutheran Church, the Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Baptist Church, the Mormon Church, the Episcopal Church and so forth from heaven or from men? Since none are found in the Bible, I would say they are from men and not from heaven. In fact, the Catholic Church is dated by many at around 600 A.D. and the Protestant churches did not even exist until around 1500. But since they are not in God's Word, they can have no claim as being from God, and they are truly from men. Notice a few warnings in scripture regarding adding to God's word:

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2).

Paul warned lengthily, "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel;

which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema. For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-10).

John warned us, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11). So we cannot add things to God's word such as denominationalism and not find ourselves condemned by God's word.

TRADITIONS OF MEN

Though it gives us no joy to say it, denominations can't be part of the church for denominationalism and all its additions are traditions of men. They are not from Christ. Jesus said, "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men... But he answered and said, every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:7-9, 13). Again, only to be frank and clear, not intending to be abusive or insulting, coarse or offensive, as good as people in the various 600 denominations are, they belong to organizations that are only traditions of men. The Lutheran church, the Anglican Church, Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh-Day Adventists are traditions of men in existence, doctrines, organization, and worship. The Lutheran church was started by Martin Luther. The Baptist Church was started by John Smith. The Methodists were started by John Wesley, and the Jehovah's Witnesses were started by Charles Taze Russell. On and on we could go. We make no charges against these men, and the condemnation toward these and all denominations is that they violate God's word by being additions. They are vain because they are

traditions of men and such traditions are condemned by Jesus Christ. With Paul I say, "So then am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). I hope not, for in my heart I know I mean well. I love you, I love peace, but I sincerely feel I must love truth more. You too should love truth most of all, more than family, more than a denomination, more than your own life (Luke 14:26-33; Mark 8:34,35).

DIVISION IS CONDEMNED

Denominationalism cannot be part of the church Christ built, for denominations are divisive. To denominate means to divide, and a sect is something sectioned off. Jesus condemned such division. He prayed, "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:21). Paul pleaded, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10).

In one sense we don't have to inspect their peculiar doctrines. Denominations are already wrong by their mere existence. If you know that the foundation of something is rotten, you don't need to inspect everything in the structure.

Denominations cannot be part of the church Christ built for they sponsor, bind, and ordain human creeds, catechisms, manuals, and disciplines. These things divide. There is the Catholic Catechism, the Baptist Manual, the Methodist Discipline, the Book of Mormon, Science and Health and the Key to the Scriptures, and on and on it goes. We do not delight to condemn such, yet is not the apostle Paul clear when he says, "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). So scripture will make us complete. It will furnish us completely. It will perfect us. I would not say anything about these manuals if they did not harm and divide, and if they were needed. But they are not needed, and all their traditions of men are condemned by the Lord.

So friend, I do not want to hurt anyone. But may the Holy Spirit have the last word through Jude: "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (3)

Is the church written about in the Bible a denomination? What teachings did it hold? How was it organized? How did it worship? What was its work? Should we use the Bible as a pattern and return to that ancient church today, in organization in doctrine, in work and worship? Can we have first-century Christianity in the twentieth century? Can we have pure, undefiled, new Testament Christianity without addition, without subtraction? Can one be a member of the church without ever joining a human denomination? Are our doctrines or teachings the traditions of men or are they the oracles of God? Are the doctrines we hold of heaven or of men? Those are the type of things we will be studying. So far we have seen that we are to beware of false teachers and false prophets. We have seen that church means "called out people." The church is called "the kingdom of God," "the house of God," "the family of God," "the bride of Christ," and "the body of Christ." Its origin was in the mind of God from all eternity, and its builder was Christ (Mat. 16:18). Let's continue on.

CAN HUMAN DENOMINATIONS

COMPOSE THAT CHURCH?

The honest question comes up whether human denominations make up and compose that church. That's the way most denominationalists look at it, that many of the various denominations make up that one church read about in the Bible. We are going to say no, that can't be the case, not just because they have other beliefs and teachings than those found in the Bible, but for other reasons.

THEY ARE NOT MENTIONED IN THE BIBLE

First, they can't be part of that first church because they are not mentioned in the Bible. Notice that when the priests and elders questioned the authority of Jesus, He asked this question: 'The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" (Mat 21:25). The implication is that things from heaven have authority from God and things of men don't. Denominations are from men. They are traditions of men. Paul wrote, 'Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ: for in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:8,9).

Now I don't want to offend you, and I ask that you trust that I am motivated out of love. I speak without prejudice or ill-will, but I think you would want me to speak clearly and frankly. So let's be clear. Ask yourself; is the Catholic Church from heaven or from men? Is the Lutheran Church from heaven or from men? Is the Baptist Church from heaven or from men? Is the Mormon, the Methodist, the Episcopal, from heaven or from men? If they, and the doctrines which make them distinctive, are from heaven, why are not they all mentioned in the Bible? If they are not in God's declarations where else could they be from but from men? Remember Jesus' question, "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" (Mat 21:25).

WE CAN'T ADD

DENOMINATIONALISM TO GOD'S TRUTH

Moses said, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the

commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). It is certainly God's will not to add to His word. Yet I charge, without malice, from grief, that the denominational world does that very thing for a living. And members in denominational churches are so weak in Bible knowledge they don't understand it, if they are aware of it. I charge you to be an independent thinker. Check the scriptures to see if what I say is so. Don't believe everything I say without checking God's word. I could be a false teacher. You can only trust God's word. Again Luke wrote of the Beroeans: "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of men, examining the scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11).

And recall Paul was crushing and severe in his remarks regarding adding to the gospel. He said, "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:6-9). False doctrine, adding doctrines in addition to God's word, traditions of men, a different gospel, are serious business. It brings down a curse. Have you really checked the doctrines of your church to see if they are really in God's word?

To show how serious this all is John, the apostle of love wrote, "whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11).

TRADITIONS OF MEN

Denominations can't be part of the church Christ built for denominations are the traditions of men. They are not of Christ, through the apostles, through their writing in the Bible. To see again

that this is important, notice what Jesus said: "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 215:7-9). Then in the context of such traditions He said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit" (Mat. 15:13,14). So we say, though it gives us no pleasure, that denominationalism is traditions of men. It is not from heaven. It is not in the Bible. It is 1500 years too late to be in God's word. The whole concept, as Jesus said, should be "rooted up." And those who defend denominationalism are as Jesus said, "blind guides." Why not be plain Christians in the one church Jesus built, no more, no less? If they did it in the first century you can do it today. You can be neither Catholic, Protestant, or Jew. You can refuse to be "this" or "that" type of Christian. You can use the Bible as your guide and blueprint and simply be a plain Christian. So again, just to be utterly clear, with love for souls and for truth, with no anger or malice, let me say, the Lutheran Church is traditions of men. The Catholic Church is traditions of men. The Baptist Church is traditions of men, as are the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Methodists, the Mormons, the Latter-Day Saints and all other cults and denominations. They do not date back to the beginning.

DIVISION IS CONDEMNED

These various denominations cannot be part of the church Jesus built for by their very existence they are divisive. The night Jesus was betrayed He prayed: "that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:21). To denominate is to divide. Denominationalism flies in the face of Jesus' prayer. Paul pleaded, "Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). If to denominate is to divide, how can denominationalism be good? It contradicts the Bible, God's word. A sect is something sectioned off. How can sectarianism

be good? It proceeds to ignore Jesus' prayer and disobey the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul.

In one sense you don't even have to inspect the peculiar doctrines in each sect. Sects are wrong by their mere existence. If you know the foundation is rotten, you don't need to inspect the wiring before you pull the house down.

HUMAN CREEDS AND CATECHISMS

Denominations can't be part of the church Jesus built because they invent, foster, and bind human creeds and manuals and catechisms. Paul said scripture would make us complete and completely furnish us unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Yet denominations offer, recite, and bind catechisms, manuals, creeds, and disciplines. There is the Lutheran Catechism, the Catholic Catechism, the Baptist Manual, the Methodist Discipline, the book of Mormon, Studies in the Scriptures, Science and Health with the Key to Scriptures, and on it goes, as if the Bible is insufficient. Paul said in the first century, "Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:26, 27). Peter said, "seeing that his divine power hath granted unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). And Jude said all of that need never be given again: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). With love, all I can say is "Please think about all this."

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (4)

DO NOT THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

HAVE A HISTORICAL BEGINNING?

It is true that around 1832 a group who wanted to by-pass the denominationalism which arose in the Protestant Reformation of the 1500's united movements led by Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone. These movements wanted to use the Bible as a guide and go back to the Christianity of the first century. Out of that movement, the churches of Christ of America came to be. Of course it is often overlooked that there were other similar movements in other countries.

Too, it is our conviction that the church Jesus built always existed, though not recorded much in church history. Still, there is the implication that if the Lord's church has a historical beginning in a country it would be a denomination. Let's consider that, using the parable of the sower in Luke chapter eight. A sower went out to sow seed and some fell on the wayside, some on stoney ground, some amidst thorns and thistles, and some fell in the good ground and brought forth fruit. Now Jesus said this was a parable of the kingdom or church. It is how the church comes into being, a member at a time. However, Jesus said in verse eleven that the "seed" in the parable is the word of God. So the seed of the kingdom is the word of God. When Paul took that word into Europe and planted it in the hearts of men, did it produce a Paulite denomination? If John Mark took it into Alexandria in Egypt did it make a Markan sect? Say Thomas carried the seed of die kingdom into Coromandel, East Indies. Would that make a Thomasite denomination? The answer of course is "No." A seed produces after its kind. And today if men take the same seed, as did Thomas and Alexander Campbell, and plant it in America, would it make a Campbellite denomination or a Church of Christ sect? It would not, not if they just planted the seed of the kingdom, the word of God. Now if they mixed the word of God with human creeds, human names, traditions of men, man-made titles, human organizations, and worship, truly, they could make a human, man-made denomination.

Jesus said, "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). And in that same context He said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:13).

We should only follow the word, for even in the Old Testament God said through Moses: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2).

And in the New Testament the Holy Spirit said through John the apostle, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of

Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teachings the same hath both the Father and the son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11).

Now I ask you, might it be possible to not be a member of a denomination? We all have to choose between denominationalism and pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity, without addition, without subtraction. We need to choose between creeds and doctrines of men, human catechisms, manuals and on the other hand scriptures.

We can stand today for being a Christian only, without joining a human denomination. The Bible is the perfect blueprint. Paul said it as clear as could be, "Every scripture is God breathed and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

Since the Protestant Reformation of the 1500's, denominationalism is so common that some cannot conceive of Christianity without it. God said, "if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Now you are going to have to trust that I have no ill will, and that I have concern for truth and love of souls in my heart. For all that, I want to be plain. If there were something like a "Church of Christ denomination," I would plead that you get out of it and leave it behind. In like manner I counsel you, out of love, to take a journey back to the Bible. Pass over the denominations of today such as the Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian Church, the Methodist, Catholic, Mormon, Baptist, and Anglican. Go all the way back to the church you read about in the Bible. The organization of the church is mentioned in the Bible. The work and worship of the church is mentioned in the Bible. Scriptural names for the church are in scriptures. Names people of God are called are in the word of God. Paul said, as we have seen, that scripture will make us "complete," and it will completely furnish us unto "every" good work. There is no true doctrine unless it is found in the word of God. So, what is wrong about undenominational Christianity? Paul said, "Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. 27 For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole

counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). They had the whole counsel of God in the first century. They were just plain Christians in the church Jesus built. And dear reader, I ask you, What is wrong with being neither Catholic, Protestant, or Jew? Is it evil of me to exhort you to be a plain Christian without ties to that which is human? Paul asked the Galatians and I ask you this day, "So then am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?"

DIVISIONS

Another thing said about the churches of Christ is that they have had various divisions, over whether you can use instrumental music in worship, whether the Lord's church can support an orphan home, even over whether you should use one cup or many in the communion. Well, it is true that there have been some splits in fellowship. Most human denominations, even, have had their splits. But not every difference is a division. Too, the early church mentioned in the Bible suffered schism and splits. This is bound to occur when you have a segment in the Lord's church which wants chapter and verse for all it does. Controversy makes us study every nook and comer of scripture to see what is right and what is wrong.

Paul said, "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be manifest among you" (1 Cor. 11:18, 19). He also said, we "might learn not to go beyond the things which are written" (1 Cor. 4:6).

I hate division, and it is always sad to see it. I am, however, glad our brethren seek to prove, even by debate, what's right and what is wrong. It is not meanness of spirit. It is called "conviction."

CONCLUSION

On the night He was betrayed Jesus prayed something very close to His heart. He prayed, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:20, 21). So Jesus prayed for unity. But it was a oneness among believers which was the type oneness between the Father and the Son. At the

same time believers are one together, they are to be one with the Father and the Son. How does it happen? Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my words: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's who sent me" (John 14:23-24). So God and Jesus make their abode in the Christian through the Christian's keeping of the words of Christ. In such a way believers are united with one another. That is the only way for the unity to occur for which Jesus prayed. It must be a unity in truth. It is not a unity in diversity of doctrine, various doctrines in man-made churches which contradict each other. It is a unity in truth.

So love unity, but only unity in truth. Love peace, but love truth more.

IS BAPTISM FOR REMISSION OF SINS

The churches of Christ are often criticized for believing that water baptism is for the remission of sins. We believe such criticism comes from an allegiance not to the New Testament but to doctrines which sprang from the Protestant Reformation. Such doctrines were not from the New Testament but were gotten up by a reaction to the work salvation of the Catholic Church in the 1500's. Let's notice the context of Acts 2:38.

ACTS 2:38 IN CONTEXT

After the apostles receive the baptism of the Spirit, Peter preaches the first gospel sermon. He shows from scripture that Jesus is the Christ. He says, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom ye crucified. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do? And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:36-38). So first He tells them Jesus is Lord and Christ (v. 36). Then they ask what they should do (v. 37). Then He tells them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, or "unto the remission of sins" (v. 38). So clear! Yet let's look closer at what it means.

EIS — IN ORDER TO OBTAIN

When we read, "Be baptized for the remission of sins" we all know what it means, but some still deny it Notice how the versions make it clear:

"Repent, and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins" (New American Standard Version).

"Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins will be forgiven" (Beck).

"Change your hearts and each one of you must be immersed by the authority of Jesus the Messiah, so that your sins may be forgiven" (Simple English Bible).

"Repent and be baptized, each of you on the name of Jesus Christ to the forgiveness of sins" (A Literal Translation, Jay P. Green).

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven" (NRSV).

"You must repent and every one of you must be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, so that you may have your sins forgiven" (Philip's Translation).

The Greek text is very clear. That baptism was for the remission of sins was the view for 1500 years. Only after Protestants reacted against the work salvation of the Catholics did another idea arise. The concept was that we could do nothing to save ourselves, so therefore we could not be baptized for the remission of sins. Yet the Bible says we must be baptized for remission of sins, and it is clear in saying it. Now I have no reason to do this other than love, but I must tell you in all sincerity how vital I believe this is. I humbly believe that if you were baptized for some other reason, you did not get remission of sins. If you were not baptized for remission of sins, you were baptized for the wrong reason. You cannot be baptized for the wrong reason and get the right result, especially if you are obeying a false doctrine. If I was not baptized for the remission of sins, I would feel I was still in my sins, according to scripture. So, when the churches of Christ draw

the line of salvation on Acts 2:38, let me assure you it is not bigotry. It is concern for the lost and conviction.

SHOULD DOCTRINAL MATTERS DIVIDE?

Are doctrinal matters important? Well, God said, "ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). Now if you or I follow the teachings of men, we will make or be part of a denomination. But Paul said, "all scripture is God-breathed, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2Tim. 3:16,17). So if it's in scripture, it will make one complete. If it's not in scripture, it is adding to God's word, an act severely censured in God's word. Again, notice the language of the apostle John. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:8,9). So to add things contrary to God's word and to practice things not authorized by God's word is adding to God's word. It is preaching another gospel, and it puts one under a curse according to the apostle Paul.

FROM HEAVEN OR FROM MEN

There is a good question Jesus once asked and it is significant to our studies: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" (Mat. 21:25). Similar to it the apostle Paul once said, "Do I speak these things after the manner of men? or saith not the law also the same?" (1 Cor 9:8). Now these questions imply that what is from heaven ought to be held and believed, and what is from men ought not so to be. Now in light of our study let me ask you: "Baptism for the remission of sins. Is it from heaven or from men?" We have seen it is from heaven, for it is God's word. But more.

A CALL TO RETURN TO

NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

In the churches of Christ we have been charged with wanting to return to New Testament Christianity. This is a fair and true statement. Jesus said the seed of the kingdom is the word of God. So how to make the kingdom or produce it is in the word of God. Moses was told, "See saith he that thou make all things according to the pattern that was showed thee in the mount" (Heb. 8:5). All this contains a principle for all religion. We see in the New Testament a pattern, a blueprint. Scripture only is trustworthy for it came by the Holy Spirit who taught the apostles all things and guided them into all truth (John 14:26; John 16:13). The words they wrote were the commandment of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37). The words were called the word of God (1 The. 2:13). They are trustworthy as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

To not follow the Bible as a pattern is to follow teachings and traditions of men for our beliefs and practices. Such traditions add to God's word (Deut. 12:32), and are condemned by Christ. Jesus said, "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, this people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines, the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). Paul said, "Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). And again John said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the father and the son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11).

So the question for you is, "Who do you want to follow, God or men? Do you want your doctrine from heaven or from men? Do you want your religion from God or after the manner of men? Do you want traditions of men or the doctrine of Christ?"

The truth is, no man has the right to come up with human doctrines, beliefs, or practices. It is false teaching if you go beyond the doctrine of Christ. I tell you, it will give you joy to return to the simple beliefs and practices of the New Testament. It is a grand challenge to try to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. Yet why not try to call Bible things by Bible names? Why not

attempt with all your might to return to pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity, without addition, without subtraction?

True, if you take such a stance you will be out of step with the denominational world. You will be sometimes persecuted for it. Yet Jesus warned, “Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! For in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). Well, what I say, I say in the spirit of love. Please think about it.

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (6)

RETURN TO NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

Another statement that is made is this, “Basic to ‘Restoration Theology’ is the call to return to New Testament Christianity, beliefs, and practices of the first century church in the New Testament.”

First, in the churches of Christ we are not committed to any restoration theology. When I get up a lesson or sermon I use no book of "Restoration Theology," no human creeds, no man-made catechisms, no church manual. All we need for our authority in religion is the Bible. James said, "Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:21). Paul said, "If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). He said, "And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, even the word of God, ye accepted it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe" (1 The. 2:13). So the Bible ought to be our authority in religion. It is the commandment of the Lord. It is the word of God which works in us. Jude said, "Beloved, while I was giving all diligence to write unto you of our common salvation, I was constrained to write unto you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). In the first century there was a body of faith called "the faith," and it was "once for all" delivered. It is our guide in religion. We are not to change it, take from it, add to it, or just simply ignore it. God said through Moses, "ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2).

It seems that in our day and our time there is an unknowing arrogance that desires a do-it-your-own-self kit for religion. People make things up and leave things out and describe God in just any old way. They go off on their own religiously, headstrong, self-willed, inventive, and creative. That which they come up with they call traditions, and they follow them even when they contradict the word of God. And they leave things of His will out, even though He warns not to do so.

You need not be that way. The apostle Paul said, "All scripture is God-breathed, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work"

(2 Tim. 3:16,17). So, all we need is scripture. And the more one is committed to a human denomination the more one will have difficulty committing to that which is strictly divine and not human.

Yet, why take from mere men when you can have your doctrines from heaven (Mat 21:25)? Why speak after the manner of men when you can speak according to the law of God (1 Cor. 9:8)? Why join a denomination when you can have pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity? Why have the precepts of men when you can follow the oracles of God (Mat. 15:7-9; 1 Pet. 4:11)? Why would we ever want creeds, manuals, disciplines when we can have the pure apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42)? The blueprint is right in the Bible. There we have the divine pattern, and by following the Bible we find the best way to guard against false teaching.

NOT SPECIFICALLY FOUND IN THE BIBLE

Against all this it is stated, "the Churches of Christ believe only by rejecting everything not specifically found in the New Testament would true Christianity be achieved, it was reasoned." Well, such a statement is close, but it is not exactly true. It does not represent us or the New Testament accurately. We sincerely believe the Bible teaches we should reject everything for which there is no authority in the New Testament.

If God tells you what to do but does not specify how to do it, the how is left up to us. God specified singing, but He did not specify how to sing. So the how is left up to us. We can use four-part harmony, use a song book, stand or sit, have our eyes open or shut. Since the how is not specified, we have authority to do it as seems best to us. We can have four-part harmony, a song leader, and a microphone, none of which is specifically mentioned in the scriptures. Had God told us how to sing as well as that we should sing, we would follow His how. But since God leaves the how up to us, authority for how we do it is found in the command to sing in Ephesians 5:19.

There is nothing specifically in the Bible about a radio, but we do not reject a radio program. We try to teach with a radio program. Authority for it is found in the command to teach: "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to

observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat 28:18-20).

This passage doesn't say how to teach, so the method is left up to us. We can use books, tracts, radio, television, magazines, or computers. We have authority for our methods when a command is given and the method is not specified.

To use a method not specifically mentioned in the Bible is far different than adding new doctrines which are not mentioned in the-Bible. The doctrines and teachings God wants us to have are all specified in the word of God. To bring forth a new one is to add to God's word (Duet. 4:2; Gal. 1:6- 9). God did not say, "Have doctrine," and then leave the doctrine up to us. He specified the doctrines. To specify is to exclude all else. So we cannot add new doctrines such as "faith only," or "eternal security." We cannot invent new beliefs such as purgatory and the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary. We cannot ordain new practices and offices such as popes, and priests, and holy water, and lamps, and reciting creeds, burning incense, and the sign of the cross. We must stay with the doctrine of Christ as written down by the holy apostles and prophets. The apostle John said, "whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11).

So the problem with the Bible being our only guide in religion is that such a position leads to a condemnation of traditions of men and a condemnation of denominational beliefs and practice.

THE BIBLE PATTERN FOR SALVATION

First, we must hear the gospel. Paul said, "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Then one must believe the good news about Jesus Christ. The apostle John said, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written that ye may

believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name" (John 20:30,31). Next, to be saved, one must repent of his sins. That means he changes his mind about his sins, not to do them any more. Peter said, "Repent ye therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19). And next, one must make the good confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. There are no secret disciples. Jesus said, "Every one therefore who shall confess me before men, him will I also confess before my Father who is in heaven" (Mat. 10:32). It is called the "good confession" (1 Tim. 6:12). Finally, one must be baptized to be saved, according to God's pattern. Jesus said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Well, we can all choose. Do we want to follow things according to the teaching of men or according to the teaching of God? Jesus might say, "He that hath ears, let him hear" (Mat. 13:9).

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (7)

SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURE

In a manuscript done by Christian Research Institute it is said about the churches of Christ: "Most churches of Christ, due to the silence of scripture object to denominational structures." Basically that is a true statement, though what we mean by silence is different. By silence they mean something not mentioned. By the silence of scriptures, we mean silence in the sense that something is not authorized by scripture. When God specifies in a command we are silent in the sense that we don't add to it.

Again, for example, see the structure of the local church. If God told the local church to be organized but did not specify how, we could organize any which way we saw fit and thought best. But when God specifies how to organize or what that organization should be, that would exclude all additions.

Now think what needs to occur if mother wants to teach the daughter how to compose mother's beef stew. She lists all the ingredients: cubed beef, onions, carrots, and potatoes. But when the daughter is ready to make mother's beef stew, in goes curry, pork, mutton, clams, eggs, raisins, bialy-stoker, kraut, peanut butter, marmalade, whipped cream, coffee, donuts, tapioca, cheese, eggnog, bubble gum, horse-radish, liver, lobster, frog legs, chop suey, possum.

The mother says to the daughter, "That's not mother's beef stew!" The daughter replies, "Just because you were silent on possum didn't mean I could not add it. And you didn't say not to add frog legs. Mother, you think you and your little group of cooks are the only ones who can make beef stew. And isn't it nice there are so many kinds of beef stew, so every one can pick the beef stew of his choice. Mother, you can have frog leg beef stew, mutton beef stew, clam beef stew, and possum beef stew. If you think you can only use beef in beef stew just because the recipe is silent on possum, you are radical and I'm going to tell people to stay away from you and your group of cooks."

Mother might reply: "When I specified what was in the recipe, it excluded all else. When you add another meat to the kind of meat I specified you have an addition and not an aid. You made your own recipe; you didn't follow mine. If you want mother's beef stew, use mother's recipe."

To make application: when God specifies what organization the church is to have that excludes all organizations with which we can come up. When you add another organization to God's organization you have an addition to God's word and not an aid to God's word. Though it gives us no pleasure to say it, we sincerely believe denominations make their own organization and do not follow the organization God gave in the Bible. If you want to be God's church you should follow God's organization.

GOD'S ORGANIZATION

Did God give an organization? Yes, it is right there in the New Testament. We read, "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). The offices of the church are the bishops and deacons. The qualifications of elders and deacons are found in 1 Tim. 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5- 16.

Now you have to trust that we love you. Still we want to be clear for truth's sake. The New Testament is as silent as the tombs of Egypt about the following: pastorate, a call, holy orders, clergy, special priest-hood, monkery, cardinalship, primacy, rector, archbishop, curate, vicar, pope, synod, conference, presidency, parish, monastery, college, episcopate, deanery, diocese, canonry, or possumate.

You can add all that and claim you are the church Jesus built but the truth is that such a monstrosity is not pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity, without addition, without subtraction. All one needs to do is look at the recipe in the Bible. Instead of being God's organization for the church it is condemned in the Bible as being the traditions of men (Mat. 15:7-9; Col. 2:8). So, yes, most churches of Christ, due to the silence of the scriptures, object to denominational structures. But there are other criticisms of the churches of Christ.

BINDING AND LOOSING

In the manuscript we are reviewing it is said, "Some churches of Christ object to plural cups, Sunday Schools, and kitchens in the church." Yes, when we attempt to go back to the Bible for our faith and practice there are two dangers. One is "loosing where God did not

loose." For example, in Matthew 19:9 God clearly says there is only one reason for a divorce and a remarriage — adultery. However, in the religious world, some loose where God did not loose and say any reason is acceptable for a divorce and a remarriage, and in doing so they contradict Christ and cause souls to be lost. Others, though often in sincerity, bind where God did not bind. They say you can only use one cup in the Lord Supper. However, we point out to them that "cup" does not always mean vessel. True, often when "cup" is used by metonomy, a figure of speech, it stands for the contents.

In the early church some wanted to bind circumcision for salvation. Paul said, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision; but faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6). And Paul said, "to whom we gave place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). True Christianity will try with all its effort not to loose where God has not loosed or to bind where God has not bound.

However, division over such things means someone has stood firm in truth and would not bind or loose where scripture would not allow. Or division often means some met a test from God. Paul said, "For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. 11:18,19).

REJECTING DENOMINATIONAL NAMES

Then it is said of the churches of Christ: "Rejecting things not in the Bible, they reject denominational names such as Baptist, Lutheran, Catholic, and Methodist."

Again, if making stew, mother just says, "make a stew," one could make lamb, chicken, vegetable and so forth. But if mother said "beef' stew, that would exclude other types of meat. She specified.

Suppose Barbara and I agree to marry, and I offer her the name of Mrs. Moffitt. Then I notice in the phone book and on stationery she calls herself Mrs. Womack, Jones, Smith, Roberts, Jackson, Mundun, or Merto. How would I feel and what would strangers think? She would have as much authority for that as one who claims to follow the

Christian religion would have to call himself Baptist, Catholic, Methodist or some other human name. Nowhere in God's word do we find: Amish, Calvinist, Christadelphian, Christian Scientist, Dunker, Gideon, Unitarian, Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, Rosicrucian, Jacobite, Shaker, Quaker, Catholic, Lutheran, or Presbyterian.

Why not call Bible things by Bible names? The Bible says to glory in the name Christian (1 Pet. 4:16). It calls Christians disciples (Acts 11:26), which word means "pupils." It calls all Christians "saints" (Phil. 1:1), which means they are set apart. Christians are set apart from the world for God's use. Christians are called brethren (1 Pet. 1:22). We do not object to any scriptural name. However, when God specifies, He excludes. There is a nomenclature of the Holy Spirit. Wouldn't God's terms be better than man's terms? Are we not warned against human traditions (Mat. 15:7-9). If we speak, are we not to speak as the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11)?

No, to follow human traditions is condemned. To digress and add to God's word is too risky. Why condemn a people for trying to stay within the confines of God's word and the teaching of Christ The apostle John said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into you house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11).

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (8)

We are reviewing an article by Christian Research Institute critical of the churches of Christ, particularly its claim to undenominational Christianity. In this study we have explored such topics as whether it is possible to have in our day pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity, without addition, without subtraction. Let's explore further by viewing what else Christian Research Institute claims about the churches of Christ.

REFUSING THE NAME "DENOMINATION"

The article says, "The churches of Christ refuses to call itself a denomination." Well, that's true. Though Christianity existed 1500 years before denominationalism, some can't view Christianity without denominations. Though we do not intend it, it irks some that we condemn denominationalism and refuse to be one. The easiest way to relieve their anxiety is for us to give up and say we're a denomination, but we won't do it. If we did, it would do nothing else but make us both wrong. If one restores a Model T., why act like it's a modem Volkswagon? Remember Luke 8:11 says, "The seed is the word of God." The seed of the kingdom or church is the word of God. I read they found wheat seed in King Tut's tomb almost 2,000 years old. When they planted it, it still produced wheat. Lotus seed in China over 2,000 years old still produced the lotus plant. And the seed of the kingdom, around 2,000 years old, will still produce one thing: the church Jesus built, plain Christians, without denominationalism which came 1500 years later. Now we ask, how could anyone rather have denominationalism than plain Christianity?

REJECTING CALVINISM

Some of this material has been covered previously, but new items are added and it is all said with a new thrust.

The manuscript from CRI continues: "Most Restoration Churches reject Calvinism. Some of the churches of Christ regard the doctrine of eternal security as a damnable heresy."

Well, again, all that's a true statement. Calvinism is about 1500 years too late. Calvin was a French theologian and reformer of the Catholic church. He was born in 1509 and died in 1564. There was a

falling away from pure, simple Christianity until around 600 A.D. some pinpoint the birth of the Catholic Church. I do not intend to be crass or crude, and I take no pleasure in saying it, but I sincerely believe the Catholic Church is the first apostate church.

There were good Catholics who desired to reform it. They did not think of restoring the original church, only of trying to clean up the doctrine and morals of the Catholic Church. Luther was only one of them. His discomfort was in large part with the work salvation of the Catholic Church. I sincerely believe that he and the other reformers went too far to the opposite extreme and taught one can do nothing to save himself. Calvin systematized reformed doctrine and it was called "Calvinism." It is usually viewed under the word TULIP. Each letter in TULIP stands for one of the five points of Calvinism. "T" stands for Total Hereditary Depravity. "U" stands for Unconditional Election. "L" symbolizes the doctrine of Limited Atonement. "I" is the representation for Irresistible Grace, and "P" stands for the doctrine of Perseverance. Taken together, the doctrine of Calvinism teaches man can do nothing to save himself. God does it all without human consent or effort. All that remains now is for us to Biblically refute the doctrine. Let's begin.

TOTAL HEREDITARY DEPRAVITY

This doctrine teaches that when a child is born and grows up, it is born so totally depraved that it can never do one thing to save itself. Depravity is hereditary; there is no innocence in the child, and only God without any effort of the person will save one. Now just listen to a few verses which refute and condemn such a notion:

Jesus said, "Verily I say unto you, except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 18:3). If children are born totally hereditarily depraved, then why do we need to become like them to enter heaven? And again Jesus said, "Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for to such belongeth the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 19:14). And Solomon said, "God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions" (Ecc. 7:29). So it is easy to see the doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity is contrary to the Bible.

UNCONDITIONAL ELECTION

On this Calvinism teaches that being elect to heaven is unconditional, regardless of any effort on the part of any individual. However, again notice a few scriptures. Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father who is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21). Salvation is not based on unconditional election but on effort, works, and obedience. Notice Paul said, "Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:8,9). Of God Paul said, "Who will render to every man according to his works: to them that by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and incorruption, eternal life" (Rom. 2:6,7). See also Romans 6:17, 18; 1 Peter 1:22; James 2:19-26; and Philippians 2; 12. Yes, God wants us to play our part. We must seek Him by our own efforts (Mat. 7:7-11; Acts 17:27). Unconditional elections denies the human effort part of salvation and so is a most damnable doctrine.

LIMITED ATONEMENT

Well, after Calvinism tries to teach that the saved are unconditionally elected, it would seem silly to teach Christ died for any that God did not unconditionally save. So Calvinism taught Limited Atonement, that Christ only died for those God arbitrarily chose to go to heaven. The only problem with such a doctrine is that it clearly contradicts scripture. The apostle Paul said, "For to this end we labor and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe" (1 Tim. 4:10).

God is the Saviour of all, only some of their own free will reject that salvation. Peter tells the whole story: "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness; but is longsuffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). The Holy Spirit said, "And the Spirit and the bride say, come. And he that heareth, let him say, come. And he that is athirst, let him come: he that will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). So the doctrine of Limited Atonement is a false doctrine.

IRRESISTIBLE GRACE

Well, if God does it all, and no human effort can be allowed in Calvinism, then God would have to force His grace on the elect in an irresistible manner. So Calvinism teaches. However, Luke shows grace is not irresistible. He records, "And Paul and Barnabas spake out boldly, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). Notice they thrust words of life away and in so doing judged themselves unworthy of eternal life. They refused the grace of God so how could it be irresistible? And Jesus said, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets and stoneth them that are sent unto her! how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" (Mat. 23:37). So again, grace can be refused, even when it is the will of God and Christ to extend that grace. They could be gathered to Christ but there was one supreme problem: They would not. It was a matter of free will and personal choice. Again, Calvinism contradicts the Bible.

PERSEVERANCE

Lastly Calvinism teaches the false doctrine of Perseverance of the saints, that once God saves one, He will utterly not allow them to be lost. Yet once again notice the scriptures. Paul said, "Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain. And every man that striveth in the games exerciseth self-control in all things. Now they do it to receive a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (1 Cor. 9:24-27). So even Paul thought he could fall. And again Paul said, "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end; while it is said, today if ye shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation" (Heb. 3:12-15).

Yes, I'm grateful and feel blessed to reject Calvinism, it is contrary to scripture, false doctrine, and full of the traditions of men. I feel I would cheapen the death of Christ to defend that which is human, when He died to bring us the divine.

The dangers of Calvinism, besides teaching error and contradicting scripture, are two-fold. First, saying God must use His Spirit in a direct operation of grace strikes cruelly at scripture's teaching on free will, personal choice, and human responsibility. It tells us "man can't! So, God will!" How many wait for God to do it until they are ultimately lost.

Second, Calvinism attacks the all-sufficiency of scripture. God said it would make us complete and furnish us completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Calvinism says no, scripture won't make you complete. You need a mysterious work of the Spirit to do it for you.

However, the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). It contains teaching, reproof, correction, and instruction which will make us complete. Scripture has good news, promises, warnings, admonitions, and motives as high as heaven and deep as hell. It has all an honest and good heart needs to respond to Christ and grow in sanctification. When the Holy Spirit finished scripture, all that stands between salvation and damnation is a person's heart, and his faithful obedience. The Holy Spirit need not illuminate scripture or enlighten one's heart. When one hears scripture he can understand and obey or harden his heart, close his eyes, and shut his ears. So when Jesus preached the word of God, He simply said, "He who has ears, let him hear" (Mat. 13:9). May God ever help us watch brethren and prevent or else eradicate this foul doctrine of Calvinism from the church.

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (9)

PREMILLENNIALISM

A document we have been reviewing, done by a so-called "Christian Research Institute," objects to the churches of Christ in this way. It says, "Restoration churches tend to be amillennial." That's a true statement. Premillennialism is a recent doctrine, not a Biblical doctrine. The churches of Christ are amillennial, not premillennial. Amillennial simply means we believe there will be no literal thousand-year reign. The origin of this recent doctrine is from Revelation 20 where a 1,000 years are mentioned where Christians reign with Christ. In the churches of Christ we simply believe it symbolizes a long time in the Christian dispensation where Satan is bound. Premillennialism teaches Christ comes first and ushers in a literal 1,000 year reign here on earth. Satan is literally bound at that time. Let's notice a few points.

HOW SATAN IS BOUND

First, in Revelation 20:3 the text clearly says Satan is bound in the sense that he won't deceive the nations any more. How is that accomplished? I believe it is accomplished in the sense of Hebrews 2:14,15: "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14,15). Satan used the fear of death to hold sway over people. It was as if he said, "you only go around once; you better grab all the gusto you can get." But Jesus took away from Satan by a resurrection from the dead, showing He had power to give that other life He talked of so much (John 1:1-5; John 11:25,26). So Jesus bound Satan in the sense He made Satan's lies of no use. Jesus robbed him of the fear of death and Satan will in that

sense be bound as long as the gospel message is known and preached. If it ever grows dim, Satan will be able to deceive the nations again.

THE SECOND DEATH

Then when Revelation 20 says saints will reign with Christ a thousand years, it calls that reign the first resurrection. Well, what is all that talking about, something way up in the future? No. Romans 6:3,4 says, "Or are ye ignorant that all we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection" (Rom. 6:3-5). So what is the first resurrection? It is the resurrection of water baptism, when one is raised out of the water to walk in newness of life.

For those who have the first resurrection, the second death has no power. What is the second death? Revelation 21:8 says, "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death."

THEY REIGN WITH HIM

Next Revelation 20 says that in the thousand-year reign they that are mentioned reign with Him as priests. Well, Christians reign with Christ now: "much more shall they that receive (he abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one, even Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:17). Are we now priests? Peter said, "But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession" (1 Pet. 2:9).

So what we are saying in all this is that the one-thousand year reign is not some time up in the future in some literal reign. We are in it now. It is a spiritual reign. It is being fulfilled now in the Christian dispensation.

THE KINGDOM

However, the main error of Premillennialism regards the kingdom. Premillennialists still look for the coming of the kingdom. However, we understand the Bible to clearly teach that the kingdom is the church and that it came into existence the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ as recorded in Acts chapter two. Notice the kingdom is spoken of as existing in the first century. Paul said, "who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the son of his love" (Col. 1:13). Jesus earlier said, "Verily I say unto you, There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). So what Jesus predicted came true according to Paul. John teaches the same thing. He said, "I John, your brother and partaker with you in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus" (Rev. 1:10).

Also Premillennialism is wrong on the nature of the kingdom. It is a spiritual kingdom. It is not of this world (John 18:36). It comes not with observation, but rather is within you (Luke 17:20,21). So why should the churches of Christ be criticized for something clearly not in the Bible? I know for certainty that Premillennialism comes from taking figurative passages literally and passages regarding the church in novel ways.

THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

ARE NON-CHARISMATIC

The manuscript says, 'The movement is almost uniformly non-Charismatic."

Again, that's a true statement. Now think. God began vegetation and animals by miracles. Then they were to reproduce after their kind. God made man by a miracle, but then he and Eve were told to reproduce naturally. Later God made the church. By the coming of the Holy Spirit the church came into existence miraculously as recorded in the Book of Acts. But after that first age of the church it was to reproduce naturally by evangelism (Mark 16:15,16; Mat. 28:18-20).

MIRACLES

The Bible amply demonstrates that miracles were to confirm the word about Jesus. Notice Nicodemus said to Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; or no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:1,2). At the end of his book John said, “Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name.” Well, why did the apostles speak in tongues and do miracles? Mark answers. He said, “And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by the signs that followed. Amen” (Mark 16:20).

Besides, spiritual gifts like speaking in tongues and prophecy came by the laying on of the hands of the apostles, uke says, “Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Spirit was given he offered them money” (Acts 8:18). Now there are no apostles today, so one can meet the requirements as laid out in Acts 1:21,22. If there are no apostles, there are no hands of the apostles. If there are no hands of the apostles, there is no laying on of the hands of the apostles, and no spiritual gifts today. So 1 Cor. 13:8 has been fulfilled: “Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away.”

The truth is, everything, every ultimate purpose for which spiritual gifts and miracles were designed, are now serviced by the Bible. We don’t need miracles and spiritual gifts any longer. The word has been confirmed. God heals by daily grace and providence and no longer by miracle. He doesn’t need miracles to accomplish His will. Paul said, “All scripture is God-breathed, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (10)

BAPTISM ATTACKED

There are over 600 denominations and cults and sects. Arc you where you need to be? Should you belong to any? Can you be a Christian without joining a human denomination?

In the churches of Christ we are trying to be plain Christians, members of the church we read about in the Bible, without making ourselves part of a human denomination. We feel the Bible is all-sufficient to help us do that. Our goal always is pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity, without additions, without subtractions. We try, regarding authority, to speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent We feel there is a nomenclature of the Holy Spirit and we try to use it when possible. For, when the word is not in the Bible, perhaps the thought is not there. And if the thought is not there, perhaps the doctrine is not there. In short — we want to simply be, without any human contamination, what Peter, James and Paul were — plain Christians in that one church Jesus built. Basically human denominations, as loved as they are by some, came 1500 years after Jesus built His church. They came as some tried to reform some of the errors of the Roman Catholic Church. They stopped short of getting things back where they were in the first century when under the guidance of inspired men. In the churches of Christ we feel we can have that inspired guidance today in the Bible. So we seek Bible-based Christianity. In following the Bible we can follow the directions of the Holy Spirit in restoring in any age the church we see in the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). We can, if we have an honest and good heart, have

the same organization the original church had, the same doctrines, the same items of worship and work, the same oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). Let's notice an example of what we mean.

WATER BAPTISM'S DESIGN OR PURPOSE

The so-called "Christian Research Institute" condemns the churches of Christ in this: "Perhaps the best-known distinctive of the churches of Christ is the strong stance on the necessity of water baptism to effect salvation."

See, they think it strange that we believe water baptism is connected by God to eternal salvation. You contemplate and judge what the Bible says:

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily I say unto thee, Except one be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

"And Peter said unto them, Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

"And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

"Which also after a true likeness doth now save you, even baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation of a good conscience toward God through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21).

So these say baptism saves, is essential to the new birth, is for remission of sins, washes away sins, and again, "saves" us. So why should it be opposed by denominationalism? We think because in reaction to Roman Catholicism's work salvation, Protestants went to the other extreme that one can do nothing at all to save himself, even by being baptized for the remission of sins. See why you have to take the Bible alone as your guide in religion?

IS BAPTISM POURING OR SPRINKLING?

No, neither! The New Testament was originally written in Greek. In Greek the word for pour is katacheo. Kata means "down" and cheo "to pour." Sprinkle is rhantizo. But baptism is baptisma. It is from bap to, "to dip." On that Vine, a lexicographer, not a member of the churches of Christ, says, "Consisting of the process of immersion, submersion, and emergence." So it takes a lot of twisting to make baptism pouring or sprinkling. Notice the Bible says, "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway from the water" (Mat. 3:16). What does it sound like Jesus did when He was baptized? Did he come straightway up out of the water because water was sprinkled or poured upon Him?

Notice another passage. The Ethiopian Eunuch said to Stephen, "Behold, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip" (Acts 8:37-39). Did they go down into the water to pour? Did they go up from the water after sprinkling?

Notice another passage. We read, "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized. And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized" (John 3:22, 23). Now why did John go to Aenon? Enough water to pour a cup full or to sprinkle a few drops would be found almost everywhere. To baptize however, or rather immerse or dip took much water. So John baptized in Aenon because there was much water there. The scriptures are clear. You need much water for dipping.

AN EXAMPLE

Let's look at an example. Suppose I told someone I would give them $10.00 to immerse themselves in the bay. They go down to the bay, dip their hand into the water, and sprinkle a few drops on themselves. Did they fairly earn the $10.00? Did they meet the requirement? Did they complete the task or fulfill the condition? Obviously not. The same would be true if they took a thimble and poured a little water on their head. Would they cinch the $10.00? Did they actually do what I said? Now it certainly gives me no pleasure to

say this, and I will only say it because I love souls and respect truth. I sincerely believe, no matter what any man or any church tells you, when you have had water sprinkled or poured upon you, you have not been baptized. You have not done that of which Jesus spoke when He said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). You have not obeyed the Holy Spirit when He spoke through Ananias saying, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on his name" (Acts 22:16).

Friends, what is denominationalism to substitute for things God has said? What kind of attitude would do that? Would you really want to chance eternal life on sprinkling or on pouring? Is not sprinkling or pouring really disobedience? Does it not really leave you totally without baptism? I've never seen a more classic case of "why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition." That is the word of Jesus Christ (Mat. 15:3), and surely it clearly rebukes those who sprinkle and pour for baptism.

BAPTISM AND THE CHRISTIAN

The manuscript we are reviewing says, "The church of Christ goes on and says if you do not regard baptism as essential to salvation you are not truly a Christian. This rules out almost everybody but the churches of Christ."

Well, that's what you call a prejudicial statement. Since they have no scripture and the truth is not on their side, they resort to trying to make one look bad, or bigoted, or exclusive, or narrow, or condemning. Did you notice its lack of scripture content?

But we would ask, "How can you really be a Christian if you are not baptized?" Remember sprinkling and pouring are not baptism. One becomes a disciple of Christ by baptism (Mat. 28:18-20). One is saved by baptism (Mark 16:16). You have remission of sins by baptism (Acts 2:38). We received the new birth by water baptism (John 3:5). One gets into Christ by water baptism (Gal. 3:27). How can one be a Christian without all that? Too, we believe one must obey water baptism for the right reason. That's remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Can you do something for the wrong reason and get the right result? Can you accidentally stumble into Christianity? The truth is, we have no pleasure in the conviction that one who has not been baptized for the

purpose of remission of sins is not saved nor a Christian. We know that such a conviction will bring persecution. But God help us, we sincerely believe it is true.

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (11)

SILENCE AND AUTHORIZATION

We are looking at undenominational Christianity. We do not mean by that that we advocate that people just accept all denominations. We mean that there should be no denominations at all, that all who believe on Jesus should just be plain Christians in that one church Jesus built. The seed of the kingdom or church is the word of God (Luke 8:11), and so by planting that seed in the hearts of men in our generation, and the seed or word of God alone, it should produce nothing but pure undefiled Christianity.

We are examining these principles by answering criti-cisms of these aims of the churches of Christ and by Biblically defending the doctrines we sincerely believe come from the Bible. The objections we answer come from a manuscript done by Christian Research Institute. Let's see what further objections they have.

WHAT TO REJECT

They say, "The Bible never suggests that Christians reject whatever is not found within its pages. Rather, it forbids adding anything to scripture that would contradict scripture (Mat. 15:6), or imply scripture is not an adequate guide to salvation."

In this statement you are seeing the difference in a denominationalist attitude and an attitude which wishes to have nothing but pure Christianity. For example, when Luther wanted to reform the Catholic Church, he only wanted to get rid of those things

which contradicted the word of God. Zwingly in Switzerland wanted to get rid of all things in religion which were not found in the word of God. Similarly, we feel it necessary to eliminate from religion all things not authorized by the Bible.

Now it is also true that God's word must not be contradicted by our practices if we want to be approved by God. For example, Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17). And it is true that we should never indicate scripture is not an adequate guide to salvation. Paul said, "All scripture is God-breathed, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). David said, "Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory" (Psa. 73:24). And again he said, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105).

It is also true, however, that both denominationalism and the Catholic Church do contradict scripture. It gives us no joy to say that, nor does it give us a sense of pride in ourselves. It is just true. The Roman Catholics, for example, call their priest "father." Jesus, however, said, "And call no man your father on the earth: for one is your Father, even he who is in heaven" (Mat. 23:9). Really, Jesus is condemning all religious titles: Pastor, Reverend, Priest, Father. He is condemning personal titles, not descriptive titles which are found in the Bible: "minister," "elder," "deacon." But He is condemning things like Reverend Smith, pastor Jones, Father Shanahan. How much more would Jesus condemn Very Right Reverand, Father confessor, Pontiff, Cardinal, Archbishop, or Lady Superior?

Have you ever noticed when men talk they say, "Jesus," or "Peter," or "Paul." But when they talk of themselves it's "The Right Reverend John Smith, Abbot." Or we hear, "The Most Reverend Archbishop," or "The Venerable The Archdeacon" or "His Eminence," or "The Reverend Mother Superior." According to the Bible, I would prefer that men just call me Jerry.

But think again about what the writer of the manuscript said. He said the Bible never teaches we should reject anything except what contradicts the Bible. Then his statement must be rejected for it contradicts the Bible. The Bible says to reject anything that adds to God's word. We read, "ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). We find the same in Deuteronomy 12:32. Then we read, "Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Prov. 30:6). Paul said, "I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel: which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. As we have said before, so say I now again, If any man preacheth unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema" (Gal. 1:6-9). The apostle John said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11). So we must reject additions to God's word and not merely things which negate God's word or which contradict it.

BIBLICAL WORDS

Next the manuscript says, "Why can't you use words like 'Trinity,' or 'Canon,' or 'Bible,' which expresses biblical truth?"

First, we believe you can use words like those. We do use most of them. One can use any word to express a Biblical truth. We talk of "Cases of Conversion," and "Plan of Salvation," and the "Good Book." But a lot of useful things have warnings attached, as in the case of most appliances. We would warn first that we should make sure the word does express a Biblical truth. The Bible does not call a preacher a "pastor." Nor do we find a Biblical concept behind the word "Pope," or "rapture," or "call," as in a preacher being called. So we merely warn that if the word is not in the Bible, perhaps the concept is not in the Bible. If the concept is not in the Bible perhaps the doctrine is not

in the Bible. Then the "word" would contribute to false teaching and help to damn souls. So some things may not be nailed down as wrong, but they may not be useful when one is trying to restore the church one reads about in scripture. We have found it is more useful to "call Bible things by Bible names." We try to be consistent.

SILENCE OF SCRIPTURE

Then the manuscript says, "On the silence of the scriptures, the churches of Christ build church buildings, use microphones, etc. The scriptures are silent on these things." However, they are confused on what we mean when we say we try to observe, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent" We mean we should be silent when there is no authority for some item, doctrine, or practice. We do not apply "silence" to things simply not mentioned in the Bible. If we did we could not have church buildings, pews, or song books. Remember, "If you add something of the same nature as that which God commanded you have an addition and not merely an aid." God commanded that Noah build an ark out of gopher wood. To add cedar wood is an addition and not an aid. A hammer was not mentioned, but it was authorized because in doing what God said you did not add another type of wood. A hammer still left you with just gopher wood and so with a hammer you still had just the wood God commanded. We apply "silence" to cedar wood, which would add to God's commandment. We do not apply "silence" to a hammer or saw which would be an aid. They are authorized because they helped fulfill the command without adding to the command. Pews, microphones, church buildings don't add to any of God's commands. They are authorized under the commands because they aid in carrying it out while at the same time they do not add to the commands we find in the Bible.

CONCLUSION

Well, we are just trying with all our hearts to not add to God's word (Deut. 4:2; DeuL 12:32). We seek to refrain from traditions of men (Mat. 15:7-8). We don't want to go beyond the doctrine of Christ and lose God (2 John 9-11). Scripture will make us complete and furnish us completely unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Only truth will set us free (John 8:31,32). So we are warned against false

teachers (Mat. 7:15,16: 24:24; 2 Tim. 3:13; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; 1 John 4:1). Jesus said to us all, "For many are called, but few chosen" (Mat. 22:14), and, "He that hath ears, let him hear" (Mat 13:9).

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (12)

SILENCE (2)

It seems the Christian Research Institute has given the churches of Christ attention because the churches of Christ condemn denominationalism and believe the principles of the Protestant Reformation are insufficient to guide one to heaven and that the doctrines of the Protestant Reformation go beyond and contradict scripture. However, let's look at some more of their objections.

WHAT TO REJECT IN RELIGION

They say, "If you reject on the basis of silence, there is no objective basis for determining which things will be rejected and which will not."

Well, that's what they say, but we wonder why that should be the case. In fact, the objective basis determining what should be rejected ought to be this: we reject all in religion for which there is no Biblical authority. That is the objective basis for determining which things will be rejected and which will not.

Take for example a church building. Jesus said after His resurrection: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing

them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Mat. 28:18-20).

There Jesus said go teach. Then Paul told the Corinthians, "When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11:20). He didn't say where or how, but Christians are to assemble to eat the Lord's Supper. The how and where to teach and to assemble to eat the Lord's Supper are left up to us. It can be in a temple (Acts 2:46), on a river bank (Acts 16:13), or in a house (Rom. 16:5). Too, since God said to teach and assemble, we might build a church house, since in these commands the how and where are left up to us. A church building is not mentioned in the Bible, but authority for it lies in the commands to teach and to assemble (Mat. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 11:20).

If in His teaching, as recorded in Matthew 28:18-20, Christ had specified that the teaching was to be done in houses, that would exclude temples, church buildings and river banks. But the Lord did not so specify. He left it up to us. So though church buildings are not specifically mentioned in the New Testament, there is authority for them.

When we speak of respecting the silence of scripture, we mean we should not engage in anything religiously for which there is no authority. Let's look at an example regarding what we would reject if we were to respect the silence of religion.

THE HEAD CALLED THE POPE

Now if God had told the church to organize any way it wanted to organize, would we not have a right to make a Pope to be over bishops and to be the visible head of the Church? However, God specified an organization for His church. In the local congregations He gave bishops and deacons (Phil. 1:1;1 Tim. 3). Evangelists were authorized (Eph. 4:11), as well as all members (1 Cor. 12:12). But where was the Pope authorized? Where did God ever say to make one bishop head over the visible church? You may say that God didn't say not to. However, we would reply that when God specified what to have, that excluded all others of the same kind. If in class I say, "Janet, stand and

read the assignment," I excluded every other person. I don't have to run through the class roster saying, "Fred, don't you read. Mary, don't you read," etc. When Jesus said, "Lazarus, come forth" (John 11:43), that excluded the rest of the whole graveyard. When God said Jesus was His son (Heb. 1:5), that excluded all the angels. And when in organization God ordained Elders, deacons, preachers, and members, that excluded a Pope, Cardinals, Priests, and all else. So let's not add to God's word (Deut. 4:2). Let's reject all that is not authorized in the Bible. When God specifies, let's exclude all else men may dream up in the same category.

IS DOCTRINE IMPORTANT?

Specifically, let's take a doctrine commonly called "the Trinity." We believe there is one God, but that He is in three Persons. When we say "Person" don't be alarmed; we don't mean a human person. Webster says person also refers to Beings in the Godhead. And God, in the King James Version, is called a Person in Hebrews 1:3. But we speak of the Father (one Person), God the son (two Persons), and God the Holy Spirit (three Persons). Yet though there are three Persons in the Godhead, there is only one God. The scriptures are clear on that. Notice:

"Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah" (Deut. 6:4).

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me" (Isa. 46:9).

"For there is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

"One God and Father of all, who is over all, and through all, and in all" (Eph. 4:6).

Now some say Jesus isn't God, but the apostle John said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Then John 1:14 says, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Then in Hebrews chapter one God the Father speaks to the Son saying, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; and the scepter of uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom. Thou hast loved

righteousness, and hated iniquity; Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Heb. 1:8,9). There God the Father calls the Son "God."

But wasn't God the Father Jesus' God? Yes. Jesus said, "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father: but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God" (John 20:17). As the Son of God, God was His Father. That demonstrates only the human side of Jesus. But He was not merely human. He was also divine. Notice Paul said, "For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9).

But let's go on. Is the Holy Spirit God? Peter said to Ananias, "why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit..." (Acts 5:3). Then he said, 'Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God" (Acts 5:4). So when one lies to the Holy Spirit he lies unto God.

Then Ephesians 3:9 says God created all things. We know that is right because Moses said, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). Yet notice Genesis 1:26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness... "(Gen. 1:26) Some say plural pronouns are used there because God is talking to the angels when He says "our image." But the next verse says, "and God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him" (Gen. 1:27). God is not talking to the angels He is talking to God, as in Hebrews 1:5. There are three Persons in one God. It is difficult to explain three in one. Some say ice can be steam, vapor or water but the three are always H20. Others discuss that a person has a body, soul, and spirit, but that he is still one person. Others say there can be three light bulbs in a room but it is all one light. Maybe we can't explain it. They are maybe one in essence and substance, but not one in Person. Nevertheless, is it important? Yes, if one teaches falsely on it, it is. If one teaches there is only one person or that there are three God's it is called false doctrine. Is that dangerous or bad? Notice. Peter said, "But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall privily bring in destructive heresies..." (1 Pet. 2:1-3). Notice false teaching is called "destructive heresies." If a person doesn't receive the love of the truth he will perish (2 The. 2:10). Paul said, "But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a

gangrene" (2 Tim. 2:16,17). Paul said such teachings would "overthrow whole houses" (Tit. 1:11). John said if one went beyond the doctrine of Christ he would lose God (2 John 9-11). No wonder Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves" (Mat. 7:15,26).

Yes if one wants plain Christianity, there are things to reject. We should reject in organization, work, and worship all that is not authorized. We should reject all doctrine not taught in the New Testament.

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (13)

NO UNIVERSAL ORGANIZATION

In the Churches of Christ we are sincerely trying with all our heart to not be a denomination, but simply the church Jesus built. We strive to do so by making the Bible our blueprint. If you look in the Bible you will find that denominationalism is not part of Christianity. It is not in the Bible and is 1500 years too late. Denominationalism contradicts unity (John 17:21; Eph. 4:3).

THE BIBLE IS THE AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

The Bible must be our guide in religion. Peter said, "if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Paul showed scripture is enough: "All scripture is God-breathed, and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

However, we have seen that denominationalism goes beyond the Bible and into doctrines and traditions of men. But Jesus said, "ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, this people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9). And Paul said, 'Take heed lest there shall be any one that maketh spoil of you through his philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (Col. 2:8). But let's view some more objections to Bible-based Christianity.

AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The manuscript we have been reviewing says, "The problem of their divisions is the emphasis on the absolute autonomy of the local church. This doctrine was actually inherited from the Baptists. And when combined with their 'New Testament Pattern' principle it results in fragmentation."

Well, autonomy means self-governing. Each local congregation is self-governing. There is no proof that self-government leads to fragmentation. You do not govern my house nor I yours. Do we therefore fragment? Yet, we may be part of the same, city, county, state, and country.

In His word God made each church self-governing. God's ways are not our ways, neither His thoughts our thoughts. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are His ways higher than our ways and His thoughts than our thoughts. It is like small window panes being used instead of one large plate-glass window. If a rock goes through the many-paned window, only one small pane is broken. If it goes through the large-pane window, all is lost So if each church is autonomous and one is infected with deadly error, all the churches need not be lost as would be the case if all were connected by an earthly governance.

Then, the doctrine of self-governing congregations was not inherited from the Baptists. It is in the Bible. Corinth didn't govern Ephesus, nor Rome Antioch. Baptists came 1500 years later. Yet we charge that making an earthly head over the church like denominations do is inherited from the Catholic Church. And we would just ask, we

who desire to speak as the oracles of God, where in the Bible do we find the following: Papacy, See, Synod, Presidency, Conference, or Sacred College? Or, for that matter, where would we find in scripture: Priestship, Rabbinate, Ecclesiasticism, Ecclesiastical offices and dignities, Cardinalship, Archbishopric, or denominationalism? What is it that we do find in the Bible. Notice:

Jesus said, "And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church" (Mat. 16:18). And, "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish from it, that ye may keep the commandments of Jehovah your God which I command you" (Deut. 4:2). And, "Whosever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11).

Yet what does the Bible say causes division? Paul says, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:16,17). And Paul told the Ephesian elders, "Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:28-30). So it is false teaching, false doctrine, and teachers of such which cause division, according to the Bible. We charge denominationalism with fragmentation and division by their propagation of the doctrines of men, the traditions of men, the language of Ashdad, and all its false teaching and worldliness. That is what divides the religious world, as uncomfortable as it may be to say it. We are to speak as the oracles of God. If we don't have God's word to teach we have nothing to say. And it is not so much what is in God's word that divides, but what is not there, what is made up by men.

CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

The manuscript we are reviewing says "[their] disregard for creeds and confessions of faith causes a high potential for disunity." Well, we would ask, "what are creeds and confessions of faith?" They are nothing more than the writings of men-designated men. Would you not rather have your faith rest on the writings of God-designated men? Yet some can't see the difference in the authority of men and the authority of God. Paul said, "Wherefore let no one glory in men" (1 Cor. 3:21). Again he said, "ye were bought with a price; become not bondservants of men" (1 Cor. 7:23). He said, "Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men" (Col. 1:22,23).

Now please listen to God's word very carefully: "All scripture is inspired of God and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). Now can you be completer than complete? Is it not an absolute term? If the word of God will make us complete, why do we need creeds? Again listen: "all scripture is God-breathed [or given by inspiration of God] and is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16,17). If so, why do we need confessions of faith? Creeds and confessions of faith have error, and they build walls around various denominations.

Now think very simply how creeds and confessions are unneeded. If they contain more than the Bible, they are objectionable because they do contain more than the Bible. If they contain less than the Bible, they are objectionable because they contain less than the Bible. If they contain what the Bible contains, they are useless because we have the Bible.

ECCLESIASTICAL STRUCTURE

Next the Churches of Christ are criticized for condemning ecclesiastical structures of church government. Well, the Bible says not to add to God's word (Deut. 4:2; Deut. 12:32; Prov. 30:6; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; 1 Pet. 4:11; Rev. 22:18,19). The writer says you are extremist if you condemn denominational systems of church

government. First, God gave His church a system of church government which is found in the New Testament. We simply follow it. Second, when arguments fail and no Bible proof can be found, it is no excuse to resort to name calling such as "extremists."

Then notice. John said if you go beyond the doctrine of Christ you lose God (2 John 9-11). Jesus said it is hypocritical and vain worship to teach the precepts of men (Mat. 15:7-9). Paul said you are under a curse if you preach another gospel than what the apostles preached (Gal. 1:6-9).

So, as we review this manuscript which condemns the Churches of Christ, we really see it not so much a struggle between denominationalism and the church, but a struggle between using the simple word of God, or using the word of God mingled with the doctrines and precepts of men. You choose. You judge, in the face of heresy, which is safest.

IS THE CHURCH

A DENOMINATION? (14)

WHAT IS A DENOMINATION?

One said, "The churches of Christ are a denomination in fact if not in name." Well, we all know that assertions are not proofs. That sounds like the kind of thing one says when he has no proof. It is like children, "If I'm one you are too." But denominationalism contains in it the notion of dividing. What divides? Paul said, "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17). Things contrary to the doctrine cause division. Well, what doctrine? John, the apostle said, "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the teaching [doctrine] of Christ, hath not God: he that abideth in the teaching, the same hath both the Father and the Son. If any one cometh unto you, and bringeth not this

teaching, receive him not into your house, and give him no greeting: for he that giveth him greeting partaketh in his evil works" (2 John 9-11). However, those who argue for pure undefiled, New Testament Christianity insist that we all stay with the Bible and hence we can't divide by teaching "other than the doctrine of Christ." Those with a view to speak where the Bible speaks would not be a denomination as long as they did not teach contrary to the things the apostles taught.

Yet, what do we find in denominationalism? We find instrumental music, the doctrine of "faith only," creeds, confessions, denominational structures, Calvinism, premillennialism (try to find those in the Bible), "once saved always saved," denominational names, doctrines of men, and about every kind of tradition of men that rebellious humans can devise.

ANOTHER DEFINITION OF "DENOMINATION"

It is argued, "The word denomination simply means a group of churches that associate together under some common name. Baptists and Methodists are denominations and so is the Church of Christ."

You know, we can all make up definitions of words, but is that what the words really mean? We could say, a denomination is a group of churches which use buildings, has microphones, and meets on dry land. Or we could say a denomination is a group of people who use Welch's unfermented grape juice in the communion, plastic communion cups, and has pulpits. One philosopher gave a definition of man as a smooth creature, who stands upright, and walks on two feet. One of his rivals went to the forum the next day and plopped down a plucked chicken. "Here's his man," he said. So it was not a very good definition. The first philosopher added to it, "and has teeth."

Actually, the word "denominate" means to take a category and give it a name. So "denominate" has the flavor of "name." It has also the idea of some category or difference which shall be named, something different, a different size or value. However, if as in restoration of the original church of New Testament Christianity, you restore in your time the original, you have not created off it a new category. You have not needed to designate it with a new name. You would not have a denomination of it. So when we speak of denominations, we talk of human denominations. The church is

created by the word of God, the seed of the kingdom. The Churches of Christ come from the same seed as that from which came Corinth. Corinth, or Ephesus, or Philippi, were not denominations when they came from that seed, so why should we be a denomination? When it comes to a seed producing after its kind, time does not matter.

Those who condemn the Churches of Christ because they strive for un-denominationalism, because they advocate pure, undefiled, New Testament Christianity, without addition, without subtraction, need to show it is impossible today to religiously be plain Christians as were Peter and Paul. They need to demonstrate that you can't be simply Christians in the church Jesus built, without human tradition and human doctrine. Why can't we be a Christian without ever joining a human denomination? Why can't we be neither Catholic, Protestant, or Jew? If we follow the same word of God as the church we read about in the Bible without human tradition and without human doctrine, why can't we be as were they — simple Christians in the one church Jesus built.

The Roman Catholic Church digressed away from the doctrines of the holy apostles and prophets. Some broke away from it over certain doctrines, while they retained other digressive doctrines and invented new ones. They gave themselves a new name and invited people to join them. Why should we honor all that by defending denominationalism? Would it not be better to take the word of God, the seed of the kingdom, and restore the original church in all its pristine simplicity?

When they broke away from the Catholic Church, as a category which took another name, they were designated differently, and they became a human denomination. Then we come along and condemn such human categories and cause them anxiety. They attack us, and their arguments soon fail. So defamation, persecution, and scare tactics are offered and honorable debate about these matters is turned down. Let me say now, if any reputable religious leader who has a church to sponsor him would like to debate these issues in a situation where all can come and bring their Bibles and determine who is right and who is wrong, call or write me.

DO DISTINCTIVE DOCTRINES

MAKE A DENOMINATION?

However, it is argued, "It is not necessary for a group of churches to have a hierarchy to be a denomination; nor is it necessary for them to have an unbiblical name. Any group of churches which has identifiably distinctive doctrines and practices is a denomination."

But again, as we have seen, this person makes up his own definitions to fit his own position. This type of thinking defines baptism as sprinkling or pouring, says a saint is a canonized Christian, turns the Lord's Supper into a mass, says there is a purgatory, and turns preachers into pastors, none of which is found in God's word. But when the Churches of Christ are attacked it always seems concessions are made. They admit we have no ecclesiastical structure. Neither did the church of the Bible. They admit we have no hierarchy. Neither did the church Jesus built. He only was its Head. They admit we have no unbiblical name. Neither did the "Churches of Christ" mentioned in the Bible in Romans 16:16.

Too, consider, the church you read about in the Bible had "distinctive doctrines" and "practices." Yet they were never called a denomination. For, their doctrines and practices were divine. They were not of human origin. They were the original, not new designations. They were in oneness, not various new categories.

In all humility, with all sincerity, we try to follow the Bible only. We strive with all our heart, soul, and mind to have the exact doctrine the early Christians had, the same work, the same organization, the same worship. By doing all that, we feel we are the same as the original church, no more, no less. We feel we are one with them, that they are our brethren and nothing but the passage of time divides us. If not, why not?

Friends, Jesus asked a good question: "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?" Now if it were from heaven it was from God and should be obeyed. But what if it were from men? Jesus answered earlier, "Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Mat. 15:7-9).

Again, friends, out of love may I ask, is your church you claim to be a part of from Heaven or from men? Have you checked its name to see if it is from Heaven or from men? Have you inspected its organization to see if it is from heaven or from men? Have you made sure of its doctrines? Are they from Heaven or from men? The Bible will have it if it is from heaven. However, the question the Lord may ask you personally one day is this: "Why didn't you care?"

CHURCH OF CHRIST NAME

Question: If someone asked you in a Bible study: 'Where do you get the Church of Christ name in the Bible? What scripture is the best to quote?'

This is a more lively question than many of us might at first think. At a debate in Denton, Texas a small group who claimed to be the true church, completely undenominational, passed out literature and sought Bible studies from the brethren each night. Leathel Roberts, Leo Schumpert, myself and others studied with them nightly, sometimes to 2:30 a.m. Much of the conversation centered around their contention that we are a denomination. The main reason they gave was that we singled out one Biblical name, excluding the rest, and changed it from a common to proper noun (from a general class to a specific name).

Such minute distinctions seem nit-picky unless one is firmly wedded to the principle of speaking as the oracles of God (I Pet 4:11), calling Bible things by Bible names. But since that way of thinking is not now under discussion, let us proceed to what is.

First, we who claim to be undenominational ought to bear our responsibility of not using Biblical descriptions of the Lord's church in a denominational way! I am not a member of any Church of Christ denomination!

Second, I know of nowhere in the Bible where the whole kingdom of God is ever called “The Church of Christ,” and I cannot with conscience use it in that way as it were a biblical title rather than a liberty. When speaking of the church as a whole, we might speak of it as the body of Christ. Yet even this is a description rather than a title (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18).

Third, there is NO distinctive name of the kingdom that is used in the Bible. Various names and descriptions are used, and we should cultivate the habit of using all the Spirit's terminology regarding the church.

Fourth, the phrase "churches of Christ" is found in Romans 16:16 (notice churches is plural). This phrase is a commendable one because it glorifies Christ (I Pet. 4:16). I am a member of the churches of Christ

Fifth, though it is not a proper name of the whole church, an individual congregation of the churches of Christ just so happens to be a church of Christ. We have as much right to put that bit of information on a sign in front of the building as we do to put "Bible study - Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Sixth, we put that on our building as a matter of liberty and expedience so that we can locate one another as we travel. There is no scripture which would condemn it as an expediency.

The fellow I talked with at the debate seemed to come around. He said he would like to talk more on this if he passed through San Marcos and that it was more important to him than any other difference. I told him to contact me and I would buy lunch. I said as an afterthought, "You don't need my address. You know how to find me." He just grinned and nodded.

MONOLOGUE WITH LUTHER

Once Alexander Campbell said that it was his belief that if a reformation began in the spirit it invariable ended in the flesh. We are inclined to agree. With all their errors and evils, the old reformers are glorious compared to their disciples of today. I almost believe that some of them would join with us in denouncing the errors of the denominations they started. Contemplate these quotes from Martin Luther from A Compend of Luther's Theology by Hugh T. Kerr.

ON PARTY NAMES

"I ask that men make no reference to my name, and call themselves not Lutherans, but Christians. What is Luther? My doctrine, I am sure, is not mine, nor have I been crucified for anyone. St. Paul, in I Corinthians III would not allow Christians to call themselves Pauline or Petrine, but Christian. How then should I, poor, foul carcase that I am, come to have men give to the children of Christ a name derived from my worthless name? No, no, my dear friends, let

us abolish all party names, and call ourselves Christians after Him Whose doctrine we have."

ON THE MODE OF BAPTISM

"The term baptism is a Greek word; it may be rendered into Latin by mersio when we immerse anything in water, that it may be entirely covered with water. And though that custom be quite abolished among the generality, (for neither do they entirely dip children, but only sprinkle them with a little water,) nevertheless they ought to be wholly immersed, and immediately to be drawn out again, for the etymology of the word seems to require it. The Germans call baptism tauf, from depth, which they call tief in their language; as if it were proper those should be deeply immersed, who are baptized. And truly, if you consider what baptism signifies that the old man and our native that is full of sin, entirely of flesh and blood as it is, may be overwhelmed by divine grace. The manner of baptism, therefore ought to answer to the signification of baptism, so that it may show forth a sign that is certain and full."

Well, all we say is Luther spoke some truths even his followers won't accept, yet they do accept his errors.