

The Gospel Preceptor

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Psa 119:104

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“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

Jerry C. Brewer

When the chief priests and elders of the people—a very religious group—challenged the authority of Jesus, asking, “By what authority doest thou these things?”, He replied with a question of His own. “The baptism of John, whence was it? From heaven, or of men?” (Matt. 21:23-25).

That's the question we pose in this issue of *The Gospel Preceptor* concerning the multitudes of denominations in the world. Have you ever wondered where your denomination came from? Is it from heaven, or of men? You'll find the answer in this issue for a number of them.

David declared that, “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.” (Psa. 127:1). In the same vein, Jesus said, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.” (Matt. 15:13). It is a fearful thing to plant and build where God has not authorised us to so do. But that has never deterred evil men from exalting themselves above the God of heaven and earth and creating their own religious institutions. Consequently, hundreds of religious groups exist today, all claiming to follow Christ.

Did God plant all the denominations that dot the religious landscape across the world? Are they from heaven, or of men? Can you find the church of which you are a member named in the Bible? What religious name do you wear? Methodist? Baptist? Presbyterian? Mennonite? Lutheran? Catholic? Pentecostal? Anglican? Mormon? Jehovah's Witness? Can you find any of those names on a single page of the New Testament? If you are honest, you know that you cannot. From whence then are these names and religions that teach conflicting doctrines? Did they come from heaven or from men?

That question is easily answered from the Bible—the only standard of religious authority by which man may determine his relationship with God. The denominations of men are foreign to the Bible. They are neither authorized, planted, built, nor recognized by God.

“Good People In All”

“But, there are good people in all denominations,” one will object. No one denies the truth of that statement. It goes without saying that there are good people in every religious group. It also goes without saying that there are good people who belong to *no* religious group.

We also believe that there are good, honest people in denominations who would at once renounce denominational error and become simply Christians if they would but learn the truth. We have no quarrel with any honest and good person. Our opposition is directed toward the hireling clergy of the denominational industry who are leeches on the backs of their parishioners. Many of those preachers **know** their doctrines cannot be found in the Bible, but they continue to preach them. Like the ancient Pharisees, they “compass sea and land to make one proselyte,” and in so doing they “make him two fold more a child of hell” than themselves. (Matt. 23:15). From week to week, denominational clergymen line their own pockets at the expense of good people who trust their very souls to them. Without a doubt, there **are** “Good people in all denomi-

nations,” but they are good people who have been blinded by Satan's ministers clad in Catholic and Protestant robes (2 Cor. 11:12-15).

This issue isn't about people's morals, but about God's authority. Good people can be honestly mistaken or deluded about religion. Saul of Tarsus was a good man, but his religion was wrong. (Acts 23:1), and one would be hard pressed to find a better man than Cornelius in Acts 10. The record says he was, “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always.” (Acts 10:2). Now, can one find a better man than he? Yet the sad truth about the religious and morally upright Cornelius was that he was lost. That's evident from his statement to Peter, which Peter recounted in Acts 11:13-14. “...and he showed us how he had seen an angel in his house, which stood and said unto him, Send men to Joppa, and call for Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”

Now if being a good man will save, Cornelius was a saved man. If being devout will save one, then Cornelius was saved. If contributing to charity (giving alms) means a person is saved, then Cornelius was saved. If seeing an angel in his house makes a man saved, then Cornelius was saved. But notice the reason he was to send for Peter—to hear “words whereby thou and all thy house **shall be saved.**” Cornelius was lost. If he wasn't, then the angel lied and he was a fool to send for Peter.

Yes, there are good people in all denominations, but being good people doesn't mean they are saved. One is not saved because he is good. If that's the case, then God should never have sent His Son to die for our sins. He should have just told all of us to “be good.”

Those who say, “there are good people in all denominations” are usually the same people who say one is saved by “grace alone” because we cannot earn salvation. In that position, they contradict themselves. If goodness saves, then the grace of God is nullified and we earn salvation by our goodness. If we are saved by grace **alone**, then it makes no difference how **good** people are. They can't have it both ways.

The Gospel of Christ brought no new moral precept into the world. Every right act today toward our fellow man was a right act when Christ was born in Bethlehem, and every modern sinful act toward our fellow man was sinful then. His coming into the world did not bring new moral guidelines. There were good men in the world **when** Christ came and there were good men in the world **before** he came. Goodness is not the divine standard of righteousness. That standard is revealed in the gospel which Christ brought into the world. (Rom. 1:16-17).

“Denominations Are Just Branches of the Church”

That's the contention of the Methodist Church which declares itself a branch in the vine of Christ. Jesus is the true vine (John 15:1-6). He says *individuals*, not denominations, constitute the branches. “If a *man* abide not in me he is cast forth as a branch and withered.” (John 15:6).

There is not a single modern denomination that can be found in the New Testament. They were all founded **by** men, **upon** men, and preach **men's doctrines**. Christ is neither their founder, foundation, nor guide, and He is certainly **not** the Saviour of them. (Eph. 5:23).

Read and ponder well the articles in this issue of *The Gospel Preceptor*. They are published for your information, and those who love God and His truth will plainly see that no modern denomination is the church which Jesus established.

These articles may anger you, but their truth cannot be refuted by God's word. Every writer in this issue stands ready to defend the truth of the Gospel, but it's been our experience that the hireling clergy hasn't the stomach to publicly defend what it preaches.

“Denominations: From heaven or of men?” They are of men and, as such, Jesus says they shall be rooted up and cast into the fire. (Matt. 15:13).

“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

The Roman Catholic Church

David P. Brown

Seven Foundational Catholic Assumptions Without Support

The following seven stones in the foundation of the Catholic Church are mere assumptions without biblical support. They are,

1. The church was built upon the apostle Peter.
2. Jesus gave the apostle Peter the authority of binding and loosing whatever laws he thought advantageous for the times as long as such laws remained within the structure of the basic teachings of Christ.
3. Jesus made Peter the head of the church and the vicar or chief ambassador of Christ and ruler of the universe.
4. Peter was made the Prince of the apostles.
5. The authority of Peter and his successors was universal in spiritual and temporal matters.
6. The authority of Peter and his successors was/is supreme and independent of all earthly authority.
7. Peter's office has been passed down to his successors throughout all the ages.

It should be emphasized that if I prove the first four assumptions in the previous list to be erroneous, the points in the remainder of the list are also false. Moreover, the whole superstructure of Catholicism will collapse with the failure of its foundation. Let us therefore, begin this study of Catholicism by examining the first four foundation points previously enumerated.

Was The Church Built Upon Peter?

In their attempt to prove that the church was built on the apostle Peter, Catholics go to Matt. 16:18 where the apostle records that Jesus stated, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Let us examine the passage. In the Greek language *Peter* is in the masculine gender (*petros*). *Petros* means a small stone or pebble. Jesus used the feminine gender in the Greek language for *rock* (*petra*) when He said, “...upon this rock I will build my church”. *Petra* means a ledge or cliff of rock. In the light of the meaning of these two Greek words translated *rock* in Matthew 16:18, are we to conclude that Jesus built His church on a pebble or a cliff of rock? Indeed, Jesus built His church on the foundation rock of truth that Peter confessed, namely that Jesus is “the Christ, the Son of the living God”, the *New English Bible* notwithstanding (Matt. 16:16). Catholics try to attack the previous “gender argument” by pointing out that Jesus spoke Aramaic and not Greek, that the book of Matthew originally appeared in Aramaic and, unlike Greek, the genders are the same in Aramaic. I point out that it is Catholic tradition—nothing more, nothing less, or nothing else that says the book of Matthew originally appeared in Aramaic. It is merely a Catholic assertion that such is the case. Where is the proof? Furthermore, if Jesus originally did speak the words of Matthew 16:18 in Aramaic, it was the Holy Spirit Who infallibly guided Matthew to write Matthew 16:18 in Greek. Does anyone doubt that the Holy Spirit knew how to say infallibly in Greek what Jesus said infallibly in Aramaic and, thus the different tenses?

Please consider the following points regarding the tenses in Matthew 16:18:

1. The oldest Greek manuscripts have the words *petros* and *petra* in this verse.
2. It is against sound rules of Biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) to have Peter being the doorkeeper and at the same time the foundation. At times Jesus is called the builder, the purchaser, the foundation, etc. of the church. However, inspiration never has Jesus in a single figure occupying more than one position or place at any one time.
3. Where in the New Testament does one find the apostles and evangelists preaching, “Peter” as they planted churches? It would seem that such would be

the case if Peter and not Christ was and is the foundation of the church. On the contrary, as they established churches they preached Christ as the only foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11).

4. If, as the Catholics allege, it were true that the church was built upon Peter the man, they would not be proving that the church rested on any so-called successor or office. However, if they mean that the church was built upon an “office”, then, it was not built on “the man” Peter. Of course, neither is true, but this is a good example of Catholic hocus-pocus.

Was Peter Authorized To Define Laws For Jesus?

In the Catholic attempt to state that Peter and the popes to follow him were authorized to define our Lord's laws they go to Matt. 16:19. In that passage Jesus said, “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.”

All the apostles of Christ had the same authority given to them by Jesus as did Peter (John 20:21-23). Among other things, in order to rightly divide the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15), one must have and examine the totality of what the Bible says on any given subject before reasoning with the information and drawing a conclusion. Matthew 16:19 is only part of what the Bible says on this matter (and the Catholics do not understand it). Does not John 20:21-23 bear on the question of **who** and **how many** of the apostles received authority from Jesus Christ?

The truth of the matter regarding what Matthew 16:19 literally says in the Greek language is as follows. Jesus said, “and whatever you forbid on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven.” The Greek terms, *must be what is already forbidden* and *must be what is already permitted* are passive participles. The same is true of the grammar of Matthew 18:18. Thus, the truth of the matter is that Jesus told the apostles that they were permitted to bind on earth **only** what had already been bound in heaven and loose on earth **only** what had already been loosed in heaven.

The apostles of Christ are the ambassadors of Christ to earth and eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:20; Acts 1:8). They, and they alone, possessed plenipotentiary power. This is the authority that an ambassador has in representing his government to another. It means that he alone may speak the official position of his government to another government. An ambassador may not change any part of what his government has previously determined. He may only state it accurately. The same is true of all the apostles (not just Peter) of Jesus Christ in representing the will of the court of heaven to men on earth (John 16:13; Luke 24:29; Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 2:4; 2 Pet. 1:21)—regarding Paul's apostleship, see Galatians 1:11-17. Thus, Christians continue today in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).

It is interesting to note that in 1870 when Pope Pius IX was “defined” by the Vatican Council to be “infallible” it was by a majority vote of the cardinals and bishops after many days of heated debate. The Holy Spirit had nothing to do with the decision. There is no scripture that supports (1) Peter being given the authority Rome asserts was given to him and (2) successors to Peter's office. Therefore, (3) how could Peter pass down to his successors that which he never had?

Did Christ Make Peter Head of The Church?

Catholics cite John 21:15-17 in an attempt to prove their claim that Christ made Peter to be head over all the church. The scripture reads,

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again a second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

In interpreting this scripture three assumptions are made by Catholics.

1. That Jesus was asking Peter if he (Peter) loved Him (Christ) more than the other apostles love Him (Christ);
2. that Jesus had in mind the “laity” and the “clergy” when he told Peter to “Feed my lambs” and “Feed my sheep.” According to Catholic doctrine, this was our Lord's way of telling Peter to take care of the whole church, “laity” and “clergy” and,
3. that such authority was to be handed down to the popes who succeeded to Peter's office.

It is important to understand that in the passage under consideration Jesus employed two Greek words for feed or tend. They are *boske* and *poimaine*. Ordinarily *boske* is rendered simply *feed*. When used figuratively it means to “teach.” The idea is the impartation of spiritual food. In the New Testament *poimaine* is used several times and in most cases translated “feed.” (Some versions render *poimaine* into “tend”). Paul told the Ephesian elders to, “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). In this passage the elders are commissioned to the same thing that Peter was told to do. In this regard Peter later wrote,

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind (1 Pet. 5:1, 2).

Feed is translated from *poimante*. Peter says it is the responsibility of all elders to do what he was to do. He was their “fellow-elder”. There is nothing in the scriptures that indicates that Peter thought of himself as the Pope and, therefore, head of all the church. It is simply a figment of Catholic imagination.

Was Peter Made Chief of All The Apostles of Jesus Christ?

The first scripture to which Catholics appeal to attempt to prove that Peter was made chief of all the apostles is Acts 8:14, 15. It reads, “Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.” Question: If Peter was “prince of the apostles” how was it that the other apostles sent him (Peter) on a special mission? Would not the “prince of the apostles” have been doing the sending rather than the going? Recently it was the Pope who called the American Cardinals to Rome, not the Cardinals calling the Pope to America.

In Acts 15:19-22 Luke records the meeting of the elders, apostles and others as well as the subsequent letter produced by them to be sent to the Gentile brethren concerning the relationship of the Law of Moses to the Gentiles. Peter did not run the whole shebang! Notice that the scripture reads that: “it seemed good to the *apostles (not Peter alone DPB)* and the *elders (not Peter alone DPB), with the whole church (not Peter alone DPB)*. The Roman hierarchy does not operate this way today. In the case of the decision just noticed and the subsequent letter produced, the scripture reveals that, “it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.” This means that the apostles, elders, and the whole church were in complete accord with what the Holy Spirit had revealed.

Paul by inspiration of the Holy Spirit declared that he was “not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles” (2 Cor. 11:5). How could Paul truthfully make the preceding point if Peter was the “prince of the apostles”? Moreover, in Galatians 2:11-14 we have the record of Paul rebuking Peter for his hypocrisy regarding not eating with the Gentile brethren at Antioch of Syria. Question: What cardinal, archbishop, or bishop today would dare say or write what Paul did of Peter to the “infallible” “Right Reverend” “Holy Father” “prince of the Apostles” his “eminence,” the Pope?

“Tradition” is literally the only thing Catholicism has left to attempt to uphold the supremacy of Peter. However, the meaning of the word *tradition* is that which is handed down. And, if that which is handed down finds no support in the scriptures, then it has no weight and must be repudiated and rejected (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; Jas. 1:25; John 12:48; Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17; Luke 8:11). It would be nothing less or more than the tradition of men. Of such men Jesus said, “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9).

Some Questions For Catholics to Ponder

1. Where in the Bible is the claim made that Peter was the ruler of the universe?
2. Where in the Bible did Peter ever claim any civil government power?
3. Where in the Bible did Peter ever claim any supremacy to any extent over the other apostles?
4. Where does the Bible reveal that Peter ever claimed to hold “the place of God” on earth? (*Pope Leo XIII, “Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae” [The Reunion of Christendom], June 20, 1894.*)
5. Except as Peter was lead by the Holy Spirit, when did Peter ever claim to speak for Jesus?
6. Where is the proof the Peter was ever in the city of Rome?
7. Where does the Bible reveal that Peter established the "papal throne"?
8. Where does the Bible teach that Peter had any successors?

Conclusion

In this brief article we have seen that the scriptures **do not teach** that,

1. The church was built upon the apostle Peter.
2. Peter was given the authority of binding and loosing whatever laws he thought ought to be changed as long as they remained within the basic structure of the basic teaching of Jesus.
3. Peter was made the head of the church, Vicar of Christ, and ruler of the universe.
4. Peter was the prince of the apostles.
5. Peter and his successors' authority were universal in spiritual and temporal matters.
6. Peter and his successors' authority were “supreme” and “apart” from civil authority.
7. Peter's office and authority was passed down to his successors for all time.

As I wrote in the beginning of this article, if these seven previously listed, and studied, fundamental stones concerning Peter in Catholicism's foundation are erroneous, the whole of Catholicism fails and falls to the ground. Everything—the organization of the Catholic Church, her fake miracles, her celebration of Mass, her doctrine of Transubstantiation, her doctrine of Purgatory, her Confessional System, her Seven Sacraments, and on, and on—is utterly and forever destroyed.

It is my desire that all those who espouse the name of Jesus Christ as their Savior would turn to the Bible and the Bible only, knowing that it is capable of making Christians only—members of the church of which we read in our own New Testaments—the church of Christ (Acts 2:38, 41, 42, 47; Rom. 16:16). Why not be a Christian—nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else? Why not renounce all sectarian denominationalism and have a "thus saith the Lord" for all you believe and practice (Col. 3:17)? This is the way that is right and cannot be wrong. Roman Catholicism is **not** from heaven, but of men.

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If each subscriber will send us **one new subscription** this month, we can **double** our subscriptions for June. Won't you help us reach and teach lost souls?

“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

The Anglican/Episcopal Church

Keith Sisman

Dear reader, the Anglican Church claims that its origin is from the Apostles, via the Catholic Church in an unbroken chain of succession. It has claimed that it is the true Church, so let us together examine this claim, for it is a lofty claim indeed and if true, one of which we need to take notice. Men have many ideas about the church and its relationship to Christ, but let's look at what the inspired Apostles Paul and John have to say on the subject. The church is “the pillar and ground of truth” (1 Tim 3:15), The word of God is truth (John 17:17), thus it is the responsibility of the church to teach and practice every truth of the word of God. Therefore ask, is the Church of England (CoE), the Anglican Church, from God or of men?

This proud Church wears the title “The Church of England”. The New Testament church wears several descriptions, including the “church of Christ” (Rom. 16:16). It began on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem as prophesied. The Church of England or Anglican Church wears a name unknown 2,000 years ago, for Anglican and England are new words, which have come into use since the 600s. England did not exist before then, therefore the “Church of England” did not exist before the year 590. We can further this argument when we see that the Lord gave the great commission as recorded in Mathew 28:19, it was to teach **all** nations, the church was to be universal, not limited to individual countries. An examination of both history and scripture reveals the Church of England, the Anglican Church, is not the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). It is not from heaven, but of men.

In theology, the Church of England is Roman Catholic, but distanced itself from the Pope, which it denied in a number of acts of parliament between 1532-36, making Henry VIII supreme head of it. In most areas the CoE is almost identical to the Roman church, having rejected any Protestant ideals such as the authority of the scriptures. Therefore the Church of England is a continuation of the Roman Church, but with the monarch as head, not the pope, and not Protestant in origin. When we examine scripture we find each congregation is autonomous, overseen by a plurality of elders (bishops Titus 1:7) yet the Church of England is overseen by an archbishop who, to this day, rules from Canterbury where once the arch-Druid ruled over his heathen empire of temples. The Church of England on examination is a continuation of earlier, pre-Christian pagan religion. The New Testament Church is, as we see from Acts 20:17, Titus 1:5, and Philippians 1:1, overseen by Godly elders who are able to teach the pure word of God (Titus 1:9). We can see that by organisation, the Anglican Church (The Church of England), is not the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16), for the Head of the church of Christ is Jesus as we read in Ephesians 5:23: “For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body.” Dear reader, if we are not in Christ's body, the church, we are not saved for He is the saviour of the body, the church (Col. 1:18), and He is the head of the body, the church).

The CoE's split with Rome came after Henry divorced Catherine of Aragon, which was opposed by the Pope. Few objected because the promiscuity of the Catholic priesthood was frowned upon by people of all classes. The priests were able to keep their jobs and marry, also they were able now to deal directly with Henry as the head of the church. Parliament was under the control of Henry, England still being nearly 150 years from being any sort of democracy. The Lord Himself in Matthew 19 taught that marriage is for life (Mat. 19:4-12; Rom. 7:2). The Anglican Church has refused to teach God's plan for marriage and the family from its beginning, as seen in our day by the divorce of Prince Charles, the future head of the CoE, from Diana. Their teaching shows that the Church of England, the Anglican Church, is not the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16).

The Church of England has a separate class of clergy called priests, yet the New Testament pattern for the church of Christ knows nothing and speaks against such division. For the New Testament teaches that all Christians are priests, a holy priesthood as seen in First Peter 2:4-5: “Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritu-

al house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” The church of the Bible are the priests, who are Christians, yet the Anglican Church, the Church of England is the building, dedicated on holy ground. Such a pattern is not found in the New Testament. From this we can safely conclude, the Church of England, the Anglican Church, is not the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). It is not from heaven, but of men.

Regarding salvation, the CoE teaches the need for baptismal regeneration of babies (original sin) whereby their sins need to be removed to allow them to take on the Anglican faith. As such, a baby that has not been baptised according to Anglican theology will go to Hell. This doctrine teaches that we can do nothing for our own salvation, the faith comes about after baptism.

In the year 1658, Henry Denne, who was both a preacher and evangelist for the Fenystanton church of Christ (near Cambridge) debated with the Anglican Dr Gunning (St. Clement Dane's church, The Strand, London). Dr Gunning later became bishop for the diocese of Ely and is still fondly remembered by Anglicans today. Brother Denne was strongly opposed to Calvinism and Anglicanism, teaching “all men were put into the possibility of salvation through Christ” and “those that choose to perish do so at their own choice”. During the debate with Dr Gunning, which started after a lady showed concern with the practise of infant baptism, the following exchange took place; **Dr Gunning:** Infants unbaptised where there is no desire of their baptism in their parents or friends shall be shut out of heaven.

Henry Denne: If unbaptised infants be shut out of heaven, then God punisheth some creatures for that which they cannot help. Therefore unbaptised children are not shut out from heaven.

Gunning: I deny the consequence.

Henry Denne: Then shutting out of heaven is no punishment.

After this exchange the lady was baptised by brother Denne. Here, one of the foremost theologians of the 17th century is honest in his claim that without infant baptism, a child that dies will spend eternity in Hell, this being admitted in debate with an evangelist from the Lord's church.

Baptism is essential for a person to be saved, for a person to be in Christ, and for a person to be in the church. The saved are in the church. This is what the Bible teaches.

Ephesians 4:4-6: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one LORD, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

Second Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.”

Galatians 3:27-28: “For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Matthew 28:18-20: “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.

Mark 16:15-16: “And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptised will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

The scriptures teach that faith comes **before** baptism, that faith will lead the sinner to repentance and salvation in the waters of baptism. This precludes and will always precludes infants who do not understand. An infant cannot hear, cannot repent and thus are precluded from baptism, because they are innocent.

The plan of salvation is not taught by the Anglican Church, as baptism is the doorway to salvation. Salvation is not found in the Anglican Church, therefore the Anglican

Church is not the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). It is not from heaven, but of men.

From its onset, the reformed CoE was Catholic, liberal and humanistic in its outlook, being controlled by the Anglican party who were opposed by the much smaller Puritan (Protestant) and increasingly Calvinistic party.

Between 1604 and 1611 the Puritan party, under the oversight of the Anglicans introduced the King James Bible in 1611, still regarded as one of the most accurate and honest versions in the English language.

Under Oliver Cromwell the CoE became Protestant between 1646 and 1658, during which time the monarchy was abolished. After 1658 the Anglican party became the sole party in the CoE, becoming increasingly liberal. This resulted in the Methodist movement in the next century.

During the time of Cromwell, some ministers within the CoE were able to teach true Christianity, but after the restoration in 1658 were forced to leave the CoE and faced persecution. There were many churches of Christ being established in this short period, most of whom later became Calvinistic and Baptist.

When Darwin introduced his theory of organic evolution it was greeted by the now very liberal CoE as proof of the Bible as being myth and thus allowed the CoE to further distance itself from scripture. It has been said of the CoE, that they can take a man of faith, put him through theological college and four years later he will leave, qualified as a minister in the CoE, but an atheist. But it is an able manager of property, for the CoE is one of the largest land owners in England. Jesus said "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), yet the Church of England is a physical organisation. In the past it has killed those who it considered heretics, yet Jesus in the verse quoted makes it clear we should not use violence. The last Christian to be burnt alive in England was in 1612 when Edward Wightman of Burton upon Trent was convicted of heresies on the 14 December 1611, before the bishop of Coventry and Litchfield. He was burnt at Litchfield on the 11 April 1612. Those heresies were preaching Jesus and the necessity of baptism (immersion for the remission of sins). We must ask, who are the real heretics? The answer is the Anglican Church, therefore it cannot be the church of Christ. Today the CoE is anti-marriage, pro-evolution and for allowing gay priests, both male and female to be ordained. Many within the CoE are for gay marriages. Many priests deny the existence of God, being atheist. Others reject the virgin birth whilst celebrating Christmas, and rejecting the Resurrection whilst celebrating Easter.

Diana, Princess of Wales, who unfortunately died in August 1997 after a promiscuous relationship, was regarded at the time of her funeral as a minor goddess, which is interesting since her funeral took place in St. Paul's Cathedral, London which is built on, and is a continuation of, the pagan temple of Diana. This is the same goddess (Diana) whose followers clashed with Paul at Ephesus (Acts 19:21-41). We must ask, did Paul fellowship these heathen worshipers, or did he preach Christ to them? We must ask, what fellowship do we have with devils (1 Cor. 10:19-21)? The Anglican Church is a continuation of pagan worship. We can conclude the Anglican Church is of man, not God, it is not the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). It is not from heaven, but of men.

In recent years the unity in diversity movement of the CoE has been inclusive of all faiths including Hindus and Muslims. In regards to Christianity little more needs to be said than this, the Church of England is not of God but man. Paul said teach no other gospel (Gal. 1:6-12).

In the USA, the offshoot of the CoE is the Episcopalian Church, which too suffers from the liberalism of the CoE. Starting in Jamestown, Virginia in 1607 its correct title is "Protestant Episcopal Church", though in reality its beginnings were Anglican, not Protestant. After the War of Independence the Episcopalian Church has enjoyed greater autonomy over the Anglican Church, but the two, to this day, are still closely associated. The Episcopalian Church started on the wrong continent (America), at the wrong time (1607) by the wrong people (Anglicans). It is most certainly not the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). It is not from heaven, but of men.

Paul wrote "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). The Anglican/Epis-

copal does not follow this great example and command, therefore the Anglican/Episcopal Church cannot be the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). It is **not** from heaven, but **of men**.

“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

The Baptist Church

Roelf L. Ruffner

I must say at the beginning of this article that I have nothing personally against people who call themselves Baptist. Many are fine religious folk and splendid neighbors. Baptists of yesteryear bravely fought sin, such as drinking and dancing. Some still do! Today, many Baptists are fighting a noble battle against modernism and for the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible. In these battles I stand foursquare with my Baptist friends. But despite of all these things the Baptist Church is an enemy of Jesus Christ and His brethren. Their many fine qualities will do them no good in the Day of Judgment.

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 which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; and in thy name cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:21-23).

Origin of the Baptist Church

The New Testament does not mention the Lord's body as being called Baptist. In fact, history records that the **first** Baptist Church was formed by a separatist (radical Puritan) minister, John Smyth, in 1609, in England. Many Baptists maintain that there is an unbroken line of succession of Baptist churches which stretches back to the first century A.D. But it exists only in their imagination—not in history.

Since the 17th century there have been many divisions within the Baptists. At present there are some 30 Baptist groups in the United States, ranging from the small Primitive Baptists to the large Southern Baptists. The latter came into being in a division over slavery in 1845.

The church we read about in the New Testament had its beginnings in Acts 2, about 30 A.D. Though its physical presence has waxed and waned throughout the last two thousand years it has always existed in the spiritual sense as the body of Christ (Col. 1:18, 24) and is constantly sprouting again wherever the “seed of the kingdom” (Luke 8:11) germinates in the hearts of men. The Baptist Church came into being approximately 1,579 years too late.

Teachings of the Baptist Church

I have no quibble with the Baptist teaching regarding the divinity of Jesus Christ, as far as it agrees with the Bible. But most Baptist teaching is tied in many ways to the heretical teachings of John Calvin, or Calvinism. Calvinism can best be described by the acrostic **T.U.L.I.P.**, or **T**otal Hereditary Depravity, **U**nconditional Predestination, **L**imited Atonement, **I**rresistible Grace, and **P**erseverance of the Saints. While Baptists do hold to Calvinism in varying degrees, it is at the core of their teaching.

For example the doctrine of Total Hereditary Depravity would have all humanity born “sinners” because of Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden. In other words everyone is born with the “depravity” of their forefathers. This is why many people—not just Baptists—proclaim themselves “sinners” but also “saved” from their sins. The Bible does not refer to the saved as sinners but as forgiven saints (1 Cor. 1:2).

This doctrine would also have the infant which dies at birth damned to Hell. Baptists try to get around this dilemma by claiming that babies are not born sinners but with a **propensity** to sin. Fortunately, this does not concur with the teachings of the Bible. We are not responsible for the sins of our ancestors. We are responsible only for our own sins (Ezek. 18:19-20). Likewise, little children are not depraved. Jesus once said,

“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Luke 18:16).

The Calvinistic doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints says that God has elected to save certain individuals and these individuals **cannot** be lost. In other words the Christian cannot fall from grace or, “once saved, always saved”. But in multiple passages the Bible teaches that the Christian **can** fall from grace **and** be lost eternally. Notice how the Bible refutes this doctrine: “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he **fall**” (1 Cor. 10:12). “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in **departing** from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). [Emphasis mine, RLR.]

But perhaps the most pernicious of Baptist doctrines is the idea of “faith-only” salvation. They believe that one is saved at the point of belief in Jesus as the Son of God. Millions have heard the plea to “pray the sinner's prayer” or “just accept Jesus in your heart as your personal Savior and you will be saved”. There is **not one example** in the New Testament of anyone doing these things in order to be saved. We are not saved by “faith only” but by obedient faith. “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” (ASV, John 3:36). Faith requires the necessary catalyst of obedience to produce salvation. “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

While the Baptist Church may have departed from God's Plan of Salvation, the Bible hasn't. This very day one can become a Christian like Matthew, Mark, Paul and Jude by the obeying the Lord How?

1. One must hear the gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:17).
2. One must believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Faith is vital to one being pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24).
3. One must repent, or turn, from his sins. The Lord requires a change of mind for one to be acceptable to Him (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. One must confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God (Rom. 10:9,10). It is not just enough to believe in Him, we must confess Him before men (John 12:42-43).
5. One must be baptized (immersed) in water for remission or forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). At the point of baptism one comes in contact with the precious blood of Christ (Gal. 3:27) which cleanses him of all sin. He rises up out of that watery grave a new creature, forgiven by the grace of God (Rom. 6:3-6).
6. Though our Baptist friends practice baptism to enter their denomination, they do not believe it is necessary for remission of sins. But the Bible teaches us that baptism “doth now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21); washes away our sins (Acts 22:16) and is as critical to salvation as belief (Mark 16:16).
7. One must remain faithful to Jesus even unto death (Rev. 2:10). The Bible teaches that the Christian can fall from grace and be lost (Gal. 5:4). But the unfaithful Christian can be forgiven at any time before death if he repents of his sins and prays to God for pardon through the Son (Acts 8:13, 18-24; 1 John 1:7-10).

The Baptists Use The Wrong Name

All through the New Testament we find people using the name *Christian* describing their allegiance to the risen Lord (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:16). **Nowhere** do we read of a Christian referring to himself as a *Baptist*. Where is their authority from the New Testament to call themselves by this name? They claim John the Baptist (“The Immerser”) as the source. But that described what he **did**—immersed people. Though a great prophet, John was not a Christian (Matt. 11:11). He lived **before** the Cross, under the Old Covenant or Law of Moses. Years after the ascension of Jesus into Heaven the Apostle Paul found some followers of John who had been baptized with John's Baptism, and then baptized them “in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:1-5)—the baptism for remission of sins commanded by Christ (Mark 16:16; Matt. 28:18-20).

Was Paul a Baptist? How about Peter, James, Jude and Aquilla? By its very silence the inspired record votes a resounding “No!” There is no authority in the Bible for a Christian to call himself by any other religious appellation but the one given by the Lord (Matt. 23:7-12; Col. 3:17).

Organization of the Baptist Church

The Baptist Church has developed an interesting system of church government. At the local level each congregation is independent. Usually the local pastor oversees a board of deacons which looks after the affairs on the church. (The term *pastor* is not used in the Bible to refer to a preacher or teacher.) This does not match the pattern of church government as given in the Bible. The early church was made up of independent congregations overseen by a plurality of elders (also called by the interchangeable terms of pastors, shepherds, bishops, overseers, and presbyters (Acts 14:23; 20:17-28). These men met the qualifications given by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). Serving under them were the servants of the church, the deacons (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). All recognized Jesus as the “Chief Shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4) or head of the church (Col.1:18). **Nowhere** in the New Testament did any one man run the affairs of the church. In fact, this practice was condemned (2 John 9-10). A plurality of pastors or elder oversaw the affairs of the local church. The Baptist Church is sadly deficient in following the divine pattern of church government.

While each congregation of the Baptist Church claims independence; they usually are members of a local association of Baptists as well as a state and national convention. Their representatives or “messengers” vote on all sorts of things, including how to spend their pooled monetary resources. All of this is a marvel of human endeavor, but **not according to the pattern** of the New Testament. Again, there is no authority from the word of God for any of this. The church of the New Testament did not dilute its autonomy by submitting to outside control, whether from Jerusalem or Ephesus.

Conclusion

In this short study we have seen that the Baptist Church is not Biblical regarding its origin, teachings, name, or organization. It would be unrecognizable to the early Christian. It does not fit the pattern Jesus and the New Testament writers laid down for His church, the church of Christ. Sadly, we must conclude it is an enemy of Truth.

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30).

I just want to be a Christian like one reads about in the New Testament; saved by the blood of the Lamb and added to the church of Christ by the Lord Himself (Acts 2:47).

I beseech my Baptist readers to forsake their man-made institution and go back to the Bible. Be saved like they were in the New Testament and be added to the same church they were. The Baptist Church is **not** from heaven, but of men.

“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

The Mormon Church (Latter Day Saints)

Ron Cosby

Many and vast are the differences between the Mormon Church, also known as the Latter Day Saints (LDS), and the Lord's church. No one could be, ever was, or ever will become a Mormon by simply reading the Bible. Conversely, one must ignore and neglect many New Testament facts, truths, and doctrines to be a Mormon. In reality, one must reject clear and plain Bible teaching in order to become a Mormon.

The church of the Bible is built upon inspired **historical facts and eternal truths**, while Mormonism is **built upon a deceiver's words**. Here are a dozen reasons why the Mormon Church is not from heaven, but of men:

Its Claims of Revelation Contradict God's Word

In Second Nephi 29, the Mormon Church teaches that their new revelations are equal to the Bible. They also teach that one is a “fool” to only believe in the Bible (2 Ne. 29:6). The existence of Mormonism proves the old adage, that “You can fool some of

the people all the time.” They teach that the Bible is not enough (2 Ne. 29:10). They teach that all men will be judged out of the Bible. This is a faithful saying, not because the Book of Mormon says it but because the Bible teaches it. Here is their error: They also teach that men will be **judged** out of **Mormon** writings (2 Ne. 29:11).

The revelation of the Mormon Church teaches foolishness that you can see without knowing anything about Mormonism or the Bible. The Book of Mormon teaches that God would reveal His message unto others (2 Ne. 29:11-12). The last sentence in Second Nephi 29:12 is a terrible sentence. It says too much. According to the Book of Mormon, the Lord said, “I shall speak unto all nations of the earth and they shall write it.” Deceiver Joe Smith wanted to leave the impression that the Book of Mormon should be added to the Bible as inspired of God. However, what he said was far more than that. His sentence structure says 1) that God shall “speak” to all nations and 2) that “they” [all nations] shall write. Thus, according to Deceiver Smith, we will have inspired writings from “all nations,” not just from one, or a dozen, or a hundred nations, but from each and every one of them. This is the sort of foolishness the writings of men produce. You do not find this ignorance in the Bible.

The Bible teaches that revelation from God ceased in the first century. In First Corinthians 12-14, Paul teaches that love will not perish but the partial (miraculous capabilities) would be replaced by the completed will of God (1Cor 13:8). This same truth is taught in Ephesians chapter 4 where Paul again predicts the termination of spiritual gifts. Since the cessation of the supernatural was anticipated after the death of the apostles, we would expect that second century folks would no longer be exercising supernatural power. Historically, after the first century, the report concerning miraculous events from second and third century “Christians” were few. Those that are mentioned are questionable.

Therefore, the Book of Mormon cannot be from God. It, and the other so-called inspired writings from the Mormon Church, are bogus. Mormon “Scriptures” are not equal to the Bible but to the Koran. Both the Book of Mormon and the Koran were supposedly given by an angel from heaven. Anticipating this deceitfulness, God gave a dire warning that Deceiver Joseph Smith and the Mormon Church have ignored. He 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).

Students cannot follow the Bible and the Book of Mormon. They must reject one or the other. For over 1,700 years men became Christians without the Book of Mormon. Follow the Bible and it alone and you will be blessed.

The Mormon God Isn't The God Of The Bible

The Mormon Church teaches that God is flesh and bones like Jesus (*Doctrines and Covenants, 130:22*). Though not given in their “scriptures,” they also teach that God was once a man (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses, Vol.1, p. 51, April 9, 1852*). They also teach that, we, like Adam, shall one day be gods.

While dwelling on this mundane sphere, Jesus was indeed clothed in flesh and bones (John 1:1-3, 14; Phil. 2:5-8). However, it is error to teach that the Father has a body of flesh and bones. God is a spirit (John 4:24). A “spirit hath not flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39). Jesus clearly declares that the father is not flesh and bones (Matt. 16:17). Flesh and bones cannot dwell in the heavenly abode of God (1 Cor. 15:50; Matt. 6:1; 1 Kings 8). The heaven of heavens cannot contain God because of His spiritual essence and majesty, not because of physical (flesh and bones) size (1 Kings 8:27; Acts 7:49ff). Mormons make the same mistake that the idol worshipers at Athens made. They thought God needed to be served with men's hands (Acts 17:22ff).

The Mormon Christ Isn't The Christ Of The Bible

The Mormon Church is wrong in its concepts of the life of Christ from the beginning to the end. Jesus was not born in Jerusalem, as their scriptures teach (Alma 7:10), but in Bethlehem, as the Bible teaches (Micah 5:1-2; Matt. 2:1-5).

At His death, the earth was not engulfed in darkness for three days, as the LDS Scriptures teach (Helaman 14:20, 27), but three hours, as the Bible teaches (Luke 23:44).

They also teach another gospel when they proclaim that, after Jesus had been crucified, He was manifested to folks who lived in America (“the people of Nephi,” 3 Nephi 10:18; 11:1-ff, A.D. 34). This concept has been advertised on Television. Paul gives the correct list and order of Christ's appearances after He was resurrected (1 Cor. 15:1-12).

The Book of Mormon has Jesus doing a foolish thing. In Nephi 11:14-15, “Jesus” tells the multitude to see and feel the print of the nails in his hands and feet. What good would that have done? None! They knew absolutely nothing of the crucified Christ. Jesus was slain on the cross in Jerusalem not Utah, Missouri, or New York. That foolishness is not on the part of the Lord, but Deceiver Joe Smith. Mormonism has a total lack of understanding of what constitutes evidence.

Mormonism's failure to understand the divine nature of Jesus produces error concerning His relationship with the devil. They teach that Jesus and Lucifer (the devil) are spirit brothers (the following is copied directly from their own web site, at: <http://library.lds.org/Library/lpext.dll?f=templates&fn=main-h.htm&2.0>.) though I added the bold at the end.

How can Jesus and Lucifer be spirit brothers when their characters and purposes are so utterly opposed? Jess L. Christensen, Institute of Religion director at Utah State University, Logan, Utah. "On first hearing, the doctrine that Lucifer and our Lord, Jesus Christ, are brothers may seem surprising to some—especially to those unacquainted with latter-day revelations. But both the scriptures and the prophets affirm that Jesus Christ and Lucifer are indeed offspring of our Heavenly Father and, therefore, spirit brothers. Jesus Christ was with the Father from the beginning. Lucifer, too, was an angel “who was in authority in the presence of God,” a “son of the morning.” (See **Isa. 14:12**; D&C, 76:2527.) **“Both Jesus and Lucifer were strong leaders with great knowledge and influence. But as the Firstborn of the Father, Jesus was Lucifer's older brother”** (emphasis, RC). (See **Col. 1:15**; D&C, 93:21.)

Remember Galatians 1:6-9. Mormonism is a different gospel, even by their own admission. Note the words in the previous paragraph which say, “On first hearing, the doctrine that Lucifer and our Lord, Jesus Christ, are brothers may seem surprising to some—especially to those unacquainted with latter-day revelations.” Indeed, it is surprising because it is only in Mormon writings; it is not in the Bible.

The Church Of The Bible Is From Heaven, The Mormon Church Is Of Men
The founder of the church of Christ was Jesus, not Joseph Smith (Matt. 16:16-19). On the other hand, Deceiver Smith founded the Mormon Church (*Doctrines and Covenants, 20:1-2*). No one had heard of Mormonism before Smith introduced it into the world. *Doctrines and Covenants* erroneously says the church was “established ...by the will and commandments of God” (20:1c). Verse 2 tells readers what commandments verse 1 has in mind, saying, “Which commandments were given to Joseph Smith.” Obviously, since the commandments given unto Imposter Joe are not the commandments given unto Peter, James and John, Deceiver Smith's structure is built on sand.

The church of our Lord was established in 33 AD, not 1830 AD or 145 BC (both dates are given by Mormonism). If that were not foolish enough, the writer (Joseph Smith) then gives the date as being “one thousand eight and thirty years since the coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the flesh” (20:1). This is four or five years too late. Mr. Smith followed erroneous dating. It is now believed that the Lord was born about 4 years earlier than our dating method allows, a method Mr. Smith foolishly followed. If *Doctrines and Covenants* were inspired of God, the writer would not have made this mistake. He could have scooped the scholars by correcting history a hundred years before the world discovered the dating mistake.

And, if that were not foolish enough, the Mormon writings have the church being established in the 2nd century BC, more than 150 years before the Bible says it was, and almost 2,000 years ahead of Joseph Smith (Mosiah 18:17).

Mormon Religious Practices Are Of Men

Mormonism teaches that God's people were called Christians (Alma 46:15) more than 100 years before the Bible says they were (Acts 11:26). That was 73 years **before** Christ was born. On the very surface, this is silly. How can a person be described as a follower of someone who has never lived? Can't! More importantly, the Bible clearly says that God's people were called Christians **first** at Antioch. Since 73 BC comes before 40 AD, then either the Bible or the Book of Mormon is wrong. I'll take the Bible instead of the Book of Mormon. After all, the Book of Mormon was published **after** the Bible. Luke, on the other hand, as noted before, is classified as one of the "world's greatest historians," and the *Book of Mormon* has been classified by scholars as a fraud. The *Book of Mormon* is like an antique salesman who found a vase that was thousands of years old. How did he know it was thousands of years old? Because 73 BC was inscribed on the bottom. Such foolishness is a dead give away of fraud.

In 145 BC, the LDS taught folks to be baptized in water (Mosiah 18:13). Though they were taught to teach only one baptism (Mosiah 18:21), John the Baptist was allowed to teach another (Mark 1:3; Acts 19:1-6). The Bible is right, and the *Book of Mormon* is wrong. We shall see in the other assignment given unto me that, in 1830, all baptisms were annulled (D&C, 22:1-2).

Another error taught by the LDS on baptism is that their scriptures give two conditions unto condemnation—the failure to be baptized and the failure to believe (3 Nephi 11:33-35). What this means is, a baptized unbeliever meets only one of the conditions for being condemned. According to the sentence structure of Deceiver Smith, it takes *both*, not just one, of the conditions to condemn a person.

A third error concerning baptism which is taught by the LDS is, those that have been immersed in water will be visited "with fire and with the Holy Ghost" (3 Nephi 11:35). Deceiver Smith's words clearly convey that the baptism of fire and Spirit is to be upon the same person. According to John the baptist, the baptism in fire is the judgment upon the nation of Israel (Matt. 3:1-12). Without doubt, Third Nephi 11:35 reveals a total lack of Bible understanding.

Though Jesus clearly taught one wife for one man for life (Mat. 19:1-9; 1 Cor. 6:16-18), lustful Joe Smith introduced polygamy in 1831 AD (D&C, 132:61-62), which they prefer to call "pluralism." Since Mrs. Joseph Smith was giving lustful Joe problems on the new doctrine, God, through lustful Joe of course, gives a warning to Emma Smith to receive the new doctrine on "pluralism" (D&C, 52-55). Contrary to loud but groundless denials from some Mormons, the evidence that lustful Joe had several wives is overwhelming.

Look at Mormon doctrine concerning their priesthood. In deceiver Smith's church, the priesthood was introduced in America in 34 AD, and they were ordained as a separate group (D&C, 20:39; 132:45). In contrast, Peter refers to all members as priests (1 Pet. 2:5-9). Furthermore, no list of the "appointed" includes "priests" (Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:28ff; 1 Tim. 3:1ff; Titus 1). Do you realize that, if Joseph Smith is right on this new priesthood, that Jesus is no longer our priest (Heb. 7:12, 23-24)?

Furthermore, the early teaching of the Mormon Church forbids blacks from being priests, though this doctrine was changed in 1978. In contrast, Christianity and its priesthood is for all flesh.

Conclusion

The Mormons teach a different doctrine concerning Revelation, God, Jesus, the Church, and how to become a Christian. With Paul's warning in mind (Gal. 1:8-9), students ought to cast aside the Mormon religion and cleave unto the religion from God. The Mormon Church is **not** from heaven, but of men.

**Coming Soon: "...To The Saints Which are at Ephesus"
A new commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians**

“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

The Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Jess Whitlock

The Seventh-Day Adventist movement began in America in the 1800s. The movement began in a failed attempt to set a date for the imminent return or “advent” of Jesus Christ. William Miller (1782-1849) was the first leader among Adventists. In 1818 Miller concluded from Daniel 8:14 (making a day equal to a year) that Christ would return and cleanse the earth (sanctuary of Daniel 8:14) with fire between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844 i.e., 2,300 years from the year Ezra returned to Jerusalem in 457 B.C. When that date failed many left the movement. Others, however, set a new date of October 22, 1844 stating that Miller had miscalculated. When this date failed many more left the movement.

In 1844 a small group of Adventists began to teach the seventh day of the week as the day for Christian observance, rather than the first day of the week. One member of this group was Ellen G. White. White had been injured by a thrown stone when she was a young girl. Almost all “visions” that she imparted to Seventh-Day Adventists came through messages supposedly revealed to her by God, in times of illness. She is heralded by Adventists as an “inspired prophetess.”

Mrs. White and others, endorsed the 1843 date of Miller by going back to Daniel 8:14 and reinterpreting the sanctuary as being in heaven rather than on earth. In 1855 the group set up headquarters and a publishing house near Battle Creek, Michigan. “In 1860 the name Seventh-Day Adventist was officially adopted, and in 1903 the headquarters was moved to its present location in Washington, D.C.” (Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, Abingdon Press, Nashville, 1995, p. 38). Today this cult has headquarters in Silver Springs, Maryland. Seventh-Day Adventists boast 82,000 plus churches worldwide. The “General Conference” oversees the ministry of the Seventh-Day Adventists, (SDA) world-wide.

Seventh-Day Adventism is Built Upon False Prophets

Moses gave the test for whether or not a prophet is true or false. “When a prophet speaketh in the name of Jehovah, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which Jehovah hath not spoken: the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deut. 18:22).

William Miller stated, “I was thus brought, in 1818, at the close of my two-year study of the Scriptures, to the solemn conclusion, that in about twenty-five years from that time [1818] all the affairs of our present state would be wound up.” (Leroy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers*, 1954, p. 463). Much later Miller would write, “I confess my error, and acknowledge my disappointment; yet I still believe the day of the Lord is near, even at the door...” (Sylvester Bliss, *Memoirs of William Miller*, p. 256).

Ellen G. White wrote concerning William Miller’s chart, “I have seen that the 1843 chart was directed by the hand of the Lord and that it should not be altered, that the figures were as he wanted them.” (*Early Writings*, 1882 edition, p. 64). She predicted the end of the world in 1843, 1844, 1845 and 1851. In 1851 White wrote, “Now time is almost finished, and what we have been six years in learning they will have to learn in months.” (*Early Writings*, p. 57).

The main doctrine which separates this cult from Christendom is their insistence on keeping the Sabbath Day holy. Concerning the Sabbath day, “The beneficent Creator, after the six days of Creation rested on the seventh day and instituted the Sabbath for all people as a memorial of Creation. The fourth commandment of God’s unchangeable law requires the observance of this seventh-day Sabbath as the day of rest, worship, and ministry... The Sabbath is God’s perpetual sign of His eternal covenant between Him and His people.” (*Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manual*, p. 15, fundamental doctrine # 19). The SDA holds “that the great principles of God’s Law are embodied in the Ten Commandments...” (ibid, p 15). The SDA insists that the Ten Commandments were in effect before sin entered into the world (ibid, p. 149). Can’t you envision Adam even now? He reads, “Thou shalt not commit adultery” (Exo. 20:14). Adam then asks

God, "What is adultery?" After reading Exodus 20:16-17 Adam queries, "God, what is a neighbor, what is a man-servant and what is a maid-servant?"

The SDA teaches that the Law of Moses was for Jew and Gentile. But Paul wrote of the "Gentiles that have not the law..." (Rom. 2:14). The SDA insists that man has kept the Sabbath Day from creation (not at Mt. Sinai). Let your fingers do the walkin' and let the Bible do the talkin': "Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and madest known unto them Thy holy sabbath..." (Neh. 9:13-14).

It is noteworthy that SDA members do **not** keep the Sabbath holy! The SDA argues the Sabbath is perpetual for everyone forever. However, they do **not** burn incense on the Sabbath. "And when Aaron lighteth the lamps at even, he shall burn it, a perpetual incense before Jehovah throughout your generations" (Exo. 30:8).

The SDA cult does **not** offer burnt offerings and feasts on the Sabbath. Yet, "...for the morning and evening burnt-offerings, and the burnt-offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the set feasts, as it is written in the law of Jehovah" (2 Chron. 31:3b).

The SDA adherents do **not** sanctify their first-born sons and animals. Listen to this: "Sanctify unto me all the first-born, whatsoever openeth the womb, among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is Mine" (Exo. 13:2; cf. Luke 2:22-23).

The SDA cult does **not** obey the Law of the Lord as pertains to those members who violate the Sabbath day and the law of the sabbath. "Six days shall work be done; but on the seventh day there shall be to you a holy day, a sabbath of solemn rest to Jehovah: whosoever doeth any work therein shall be put to death" (Exo. 35: 2).

SDA members teach that the Sabbath was bound as a "perpetual covenant" and cite Exodus 31:13-16 as their proof text. As noted, they do **not** keep the Law of Moses entirely. Paul wrote, "Yea, I testify again to every man that receiveth circumcision, that he is a debtor to do the whole law" (Gal. 5:3). How much of the law Paul? The apostle said the "whole law." So, what part of the law is left out? Notice please, that Paul is not quite finished. "Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace" (Gal. 5:4). According to the apostle Paul, every member of this cult remains without God's grace! That is frightening indeed.

The law of the Sabbath was given only to the children of Israel. The Ten Commandments were given to those brought out of Egypt (Exo. 20:2). That law was given specifically to Israel (Deut. 5:1-6). The Sabbath Law was made known on Mt. Sinai. "Thou camest down also upon mount Sinai, and spakest with them from heaven, and gavest them right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments, and madest known unto them Thy holy sabbath, and commanded them commandments, and statutes, and a law, by Moses, thy servant" (Neh. 9:13-14).

The old law, i.e., the law of Moses was nailed to the cross. We are now dead to the law and delivered from the law (Rom. 7:1-6). Paul, an inspired apostle declares, "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us: and He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). E.M. Zerr has recorded,

As long as a note or bond is in force or unsatisfied, it stands as an obligation 'against' those who are under it. But when its demands have been met, it is canceled and its debtors are no longer held. Then such a document is rendered void by having a punch make a perforation through it, as a ticket is punched. This was done to the law when Jesus suffered Himself to be punctured or nailed to the cross (*Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, 1954, p. 137).

That old law was done away (2 Cor. 3:11-13). "In that He saith, a new covenant, He hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away" (Heb. 8:13). We are now under a better covenant (Heb. 8:6-ff).

New Testament Christians worship upon the first day of the week, which is Sunday and not Saturday! Christ was raised on the first day of the week (Mark 16:9). The church of Christ was established on the first day of the week (Acts 2:1-47). Pentecost was always the first day of the week (Lev. 23:15-16). The Lord's Supper was always observed upon

the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7). The weekly collection was always taken on the first day of the week (1st Cor. 11:18-29; 16:1-2). Question: Where do we read of any one of these things being done on the seventh day of the week? I'll wait... I am still waiting!

Think about this: When the Law of Moses came "...there fell of the people that day about three thousand men" (Exo. 32:28), but when the law of Christ came "about three thousand souls" were "saved" (Acts 2:41,47). Therefore, we do indeed have a "**better covenant**" (Heb. 8:6).

Seventh-Day Adventists Do Not Believe the Bible

"...whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus..." (Col. 3:16). Many people believe **in** God, but do not **believe** God. The thesis of this paper has been upon the emphasis the SDA places on the Sabbath. Time would fail us to examine all their departures from the Scripture. Let us close with a few of the commands of God's Word that are completely ignored or overlooked by the SDA.

- The adherents of SDA deny the Bible's teaching about hell, a place of eternal punishment for the wicked (Matt. 25:31-46; 2 Thess. 1:7-9).
- The SDA speaks of hell as a myth: "The finally impenitent, including Satan, the author of sin, will, by the fires of the last day, be reduced to a state of non-existence, becoming as though they had not been, thus purging God's universe of sinners." (Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1978. P. 142). Furthermore, the SDA contends the lost will simply be annihilated, a form of "soul-sleeping." The Bible teaches that men do exist following death, and are consciously aware of their eternal surroundings. (Luke 16:19-31).
- The SDA teaches that the law of God never changes. The author of Hebrews, whom I believe was the apostle Paul wrote, "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). God's law and the law of Moses are both given of God (Ezra 7:6,12; Neh. 8:1,8).
- The SDA generally observes the Lord's Supper once a quarter (some more often). New Testament Christians partake of the supper of the Lord weekly, on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-28).
- The SDA charges Roman Catholicism with changing the Sabbath Day from Saturday to Sunday. The SDA does not know either biblical history or religious history. The Sabbath ever remains as Saturday (the 7th day), and has **never** been anything else. Paul commanded Christians not to keep the Sabbath (Col. 2:16).
- The SDA contends that the spirit of man is merely his breath, so at death he is annihilated. The Bible shows that man is a triune being made up of body, soul, and spirit. (1 Thess. 5:23). Materialists often go to Genesis 2:7 where "God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." From this one passage it is argued that the terms *breath* and *spirit* are interchangeable terms. This cannot possibly be the case. Let's consider a few examples: First Peter 3:4 speaks of a "meek and quiet spirit..." Is Peter suggesting soft breathing? In Acts 23:8 we read that the "Sadducees say there is no resurrection, neither angel, nor spirit..." The Sadducees denied many plain truths, but in no way did they deny that man must breathe! Paul wrote, "Let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit..." (2 Cor. 7:1). Was the apostle requiring the Cert's breath test?
- There are dozens of other departures from the Word of the living God. This will be our final test of the SDA's myriad of false doctrines. "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). There is no more dangerous and damning doctrine than those doctrines that tamper with God's plan of **salvation**. Ken McFarland, an SDA member tells us: "Adventists believe that salvation is only by God's grace through faith in Jesus as mankind's substitute..."

Everyone who in faith accepts Jesus as Savior can rejoice in the full assurance of complete forgiveness and salvation.” (Ken McFarland, *Let’s Get Acquainted! Your Friends, the Seventh-Day Adventists*, Pacific Press Pub., p. 13). Again, “... That which saves is grace alone, through faith in the living Christ. And similarly, that which justifies is His free and blessed grace.” (A quote from *Questions on Doctrine*, p. 102), and “So far it would appear that Seventh-Day Adventist soteriology is basically the same as that of Calvin and Luther” (Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Four Major Cults*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1978, p. 123).

The biblical plan of salvation involves much more than that “faith only” or “grace alone” equals salvation. Man must believe that Jesus is the Christ (John 8:24). It is essential that man repent of all sin (Luke 13:3-5). It is imperative that we make the good confession of Christ as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). Then, be baptized into Christ “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38).

Let us encourage you to “search the scriptures daily, whether these things are so...” (Acts 17:11). We are under law to Christ today (1 Cor. 9:21). Christ’s covenant is far superior and we must keep the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). You will find that Seventh Day Adventism is **not from heaven**, but of men.

“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

The Lutheran Church

David Ray

From Heaven or men; these are the only two options for the source of one’s religion. If our source is from men, then our religion is nothing more than a social group. If it is from Heaven, then we have found the one and only such religion. However, such a claim must be supported by the only *book* from Heaven, the Bible.

In this article we’ll address the Lutheran Church. Does it meet the biblically required characteristics that would make it from Heaven?

Most of us are familiar with this group’s founder: Martin Luther, the German monk, professor of theology, and Roman Catholic priest whose *Ninety-five Theses* in the year 1517 sparked the beginning of the Reformation Movement as well as his excommunication from the Catholic Church. According to ReligionFacts.com, today the Lutheran Church has 72 million adherents, 4 million of which are in North America (<http://www.religionfacts.com/lutheranism>). The two largest divisions of the Lutheran Church in America are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS).

The Name

The first and easiest characteristic we notice in a religious organization is its name. Without any further research we can see that this is not a name we find anywhere in Scripture in any form, certainly not to describe the one church Christ established. We recognize that this group takes this name from its founder, Martin Luther. While we may indeed have many positive things to say about some of his efforts against the apostate Catholic Church, nothing would give any human being the right to call the **Lord’s** church by any other name, certainly not that of a mere man! Luther agreed.

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 any one. St. Paul, in I Corinthians 1, would not allow Christians to call themselves Pauline or Petrine, but Christian. How then should I, poor, foul carcass 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.” (*A Compend of Luther’s Theology*, pg. 135).

So, though Lutherans still persist in going against Martin Luther’s wishes on this topic, we, like Luther himself, can know that the name Lutheran is clearly from men, not

Heaven. This point is enough to conclude that this organization is *not* the one church Christ established. For if they disrespect the authority of the Scripture on such a simple topic as the name of the church, why would their practices be any different?

Sola Scriptura?

Lutherans claim to believe in Sola Scriptura (or Scriptures Alone). The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod's website says this means that "The Bible is God's inerrant and infallible Word, in which He reveals His Law and His Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the sole rule and norm for Christian doctrine" (www.lcms.org/about/beliefs). The ECLA website says, "Lutheran Christians say that the Scriptures are the "source and norm" of their teaching and practice" (<https://www.elca.org/Faith/ELCA-Teaching/Scripture-Creeds-Confessions>).

Therefore, their doctrines should match those of Scripture, without adding to or subtracting from. Let's test some of their doctrines, as the Bible teaches us to do (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1).

They claim to believe in the Bible as the "sole rule" for Christian doctrine (as it truly is 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). However, they also believe in multiple creeds and confessions (e.g., the Apostles' Creed, Nicene Creed, Augsburg Confession, Large Catechism, Small Catechism, etc.), many of which are contained in their *Book of Concord* (www.religionfacts.com/lutheranism/beliefs). This is a clear contradiction of their "Sola Scriptura" claim. Creeds and confessions are either additions to, subtractions from, or exactly the same as the Bible. Therefore, in no case are they necessary. Adherence to these writings of men is another demonstration that the Lutheran religion is from men, not Heaven.

Necessity of Baptism

Many of the statements of Lutherans on the topic of baptism seem as if they believe it to be essential to salvation. But, as is so often the case, further investigation proves otherwise.

From the LCMS website, under Baptism FAQ's, we find the following:

The LCMS does not believe that Baptism is ABSOLUTELY necessary for salvation. All true believers in the Old Testament era were saved without baptism. Mark 16:16 implies that it is not the absence of Baptism that condemns a person but the absence of faith, and there are clearly other ways of coming to faith by the power of the Holy Spirit (reading or hearing the Word of God) (<https://www.lcms.org/about/beliefs/faqs/doctrine#baptism>).

And this is even from the more conservative LCMS rather than the ELCA! The Bible is incredibly clear on the topic of baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21). Yes, even Mark 16:16, contrary to the LCMS claim, teaches that baptism is **absolutely required** for salvation. It says "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved..." This is very easy to understand. Unfortunately, folks tend to focus on the second part of the verse: "he that believeth not shall be damned." This says *nothing* of baptism, positive or negative. The reason why it says nothing is because it's talking about who will be damned or condemned. If you want to be condemned, don't believe (it's irrelevant whether or not you're baptized). If you want to be saved, believe and be baptized!

Mode of Baptism

From the LCMS website's article entitled "The Theology and Practice of Holy Baptism," under "The Baptismal Commission," page 18, we find the following on their view of the mode of baptism.

Strictly speaking, the word baptize means to "wash with water," whether by immersing, pouring, splashing or sprinkling. As an act of washing, the Bible does not say how much water one must use or how one should apply the water. It simply says, "baptize" or "apply water" (<https://files.lcms.org/wl/?id=mq85SBLsvAyqKtdSCsmDKSjOGO4UrUlk>).

Sadly, they choose to define their doctrine by the *English* word "baptize" rather than the *Greek* word "baptizo" (the New Testament was written in **Greek**, not English).

According to Thayer, the Greek *baptizo* means “dip, immerse, submerge, overwhelm.” Therefore, Lutherans are wrong to conclude regarding baptism that, “The Bible simply does not say, which is good and sufficient reason for the church not to insist on a particular mode of Baptism” (ibid.).

Infant Baptism

The primary reason a religious group chooses sprinkling over immersion is so that infants can be “baptized.” Notice this acknowledgement in their next paragraph.

Ordinarily, we in the Lutheran church have performed Baptisms by sprinkling or pouring water over the head of the person being baptized. Practically, this would seem to be most appropriate for baptizing infants and very young children.

This is another departure from Scripture, which contains no teaching nor example of infant baptism. Yet in their “Baptism FAQ’s” (referenced above) it says “we believe that when an infant is baptized God creates faith in the heart of that infant. We believe this because the Bible says that infants can believe (Matt. 18:6).”

Common sense tells us that infants cannot believe or have faith in God. And, contrary to their claim, nothing in Matthew 18:6 or its context speaks of infants. Rather, it speaks of a “little child” whom Jesus called to Himself (i.e., the child was old enough to hear and come to Jesus) and whose humility He used as an example to teach His disciples not to be concerned with who was the greatest (vv. 1-6).

Infants cannot complete the biblical prerequisites to baptism. They cannot have faith (Heb. 11:6), since the source of faith is the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), which they cannot read or understand. They cannot repent (a “change of mind”) about their sins (Acts 17:30), even if they had any (see Inherited Sin below). Nor can they make a public confession of their supposed belief that Jesus is the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37).

So, here we have another topic on which the Lutheran Church shows itself to be a religion of men, not from Heaven.

Inherited Sin

Inherited sin, “original sin,” or Total Hereditary Depravity, is a most unholy and absolutely heinous doctrine that charges God with holding innocent children as guilty of the sins of their fathers, even back to Adam and Eve.

Martin Luther said in his Small Catechism that even “the infant is possessed by the devil and a child of sin and wrath” (*Book of Concord*, 372). So, not only is the infant a sinner, he is even demon-possessed!

A Lutheran congregation in Oklahoma City said this regarding sin: “All people have inherited sin through the disobedience of Adam and Eve. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. Romans 3:23; 5:12; I John 1:8-10” (<http://firstlutheranokc.org/site/cs/aboutus.asp>).

None of the passages offered say that sin was “inherited.” Romans 5:12 is the passage most often cited for this false doctrine. In reference to Adam, it says “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.” Paul said that sin **entered** into the world because of Adam, but that it passed to all men “**for that all have sinned**”! Every human is guilty of sin because every human has **committed** sin, **not** inherited it.

The very definition of sin, “the transgression of God’s law” (1 John 3:4), refutes the concept of original sin. A transgression cannot be inherited; it is an action of disobedience on the part of the sinner who committed it. The meaning of this false doctrine then must be that it is the **guilt** of the sin that they believe passes on to the next generation. Since only God can assign guilt to one’s account and punish him for it, this doctrine, if it were true, would make God unjust, holding **you** (even as an infant) accountable for your father’s sins.

But Ezekiel 18 makes it crystal clear that this is false. Great detail is given in this chapter to emphasize and illustrate the truth that Ezekiel sums up in verse 20:

“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.”

The Bible does **not** teach such a damnable doctrine as inherited sin.

There are other beliefs and doctrines of the Lutheran church that we could discuss (e.g., faith alone, grace alone, the Ten Commandments, sacraments, church organization, etc.). But these we have examined are sufficient to demonstrate that the Lutheran Church is **not** the one church Christ died to establish. It is **from men, not Heaven**.

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“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

The Jehovah's Witnesses Denomination

Bruce Stulting

The Jehovah's Witnesses (hereafter JWs) are a very zealous and active group of people. It is likely that anyone reading this article has been confronted with this particular religious group at one time or another. Although zealous, the JWs are like Israel of old and are “zealous without knowledge” (Rom. 10:1-2). Consequently, the JWs have departed from true Christianity and developed many “damnable heresies” (2 Pet. 2:1).

This article will examine some of the important doctrinal errors taught by the JWs. Please bear in mind that this writer bears no ill will toward any member of this religious denomination. However, we are obligated to heed John's warning, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Thus, our only intent is to defend the Faith and promote unity among believers (Jude 3; 1 Cor. 1:10).

The Origin and Background of Jehovah's Witnesses

In 1870, at the age of 18, Charles T. Russell organized a Bible class in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA. In 1876, he was elected “pastor” of the group. The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society was founded in 1879. The leadership of the “Society” eventually went to J.F. (Judge) Rutherford and the name Jehovah's Witnesses was taken at Columbus, Ohio, in 1931. Their headquarters were located in Brooklyn, New York. They have their own translation of the Scriptures called the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* in which they have taken unwarranted liberties with the Greek text. Their leading periodical is the *Watchtower* and they publish millions of pamphlets each year which are distributed by their adherents.

Their Name—Jehovah's Witnesses

The name “Jehovah's Witnesses” is problematic since it is not found anywhere in the Scriptures. According to the New Testament, God's chosen people were called: (1) Disciples (Acts 11:26); (2) Saints (Jude 1:14); Christians (1 Peter 4:16; Acts 11:26); and Brethren. (1 Jn. 3: 14).

Luke records in Acts 11:26, “And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch”. *Called* comes from the Greek *κληματιζω* and is literally translated “divinely called”. Thus, “Christian” is the name that God chose to call His people. This is a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, “...thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the LORD shall name” (Isa. 62:2). The fact is, **man** chose the name Jehovah's Witnesses, **not** God.

Jehovah's Witnesses' Teaching on Divinity

JWs teach that there is one God and that His name is Jehovah. In doing so, they deny the deity of both Jesus and the Holy Spirit. However, the Bible plainly teaches the deity

of Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

Regarding the deity of Jesus. Of the coming Messiah, Isaiah stated, “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). Jesus was the child of whom the prophet spoke. Thus, Isaiah recognized that Jesus is “the mighty God”. John recognized the deity of Jesus when he wrote,

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men...And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (John 1:1-4, 14).

The corrupt *New World Translation* of the JW's tries to hide the force of this plain statement of deity by translating John 1:1 as “In the beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God and the Word was **a God**”. There is simply no justification for such a translation and demonstrates the weakness of their position and the desperate lengths to which they will go to deceive the reader. Paul stated that prior to the incarnation, Jesus was in the form of God and equal with God (Phil. 2:5-8). Jesus calls upon everyone to honor Him in the same way the Father is honored. He further stated, that those who refuse to honor Him were not honoring the Father who sent Him (John 5:23). By rejecting the deity of Jesus, the JW's are dishonoring the Father.

Regarding the deity of the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures also teach that the Holy Spirit is God. When Ananias and Sapphira lied to Peter about the price of the land they sold, Peter stated,

...Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to **lie to the Holy Ghost**, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not **lied unto men, but unto God**” (Acts 5:3-4 emphasis mine BLS).

Notice that Peter referred to the Holy Spirit as God. Thus, we must conclude that the Godhead is composed of (1) God, the Father; (2) God, the Son; and God, the Holy Spirit deity (Col. 2:9). Further evidence is seen at the Baptism of Jesus where all three members of the Godhead were present (Mat. 3:16-17). And, baptism is done “...in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Mat. 28:19).

Jehovah's Witnesses' Teaching on The Christ

Closely related to their teaching about the deity of Jesus is the JW's teaching that Christ was the first creation of God. The Bible teaches that Christ is eternal in nature and that he was with God the Father in the creation of all things. The Hebrew word “God” in Genesis 1:1 is plural and includes the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The New Testament writers teach that Christ played an important role in the creation. In fact, John states that “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made” (Jn. 1:3). Furthermore, we are told that Jesus made the worlds (Heb. 1:2). Thus, we learn that Christ was **not** “created” but was the “Creator”.

JW's teach that Christ was put to death in the flesh and that God disposed of that body just as he disposed of Moses' body. They also teach that He was raised an invisible spirit creature. The Bible teaches that following his resurrection, Christ was not invisible but was seen and could be easily identified. The disciples were able to touch Him and examine His physical body (Luke 24:37-39, 42-43). Thomas would not believe the report of the resurrection of Jesus until he saw the nail prints in Jesus' hands and the wound in His side (John 20: 25-27). Upon his examination of the physical body of the resurrected Jesus, Thomas said, “My Lord and my God”.

Charles Russell and his followers believed the Second Coming of Christ had happened invisibly in 1874. This teaching continued for 40 years. However, his followers changed the date of Christ's coming to 1914. The change of date is something very few JW's

know about today. Even with the changed date, JW's still claim that His coming was spiritual and not visible and thus he was unseen to men.

The Bible clearly teaches that Christ's second coming will be visible, "every eye shall see him" (Rev. 1:7) and audible (1 Thess. 4: 16-17). The Bible also teaches that Christ is **now reigning** over his kingdom. (Acts 2:29-36).

Russell prophesied that the year 1914 would be the year Armageddon would begin in which God would destroy all human governments and establish His kingdom on the Earth. When World War I broke out in 1914, Charles Russell confidently said, "The present great war in Europe is the beginning of the Armageddon of the Scriptures" (*Pastor Russell's Sermons*, 1917, p. 676).

Of course, Armageddon never quite materialized in 1914, 1915, 1918 or any of the other years JW's leaders said it would occur. Charles Russell died in 1916, a failed prophet. But he would not be the last. Subsequent presidents of the Watchtower Society predicted 1925, 1941, and 1975 as years that Armageddon would occur.

Despite these false prophecies, the Watchtower Society has grown into one of the largest, most influential cults of our time. As of 2019, there are 8,579,909 million JW's attending some 119,954 "Kingdom Halls" (where the Witnesses meet to study) all over the world (Source: www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses).

Jehovah's Witnesses' Teaching on the Nature of Man

JW's teach that man is wholly mortal and that like the animals he ceases to exist when he dies. It is something like the little dog Rover; "when he is dead, he is dead all over". They don't believe that man **has** a soul, but that man **is** a soul. The Bible teaches that man has a body, a soul, and a spirit (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 4:12). Man is composed of a body which comes from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7). He is composed of a soul, which is his breath or life (Gen. 2:7). And, he is composed of a spirit, which is made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27; Eccl. 12:7). Because there are so many different meanings for the word "soul" and "spirit" they must be defined according to their usage in context. Sometimes the word "soul" is used to refer to nothing more than man's breath, which he has in common with the animals. There are other times when the word "soul" is used in the Bible to refer to man's eternal nature or spirit.

God Himself has a soul (Lev. 26:11,30; Isa. 1:14; Matt 12: 8; Heb. 10:38). Since God is a Spirit (John 4:24) He has no animal breath. Therefore, we conclude that God's soul is the same thing as His spirit. Though man's soul (breath or life) can and does die (Gen. 37:21; Num. 31:19) his immortal substance cannot die. Thus, Jesus admonishes us, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat 10:28). That immortal substance (spirit) is often referred to as his soul. (Psa. 103: 1; Gen 35:18; 1 Kings 17:21; Rev. 20:4).

Jehovah's Witnesses' Teaching on Eternal Punishment

The official Jehovah's Witness doctrinal position is stated in clear terms by one of their founders, J.W. Rutherford. He wrote:

For a long time men have been taught that the punishment for the wicked, those who disobey God, is everlasting torment or torture in a hell burning with unquenchable fire and brimstone. Many have been frightened away from studying the Bible because of this terrible doctrine. Many have refused to believe in God and the Lord Jesus because of it. It is another doctrine of Satan, used to blind the people. (*The Harp of God*, International Bible Students Association Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, Brooklyn, New York, p. 49).

Rutherford rejected the doctrine of eternal torment because he declared it to be entirely unscriptural. He also wrote: "Hell is not a place, but a condition. Those who go into the grave are not conscious there; but they have gone into the death condition. Their bodies decay and return to the dust." (*The Harp of God*, page 52). Again, "The doctrine of eternal torment is a wicked defamation of Jehovah. It is a foul stain upon his lovable name." (*Ibid.*, page 55).

The denial of hell and eternal punishment by JW's is based on nothing more than human bias. Many of us would very much like to believe there is no place of punishment reserved for the wicked, but the Bible clearly teaches there **is**.

Hell is not merely a grave where the body of a dead person is buried. But to the JW's, the grave is the only hell there is. They read the word "hell" in the Bible and claim that it is translated from a Hebrew word *sheol* and a Greek term *hades*. Both words refer to the place of departed spirits, to the "unseen state". Both words could refer to a grave or a pit, but when the death of a human is involved, the grave is merely the resting place of the body. It is very important for us to remember that the words translated *Hell* in the King James Version do not express the status of any particular individual who has gone into this unseen world. When the JW's people use the term *Hell* as meaning only the grave where the body is buried they are deceitfully handling the Word of God. *Gehenna* is another word in the original language translated Hell. This New Testament term expressly signifies a place of everlasting punishment for the wicked. One writer for the JW's wrote: "In all places where hell is translated from the Greek word *Gehenna* (geena) it means everlasting destruction...It is a picture or symbol of complete annihilation, and not of eternal torment." (*Let God Be True*, 96-97). As a proof text they misuse Matthew 10:28 which reads: "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 body and soul in hell." They erroneously contend that when something is destroyed it no longer exists. Thus, hell, in their view, is complete annihilation.

Destroy does not always mean complete extinction. We speak of those who destroy their reputation, or their health, or their influence. We do not mean that these are totally extinct. In fact the word from which *destroy* comes is the Greek term *apollumi*. W.E. Vine, one of the finest standards of authority on word meanings said, "The idea is not extinction but ruin, loss, not of being, but of well being" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Volume II, page 164). Jesus spoke of a "lost" sheep. The word "lost" is from *apollumi*—destroyed. The lost sheep of Luke 15:4 was not annihilated or extinguished for it was "found". The JW's' application of the words *destroy in hell (gehenna)* is totally wrong. Furthermore, Paul stated that Judean Christians heard that he, "...now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed" (Gal. 1:23). Certainly, no one would believe that Paul "annihilated" the gospel. This is evident, because the gospel is still able to be preached.

Here are passages that establish there is an awful place of torment called hell (*Gehenna*) and that it awaits all who are wicked and rebellious to God Almighty. Paul said Christ would give those who were troubled "rest" when Jesus returns with His mighty angels, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power" (2 Thes. 1:7-9). Destruction here is the loss of one's state of well being. It is not annihilation. There is no appeal from the final sentence of one who is consigned to the infernal regions of torment. Regarding the wicked, Jesus said: "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matt. 25:46). Here are the only two destinies—eternal punishment and eternal life. Here are the only two classes of mankind—the righteous and the wicked. The righteous go to eternal life—the wicked to everlasting punishment. The word that is translated *eternal* is the same word for *everlasting*. The fact is: eternal life endures as long as everlasting punishment. JW's take the everlasting part out of punishment but keep the eternal part in life. Such is neither possible nor honest. The Bible is clear that there is an everlasting punishment for the wicked and calls it *hell*.

Conclusion

Time and space limits our discussion of other vital doctrines peculiar to the JW's such as: (1) refusing blood transfusions and vaccinations; (2) refusing to salute or pledge allegiance to the flag; (3) refusing to vote or participate in government; and (4) refusing to participate in holidays or birthdays—all of which are without Biblical authority. However, these are sufficient to demonstrate that the Watchtower Society **does not** represent true New Testament Christianity.

No person who is interested in his soul's salvation can afford to espouse the doctrine of JW's. There can be no doubt that their teaching contradicts the Bible at almost every vital point. Thus, we must conclude, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" Mat. 15:14). The Jehovah's Witnesses denomination is **not** from heaven, but of men.

"From Heaven, Or Of Men?"

The Methodist Church

Gene Hill

In considering human activity, we must always question by what authority any given behavior can be justified. Paul tells us, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). The Jews asked Jesus for authority for His actions (Matt. 21:23-27), and He revealed by whom He was authorized (John 10:24-38). It is likewise necessary for us to order our thoughts, words, deeds in harmony with all that the Word teaches on any subject.

God has provided for us an infallible record to which we can go for our behavior to ensure that we are indeed walking in the light (1 John 1:6-10). Consequently, anything we need to begin and maintain a course of righteousness has been made available to us in God's Word (2 Pet. 1:1-11). It is a revelation given through inspiration by the Holy Spirit (John 14:16:26; 15:26-27; 16:13; 1 Cor. 2:4-13). It is a revelation that can be understood by all and understood alike (1 Cor. 1:10). God's Word is the source of Truth (John 17:17, 20-21). It is the Word that shall judge us all in the last day (John 12:48-50).

The theme for this issue of the *Gospel Preceptor* asks the question, "From God or Men"? This article deals with the Methodist Church in order to determine whether it and its doctrine is from God or man. Methodist author, Mary Fairchild, wrote:

Methodist Church history traces back to the early 1700s, where it developed in England as a result of the teachings of John Wesley. Even though he is named co-founder of Methodism, Wesley remained a member of the Church of England until his death and never wished to form a denomination separate from the Anglican Church.

Methodist Co-Founders: Charles and John Wesley

John Wesley (June 28, 1703-Feb. 24, 1791) and his brother Charles were born into a strong Anglican home. His father, Samuel, was a priest, and his mother, Susanna, was a religion teacher who faithfully taught the Bible to her 19 children.

While studying at Oxford University in England, John, Charles, and several other students formed a Christian group devoted to Bible study, prayer, and helping the underprivileged. They were labeled "Methodists" as a term of criticism from fellow students because of the orderly way they used methods to go about their religious affairs. But the group happily embraced the name as a badge of honor.

The beginning of Methodism as a popular revival movement began in 1738. After returning to England from America, Wesley was bitter, disillusioned and spiritually low. He shared his inner struggles with a Moravian, Peter Bohler, who greatly influenced John and his brother Charles to undertake evangelistic preaching with an emphasis on conversion and holiness.

Although both Wesley brothers were ordained ministers of the Church of England, they were barred from speaking in most of its pulpits because of their evangelistic methods but preached in homes, barns, open fields, or wherever they found an audience.

Methodism Breaks Away From the Church of England

Wesley did not set out to create a new church but instead began several small faith-restoration groups within the Anglican church called the United Societies. Soon, however, Methodism spread and eventually became its own separate religion when the first conference was held in 1744. By 1787, Wesley was required to register his preachers as

non-Anglicans, but he remained an Anglican to his death.

Wesley saw great opportunities for preaching the gospel outside of England. He ordained two lay preachers to serve in the newly independent United States of America and named George Coke as superintendent in that country. Meanwhile, he continued to preach throughout the British Isles.

Wesley's strict discipline and persistent work ethic served him well as a preacher, evangelist, and church organizer. Inexhaustibly, he pushed on through rainstorms and blizzards, preaching more than 40,000 sermons in his lifetime. He was still preaching at age 88, just a few days before he died in 1791.

The Methodist church had its beginning in the early 1700s as a result of John Wesley's teaching. It came as an offshoot of the Anglican church as these men were members of it. As previously noted in the above article, John Wesley continued to be a member of the Anglican Church until his death never wishing to found a new denomination.

The same article went on to say that George Whitefield was a great influence on Wesley but, being a Calvinist, parted company with Wesley over the doctrine of predestination. To at least some folks, doctrine is important even though that doctrine is not taught in Scripture in the first place.

One of the main sources claimed for authority for the Methodist Church is the document titled "The Articles of Faith"

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less.

All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical (*The Articles of Faith*, Article V, "Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation").

In comparing Methodist Church teachings with the Bible, here are some things to be considered:

1. When it was founded.
2. Where it was founded.
3. Upon Whose teachings it was founded.
4. What one must do to be saved.

The answers to each of these foundational questions is of the utmost importance.

When and Where the New Testament Church was Founded

We begin in the book of Isaiah chapter 2, verses 1-4 for the prophecy of the founding of the church in order to establish **when** it was to be founded and the **place** of its founding.

The prophet clearly states in verse 2, "it shall come to pass in **the last days**, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established." In Hebrews 1:1-2 the writer uses the words **last days** to reveal how God spoke through His Son Jesus "in these **last days**."

In Daniel 2:28, the prophet Daniel begins the interpretation of the king's dream of the great image and tells him that the dream would be fulfilled in the **latter days**. In that

dream four world dominating kingdoms would be established in succession with the last one being that of the Roman empire. In that dream, in verses 34 and 35, a small stone smote the image breaking it in pieces. Daniel describes the results in verse 44 of a fifth kingdom that would consume all the others and would then stand forever. Isaiah tells us that **Jerusalem** would be the **place** while Daniel said it would be in **the days of those kings**. Paul tells us that it was in “the fulness of time” that Jesus came forth (Gal 4:4), while Luke says it was in the days of the Roman Caesar Augustus that Jesus was born (Luke 2:1-7), fulfilling the prophecies of Isaiah and Daniel as to the time.

In Luke 24:36-53 and Acts 1:4-2:47 we find the commandment of Jesus to His apostles to begin the spread of the gospel from Jerusalem. Note Acts 1:8: ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. Jesus promised to build His church (Matt 16:18). He then added the saved to it (Acts 2:47) and Paul told Timothy, “how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15)—the very thing Isaiah prophesied folks would go up to (Isa 2:2-3).

The Methodist Church Contradicts the Bible on Salvation

The Methodist Church teaches, “That we are saved by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine and very full of comfort (Art. 9, *Methodist Discipline*). The **only place** in the New Testament where the words *faith only* are found is in James 2:24: “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and **not by faith only**” (Emphasis added). Methodist doctrine directly contradicts God's word on what one must do to be saved.

There are specific terms of entrance into this church/kingdom/house of God. Jesus said one must be born again—of water and of the Spirit (John 3:3-5)—if he expects to see or enter into the kingdom of God. The Holy Spirit has provided a very thorough example of what this entails in Acts 2:14-47. It requires the gospel to be taught, to be believed, and then to be acted upon. Jesus said the Gospel is to be taught in order to draw souls to Him (John 6:44-45). He said it must be believed that He is the Christ (John 8:24). Repentance from past sins is required (Luke 13:3). Confession of Him before men is necessary (Matt 10:32-33 cf. Acts 8:37). Immersion in an amount of water sufficient for a burial is commanded (Mark 16:15-16; John 3:23; Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:12). Faithful living is also an element of salvation (Rev 2:10). **Those** are the things God's Word requires for a man to be saved and be added to the church Jesus built.

It must be pointed out specifically, but lovingly, that there isn't any scripture or series of scriptures, taken in context that when understood, personally applied and obeyed that will make one anything other than a **Christian**. There is nothing in the Bible, understood in context, that authorizes any religious organization larger than a local congregation while smaller than the church universal to exist. The terms for salvation are specific and simple enough to understand and obey and, when understood and obeyed, will result in the salvation of one's eternal soul.

No ill will whatsoever is meant by anything contained in this article. Each soul reading this is responsible for his own feelings and thoughts. We encourage each person to study the scripture and compare what it teaches with what he is practicing to determine whether what he practices harmonizes with God's revealed Word (1 Cor 2:9-13).

The church of Christ was founded by, and upon, Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18) in Jerusalem in approximately 33 A.D. (Acts 2). He is its foundation (1 Cor. 3:11), its Head (Eph. 1:22-23), and its Savior (Eph. 5:23).

The Methodist Church was founded upon the wrong teachings of men (John and Charles Wesley), at the wrong place (England), at the wrong time (1744), and teaches the wrong plan of salvation (“Faith only”). The Methodist Church is, therefore **not** from heaven, but of men.

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“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

The Disciples of Christ (Christian Church)

Harrell Davidson

The Disciples of Christ was officially formed and became a denomination in 1968 though there was a liberal movement within the First Christian Church as early as the 1920 era. Both the First Christian and The Disciples of Christ on various websites falsely claim association with churches of Christ, even to this day.

The First Christian Church began more than anything else over the use of instrumental music in worship. Other departures soon came, such as the missionary society. Even more liberalism followed with many advertising a “traditional worship” at 8:45 with Bible Classes at 9:30 and a “modern worship” at 10:30. These groups are more in line with The Disciples of Christ church than they are with any other mainline First Christian Churches.

Both of these groups claim a kinship with churches of Christ. However, when an individual, or individuals, forsake the Holy Scriptures, they have left the Lord and His church and started a movement that is not approved by the Savior and is not then the true Lord’s church. There are certain commands to be obeyed to be a part of the body of Christ and certain avenues of worship that He has ordained. Where these are not followed then one might say that “one church is as good as another” which is the thinking of a large segment of society today. It is true that the First Christian Church left the churches of Christ and formed another body not approved of God. They have denominated themselves like the church in Corinth did in the first century. Paul, the apostle, wrote about that failure in 1 Cor. 1:10-13:

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

The Disciples of Christ may have originally gone out from among the church of Christ but they are not affiliated with the Lord’s church in any manner under the sun. Churches of Christ have no headquarters on earth while The Disciples of Christ have their headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana where they have their annual convention. Let us hear from the general minister and president of The Disciples of Christ, headquartered in Indianapolis. Notice this from their president and leader:

Dear Church

We are approaching Easter, a time when faith communities and families gather to celebrate the joy that we have in the saving grace and resurrection of Jesus. We are also distinctly aware of new life with the signs of spring surrounding us in God’s good creation.

I love this text from the book of Job. In chapter 14, verses 7-9, it says, “There is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again...and though its root grows old in the earth, and its stump dies in the ground, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth branches like a young plant.” There are those who would say that our experiment of covenantal structures and diverse belief is passe and obsolete, but I respectfully beg to differ. The text of Job proclaims that at the very SCENT of water, new life and new growth is possible! Your faith, indeed you, are that scent of water, standing and persevering wherever you are, still trusting and believing in the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in the power of that gospel to transform lives.

I have seen grass roots efforts to speak up with the poor just as Jesus did. I have seen faith communities reach out with kindness to those on the margins, just as Jesus commanded in Matthew 25. Our work together

through regional and general ministries touches people all across the U.S., Canada and, indeed, the globe with the message of hope that is ours in Christ Jesus.

I want you to know that I have confidence in you, Disciples of Christ! More importantly, I have confidence in God, who has begun this work in and among us, and who will complete it! I have seen the passion with which you serve your communities. God is not finished with us. As long as we abide in God, persisting in sharing the love God shows us through Christ Jesus, we can live; we can thrive.

We have another opportunity to gather as a faith community in Des Moines this summer. There we can see and demonstrate how the unity of our whole church matters. The rich diversity of our church means that while we are united in love, we are not uniform in how we live out our call. Whether you are able to attend or not, I invite you to spend some time in the Word with the Bible studies available from the General Assembly website (<https://disciples.org/ga>). “Abide in me,” Jesus says, and you will bring forth good fruit.

You are a Church—a movement—whose time has come, Disciples. You can show this fragmented world what it is like to live together, united in our love for Jesus. We can show the world that when we walk together, even when we disagree, we make the most powerful witness to the love of Christ for us all.

With joy and love

Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens

General Minister and President

Source- <https://disciples.org/from-the-gmp/holy-week-2019-message-from-the-general-minister-and-president/>

There you have the facts gleaned from their own website. Yes, they have a president of the society under which they now function in the guise of Christianity and their president and general minister is a woman, further violating many passages of scripture such as 1 Timothy 2 :12: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.” Teresa Hord Owens violates this passage in every way imaginable. There is no “general minister” or “president” of the Lord’s church upon this earth. But notice further:

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is a Protestant Christian denomination in the United States in the Reformed tradition with historical ties to the Restoration Movement.[1] The Disciples of Christ denomination officially was chartered in 1968, as it developed as a splinter from the non-denominational Christian Church. Within the Christian Church, from the 1920s forward, a segment moved in the direction of more liberal Protestant theology and acceptance of biblical criticism. This segment eventually developed a denominational structure and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was established in 1968. Although the Disciples denomination has historical ties in the Restoration Movement with non-denominational Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, it is now more akin to Protestant denominations from Reformation heritage.

It is often referred to as *The Christian Church*, *The Disciples of Christ*, or as *The Disciples*. The Christian Church was a charter participant in the formation of the World Council of Churches (WCC) and of the Federal Council of Churches (now the National Council of Churches), and it continues to be engaged in ecumenical conversations ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Church_\(Disciples_of_Christ\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_Church_(Disciples_of_Christ))).

The Disciples of Christ are ecumenical in that they are affiliated with most all religious institutions on the earth and have fellowship with them in what they call “communion around the table” meaning that all religious groups can come and share the Lord’s Supper as a sign of their fellowship together. They further say,

Disciples have given leadership to the establishment of *Christian Churches Together* in the U.S.A. (CCT) that brings together Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox, Evangelicals and Pentecostal Christians to seek to make a common witness in the United States. The Rev. Richard L. Hamm, former General Minister and President, was CCT's first full-time executive.

Thus, it makes no difference what one believes (meet around the communion table) they can be united with The Disciples of Christ Church. No one is left out of their circle, even one female who calls herself "pastor" who supports Planned Parenthood, thus arguing for abortion—murder of babies.

Additionally, they have a missionary society which is governed by a board of directors that makes decisions as to what work will or will not be done, to which each Disciples church sends money and headquarters determines where the money will go. None of these churches have any say as to where or how those funds will be used. They have created a monstrosity within the church that is almost bigger than the church itself, and **without any Bible authority**.

The Disciples of Christ are so far removed from the truth that pages could be written showing their fallacy.

First, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:5-6). From the very few things we have mentioned in this article these two passages make a strong statement. Due to the Disciples' failure in faithfully following the Scriptures they say they have God but note what God says about them in verse 6—they "lie and do not the truth."

Disciples are not in fellowship with God due to their unscriptural practices. We note: "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 John 9-11). "Transgress" means to go beyond. Disciples go beyond the teaching of God's Word. They are in clear opposition His Word when they are in fellowship with almost every denomination in society.

Second, their use of instrumental music in worship is a violation of Scripture. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16). In the personal ministry of our Lord: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matt. 26:30). There is not one scintilla of Scripture to support any mechanical instrument in attempts to worship God. Neither is there any choir in the New Testament. Congregations sing from the heart, not group singings, humming quartets, solos etc. No mechanical instrument of music is authorized in the Scriptures.

Third, the Lord's church of which we read in the New Testament has no earthly headquarters. Disciples have their headquarters in Indianapolis, Indiana. There is no president or vice-president or other chain of officers over any convention among God's faithful people. Paul said to the church at Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). No eldership was over more than the local congregation and was thus independent of any other congregation of the Lord's people. Jesus Christ is the head of the church as we note, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23).

Last, there is no mention in the Word of God about a missionary society of any kind. Local elderships are authorized only to make decisions as to the work that the local congregation will support afar. Each congregation in the New Testament was separate from all of the others. Local congregations may Scripturally send support to another

congregation as the apostle Paul did among Gentile congregations collecting funds for the poor in Jerusalem. “But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem” (Rom. 15: 25-26).

One would be wise to turn away from any denomination—church—that does not follow the Holy Scriptures for they—the Scriptures—will judge us in the last day. “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). They have rejected God and have not received His Word. The Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) is **not** from God, but of men.

“From Heaven, Or Of Men?”

Pentecostal Churches

Marvin L. Weir

During His earthly ministry Jesus asked the chief priests and elders a question that every person sincerely concerned about his soul's eternal welfare should take to heart: “The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men...?” (Matt. 21:25). This question **must** be asked of churches and doctrines today! So without any animosity for any person but nonetheless seeking truth we ask, “From whence came the Pentecostal Holiness Church, Assembly of God Church, and Nazarene Church—from heaven or from men?”

The Pentecostal Holiness Church was organized in 1898 at Anderson, South Carolina. It was, however, the Wesleyan Holiness Movement of the 18th and 19th centuries that set in motion what would eventually become the Pentecostal movement of today. This group believes in miraculous healing, Holy Spirit baptism, and ecstatic utterances (speaking in an unknown tongue) and utilizes extreme emotionalism to achieve desired results.

The General Council of the Assemblies of God was formed in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1914. Members of different religious groups decided to unite together in one body and thus be more effective in their ministry. An organization was agreed upon and the Assemblies of God movement began. In 1916 this church chose Springfield, Missouri as the place for their headquarters. This group also believes that as a result of the baptism the Holy Spirit people will be able to heal the sick and speak in unknown tongues.

It was from a Pentecostal background that the Nazarene Church was formed under the leadership of “Rev.” Phineas F. Bressie in Los Angeles, California in 1895. In 1907 the Nazarene church and the Association of Pentecostal Churches of America (founded in 1894) merged to form the Pentecostal Church of the Nazarene. In 1919 the General Assembly dropped *Pentecostal* from the name and it became officially known as Church of the Nazarene. This group believes in divine healing and the baptismal measure of the Holy Spirit.

A study of the Bible reveals that the Lord's church was prophesied by Isaiah (2:2-3) and Micah (4:1-2) some 750 years **before** it had its beginning. Jerusalem was the designated place for the Lord's church to begin.

Christ said to some during His earthly ministry, “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). The words *church* and *kingdom* are used interchangeably (Matt. 16:18-19) and Paul told the Colossian brethren that they were delivered out “of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love” (Col. 1:13). Christ promised to build **His** church (Matt. 16:18) and it was purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

Friends, **any** religious group that began somewhere other than Jerusalem on Pentecost of A.D. 33 and was founded by some man or group of men is **not** the church of my Lord! Regarding these religious groups we are now discussing we ask, “Did they come from Heaven or from men?” The answer is obvious—none of these groups was

established by the right person (Christ) at the right time (A.D. 33) in the right place (Jerusalem).

Space will not permit us to study all of the doctrinal errors of these three religious groups. People are encouraged, however, to search the Scriptures as did the noble Bereans to see whether or not the things they have been taught are true (Acts 17:11). God's Word (the Holy Bible) is true (John 17:17) and if man teaches differently from the Holy Scriptures then "let God be found true, but every man a liar..." (Rom. 3:4). As God has said, "Come now, and let us reason together..." (Isa. 1:18).

Holy Spirit Baptism Was a Promise to the Apostles

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is not available for people today. First, note that Holy Spirit baptism was a **promise** given to the **apostles** and not a command for believers to obey today. To the **apostles** Christ promised, "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), [emphasis MLW]. Again, Jesus declared to the **apostles**, "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), [emphasis MLW]. Shortly before His death the Lord again instructs His **apostles**, "And behold, I send forth the promise of my Father upon **you**: but tarry **ye** in the city, until **ye** be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:49), [emphasis MLW]. In the book of Acts the **apostles** were told to wait in Jerusalem "for the promise of the Father" (Acts 1:4). This "promise" was Holy Spirit baptism that would empower **the apostles** as Christ's witnesses throughout the world (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit appeared as promised on Pentecost while "**they** (the apostles) were all in one place (Acts 2:1) and "**they** (the apostles) were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4), [emphasis MLW].

The **one** baptism valid today is water baptism (Eph. 4:5), and it is authorized by Christ in giving the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Man cannot impart Holy Spirit baptism and Christ has not promised to give it to any who believe and obey His will today. In a futile attempt to prove that believers should expect Holy Spirit baptism today those who advocate such say it is evidenced by the same sign described in Acts 2:4—the speaking in an unknown tongue.

Speaking in Unknown Tongues

The word *unknown* (1 Cor. 2, 4, 13, 14, 19) is not in the original Greek language and was supplied by the King James translators. It was an attempt to simply stress that the apostles spoke in languages they had not previously studied. It was an unknown tongue (language) to the apostles but those to whom they were speaking understood the language. According to the Bible, speaking in tongues was a sign for the unbeliever and not the believer (1 Cor. 14:22). But when this writer challenged one who claimed to speak in tongues to demonstrate his claim, he quickly said he could not do so because I was an unbeliever!

The Scriptures read that the apostles on the day of Pentecost "began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:4). The crowd was amazed and marveled that these men were Galileans and yet they were hearing "every man in [his] own tongue, wherein [he was] born" (Acts 2:7-8). The legitimate tongue speaking on Pentecost and during the early age of the New Testament church was not some unintelligible gibberish but rather intelligent communication in a language known to the listener. In the early days of the church one was not to speak in a tongue unless there was one available who could interpret (1 Cor. 14:27-28). Folks today who **claim** to speak in tongues do not have a clue as to what they are saying and neither do the people who are listening to them. Such a situation hardly qualifies as edification and is of no benefit to anyone.

Modern Day Miracles

It should be obvious by now that *tongue speaking* and the ability to work *miracles* are an outgrowth of Holy Spirit baptism. Let us take the Bible and prove, or test, the claims of modern day miracles workers (1 John 4:1).

Did the apostles and those they gave such gifts to have the ability to work miracles in the early church? Absolutely! Keep in mind that it was **the apostles** who were baptized in the Holy Spirit and that **they** had the ability to speak in tongues and work miracles. It is of utmost importance for one to realize that the **only** way spiritual gifts could be imparted to others was by the laying on of an **apostle's** hands. Simon the sorcerer was a fake who became a believer and was baptized into the Lord's church (Acts 8:13). When Simon saw genuine miracles he was amazed and when he saw “that through the **laying on of the apostles' hands** the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money” (Acts 8:18), [emphasis MLW]. The laying on of an apostle's hand is the **only** way the Bible teaches that spiritual gifts could be imparted to others. Thus, when the last apostle died, so did the ability to impart spiritual gifts!

Modern day miracle workers claim to do mighty works but talk minus action will not suffice. The Bible teaches that “Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and **healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness** among the people” (Matt. 4:23), [emphasis MLW]. God's Word also says that Christ gave the twelve apostles “authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and **to heal all manner of disease and all manner of sickness**” (Matt. 10:1), [emphasis MLW]. Did you notice the word *all* in each of the above verses of Scripture? Bible miracles were also instantaneous and easily discerned. When was the last time you saw the missing arm or leg restored to a person? When have you seen the skin of one terribly burned by fire made new? Have you seen a leper's sore instantly cured? Have you ever seen these so-called miracle workers put their tent up at the local cemetery? The answer is *no*, and I wouldn't hold my breath until such a happening occurs. Bible miracles were not just for internal ailments but also for external ailments (those easily identified).

But the Bible clearly teaches:

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 (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

Note that *prophecies, tongues, and knowledge* would be done away. These are supernatural gifts because common knowledge still exists. These miraculous gifts would be **done away** when “**that which is perfect is come**” [emphasis MLW]. “That which is perfect” refers to completed revelation, the Holy Scriptures, the Bible. Before the Bible was complete there was the need to confirm the word of those preaching and teaching and genuine miracles did that (cf. Mark 16:20).

Miracles are no longer needed today to accomplish what they once accomplished because we have the authoritative Word of God in its completeness (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3). Each person today has access to “the perfect law, the law of liberty” (Jas. 1:25), but such was not the case before revelation was completed.

Our desire is to “speak the truth in love” (Eph. 4:15) because of the value of a soul (Matt. 16:26). As Jesus implored, “Take heed what ye hear...” (Mark 4:24) and “how ye hear” (Luke 8:18). May we all have hearts that desire to glorify God and not man, and may we realize that we will all be judged by the words that Christ has spoken (John 12:48)—and not by man-made creeds.

It has always been true that “except Jehovah build the house, they labor in vain that build it...” (Psa. 127:1). It may not matter to you today that the Nazarene, Assembly of God, and Pentecostal Holiness Churches are **not** from heaven, but of men. But in **that** Day it **will** matter!

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"From Heaven, Or Of Men?"

The Presbyterian Church

Lee Moses

Numerous denominations identifying as "Presbyterian" comprise what may collectively be called the Presbyterian Church. Among the larger Protestant denominations found in the United States are the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Presbyterian Church in America, and the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Although some differences in teaching and practice can be found between these different denominations, enough similarities exist that most of what applies to one applies to all. So is the Presbyterian Church from heaven, or of men?

The Presbyterian Doctrine...From Heaven, or of Men?

Presbyterian Churches adhere to the tenets of John Calvin, particularly as outlined in the Westminster Confession of Faith. As such, they affirm that every human being is born utterly depraved, incapable of taking any action toward salvation, or of even desiring salvation. But, they say, God has foreordained certain persons to salvation regardless of their actions or desires, and will directly **force** those persons to come to Him. This contradicts Biblical teachings that God will judge every human being based upon what he has done, not based upon some arbitrary whim of God (Rom. 2:6-11; 2 Cor. 5:10). God will not force anyone to come to Him, but anyone willing may come to Him (Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17).

And as far as the Presbyterian Church's insistence on following manmade creeds and upholding what they call their "confessional tradition"—any creed other than the Bible is not the Bible.

The Bible urges, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16). It is **the** doctrine—the New Testament teachings—to which men are exhorted to take heed. Presbyterian doctrine is other than **the** doctrine, it is of men rather than God, and it will save no one. As such, one should not give heed to the Presbyterian system of doctrine.

The Presbyterian Baptism...From Heaven, or of Men?

Presbyterian teachings on baptism are erratic. They claim that baptism is a "sacrament" by which adult Christians express their faithfulness, yet Presbyterian churches readily baptize infants. They teach that infant baptism express God's choice of that infant, yet commonly explain at such events that infant baptism expresses the parents' commitment to rear their child with a Christian upbringing. And with all these alternatives, none is biblical.

Baptism is not how a Christian expresses faithfulness. Baptism is how a sinner **becomes** a Christian. One repents and is baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). One has done what is necessary to save himself only after he has been baptized (vv. 41-42).

Also, infants and young children are not Scriptural candidates for baptism. For one, they are innocent and undefiled by sin, even incapable of sin (Matt. 18:1-3; Rom. 7:9). Thus, the purpose of baptism, the remission of sins, does not apply to them. Also, infants are incapable of doing what must precede baptism. Consider the occasion when the Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip, "See, *here is* water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). Philip's response was, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest" (v. 37). An infant is incapable of comprehending the truths of the Gospel, and thus incapable of believing with all his heart. So he may not be baptized.

Furthermore, the Presbyterian Church overwhelmingly teaches and practices sprinkling for baptism. Thus, their “baptism” is not truly baptism at all. The Biblical word translated *baptize* literally means “to plunge, dip, or immerse.” If a person has not been plunged, dipped, or immersed in water for the remission of his sins, he has not been Scripturally baptized (cf. Acts 8:38; Col. 2:12). The New Testament recognizes “one baptism” (Eph. 4:5), and Presbyterian baptism is not that.

The Presbyterian Origin...From Heaven, or of Men?

The Presbyterian Church was established in the 16th century by a Scot named John Knox. Knox studied with John Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland, and brought Calvin’s teachings back to his native Scotland. By 1560, Knox and his teachings had gained enough influence that the Scottish Parliament asked Knox to dictate a new official religion for the country. Knox wrote the Scots Confession along with five other men working under him. The Scottish Parliament adopted this as the official creed of the Church of Scotland and of the Scottish Kingdom. This was the beginning of the Presbyterian Church.

Over 1500 years before this, Jesus Christ promised, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18). The church John Knox built is obviously not the church Jesus Christ built. And if it is not the church Jesus Christ built, then it is not the church He claims as **His** church.

The Presbyterian Worship...From Heaven, or of Men?

To their credit, the Presbyterian Church in its early centuries got much right pertaining to the worship. They understood that the church is not to observe special “holy days” other than the first day of every week (Gal. 4:9-11; Col. 2:16-17; Acts 20:7). They understood that mechanical instruments of music have no place in worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). They understood that what the Scriptures do not authorize in worship is forbidden (John 4:24; Col. 3:17). However, through the centuries the Presbyterian Church has reversed course in all these areas. The Presbyterian Church widely follows the liturgical calendar of the Roman Catholic Church. Their use of instrumental music would greatly displease their spiritual father, John Calvin. Calvin correctly stated,

Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists therefore, have foolishly borrowed, this, as well as many other things, from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostles is far more pleasing to him.

Today’s Presbyterian Church violates New Testament teachings by regularly incorporating female leadership in the worship (cf. 1 Cor. 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:8, 11-12).

Even from the Presbyterian Church’s inception, one could find human innovations in the worship, such as the wearing of special clerical robes. And there can be little doubt that the Presbyterian worship today is not from heaven.

The Presbyterian Organization...From Heaven, or of Men?

Each Presbyterian congregation is governed by a group of elders, commonly referred to as a *session*. A group known as a *presbytery* then oversees all of the sessions of the congregations within an area. A General Assembly in turn oversees all the presbyteries of that particular Presbyterian denomination.

The only part of this organization that is Scriptural is having each congregation governed by a group of elders, and that governing only pertains to matters of expedience (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:5). The New Testament knows nothing of any structure overseeing or controlling multiple congregations, much less any structure overseeing that structure. The New Testament teaches that each congregation is essentially autonomous, governed by the teachings of Scripture with Jesus Christ as its sole head (Col. 1:18).

Additionally, the clergy/laity separation seen in the Presbyterian Church is unscriptural. **All** Christians are priests (1 Pet. 2:5, 9; Rev. 1:6).

The Presbyterian Name...From Heaven, or of Men?

Presbyterian comes from *presbuteros*, the Greek word in the New Testament for “elder.” So the word is Scriptural. But search as one may, he will not read of anything called a “Presbyterian Church” in the Bible. One will read of “churches of God” (1 Cor. 1:2; 11:26). One will read of “churches of Christ” (Rom. 16:16). One will read of “the body of Christ” (1 Cor. 12:27), “the kingdom of God’s dear Son” (Col. 1:13), and what Christ calls “My church” (Matt. 16:18). All these are different ways of referring to the same church. Yet they are all Scriptural, God-given, ways of referring to the same church. Referring to a church as the “Presbyterian Church” is neither Scriptural nor God-given, which is—in this case—fitting, since the Presbyterian Church is **not** the same church of which one reads in the New Testament. It is **not** from heaven, **but of men**.

What Is The Church Of Christ?

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.

Upon the threshold of this one momentous question there are numerous others which present universal problems to men who think on the subject of the church. Does the true church exist today? How may one find it? Of the many that do exist, is not one as good as another? Are there not legions of good people in them all? How can an honest man know which church he would join? In fact, why should he join one? The average man becomes lost in a maze of mystery and decides that no church is as good as any.

One Church Or No Church

It is an admitted fact that Jesus Christ founded an institution which he called the church. It is also true that there are in the world today many human institutions which are called churches, founded by men, existing by no higher authority than the word of men, governed by no higher authority than the creeds of men. Who is ready to say that these institutions are as good as the church that Jesus Christ built, and of which He is the Head? The fact that good people are in these human churches, better would they be called fraternities, is beside the point. There are good men in the Masonic Lodge, and good women in its feminine gender, the Eastern Star, but that does not make them divine institutions. If good people in all the churches makes one church as good as another, then good people out of all the churches makes no church as good as any. All such is shallow reasoning. In the light of the New Testament—it is the church or no church.

What church should a man join? Why say what church? Rather, why not join all of them, that is, all to which we might have access. If, as claimed, there is good in all of them; some good in one not in the other; truth in all, but not all the truth in any; why limit a man to only a part of the truth and a fractional amount of the good when he could have access to all of the good and all of the truth by joining all of the churches. Men belong to more than one lodge, society or club; hold insurance policies in more than one bank—why not membership in more than one church, if it is purely a matter of “joining some church,” one of which is as good as the other. It reveals the fact that nobody really believes that one church is as good as another and the statement turns out to be an effort to be broadminded and polite.

Men do not join the divine church. The Bible says that God adds to the church those who receive and obey His word when they do. “Then they that received the word were baptized and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls” (Acts 24:41). “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). Yet this dashing, smashing slogan of a “union meeting” was once seen: “Join The Church Of Your Choice And Be Baptized As You Please!” And that in the name of religion assuming that God has neither church nor choice, and that the Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles never uttered a syllable on the how and the what of baptism.

Method Of Identification

The matter of finding the true church is as simple as any matter of identification, when the means by which to identify is at hand. Do you have an identification card in your

billfold, purse or key folder? For what purpose? It describes your person, so that in case of accident or emergency you could be identified. When an automobile is lost or stolen the method of identification proceeds on the basis of registration, that is, the make, the model and the number. The New Testament contains the description of the New Testament church—the church of Christ—it is a registered institution. Its make, its model and its number, so to speak, are on divine record. Identify it by characteristics. You have the means at hand—the divine record—and when you find a body of people today who embrace the principles set forth in the New Testament in teaching and practice, that will be the identification.

The New Testament plainly teaches that there is but one true church. Jesus Christ said, “My church.” Paul said, “The church, which is his body.” Again, “The body, the church.” (Col. 1:18) Further, “There is one body.” (Eph. 4:4) And finally, “But one body.” (1 Cor. 12:20) If that is not talking of one church, and the same one, it is a peculiar way to talk of many.

There are several uses of the word church in the New Testament, but in each use its unity is seen. First, the general church—all the saved in the aggregate. “And gave him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body.” (Eph. 1:22) Second, the local church, all the saved within a certain locality, restricted by a geographical term of limitation. “The church of God at Corinth.” (1 Cor. 1:2) “The church of Macedonia.” (2 Cor. 8:2) And also “the seven churches of Asia”—all the same church (John preached for all of them), of one faith and order. Third, the congregation, or assembly. “When the church be come together.” (1 Cor. 14:26) In any New Testament sense the use of the word church when it refers to the institution of Christ includes all the saved, and no more, and no less. But a denomination cannot be the church in any Bible sense. In the general sense, the denomination is smaller than the church, for no denomination claims to have within its folds all of the saved on earth. In the local sense, the denomination is larger than the church, for a denomination is composed of all local bodies of one faith and order. The denomination is too large to be the church in the general sense, it is therefore not the church in any sense!

Procreation And Perpetuity

The church as set forth in the New Testament is simply this: God ordained that men should obey the gospel, thus become Christians and by this process be saved. In so doing they are added to the church, the saved in the aggregate. God then ordains that Christians should band themselves together for the purpose of work and worship—and wherever such a body of Christians is found, banded together in and under the scriptural requirements of the local church, without ecclesiastical head or creed, but who are in doctrine, worship and work what the New Testament requires—there you find a New Testament church.

Much has been heard in the past of the perpetuity of the church—its origin and succession. The effort to establish succession has been virtually abandoned by the Baptists. Their historians were in their way. Ancient history revealed a gap that could not be bridged. The Bible, not history, is the thing needed to establish the claims of the New Testament church. As long as the seed exists that produces the thing, why worry about succession? Then what of origin? God created the church as he created Adam, the first man. Next was procreation. Creation was the miracle; procreation, the law. The church, the new man, was created (Eph. 2:14-16). On Pentecost it was formed; the Spirit was imparted to it. Today we have the seed, for “the seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11), which is the divine means of procreation. Thus when men hear, believe and obey the Word, the New Testament Church is reproduced, procreated.. There is no need of unbroken succession, ecclesiastical church-making, creed-writing, synods, councils, conventions, manuals, disciplines, articles, confessions and catechisms, nor of the parties descending therefrom. Only the pure Word of God is needed, and wherever it is obeyed the result will be Christians and the church is composed of Christians.

Organization And Government

The organization of the church is simple, not complex. The church is not a mere vague, spiritual thing, without visible existence or government. Of the whole church Jesus

Christ is the Head, and the New Testament is the Law. As a kingdom, Christ is the King, Christians are Citizens—a divine monarchy unlimited and absolute. From the King's decrees (the laws of the New Testament) there can be no appeal. His laws are subject to no change or revision, no modification, not even by his assumed Holiness, the Pope and his cardinals. But the Head of the church provided organization for his Church. There is first the body—the members; then there are the rulers over them, the elders, who are officers of God of first rank, who though described by several titles such as bishops, pastors, elders, presbyters, are nevertheless one official group. The New Testament order is a plurality of elders in every church, not a plurality of churches under one elder. The elders are what the word implies—men of age, experience, knowledge and wisdom, whose character and faith qualify them to rule the congregation. Such men were ordained by the apostles, and those to whom the apostles delegated such right, to be elders in the church. Their qualifications and duties were laid down in the divine record near the close of the era of inspiration, showing that it belonged to the permanent and not to the provisional order. They are under the divine command to enforce the teaching of the New Testament in the church of which they are the overseers. In so doing faithful elders are sometimes charged with “lording it over God's heritage”—a thing the New Testament, indeed, forbids elders to do. But an elder is not lording when he is enforcing the word of God, no matter how arbitrary his action may sometimes appear. A “lord” is one who sets up his own will and exercises an authority not derived from Christ. Elders who by the will of Christ hold the practices of the church to the New Testament are not lords. A church that establishes congregational rule (which is majority rule) against 'the rule of elders,' is in a state of anarchy and rebellion against God. It is on this very vital point that much teaching is needed within the church. As old Israel borrowed their notion for a king from their heathen neighbors, the mistake that brought on all of their apostasies and miseries, so churches of Christ have borrowed notions about pastors and their parties, voting and petitioning, with all the evils of revolt from sectarian neighbors. The members of the church need to know what the church is—and some preachers need to learn their place in God's order.

Elders And Deacons

But someone may inquire, What of the deacons? The answer is that the church needs faithful deacons; but let it be known that deacons are not elders. We develop strange ideas, and a language foreign to the Bible. We hear it said that the church is under the elders and deacons, another thing you may find in the third chapter of second Jude. Deacons have their work, but it is not one of authority or rule over the congregation. The common practice of having meetings in which the business of the church is settled by motions made and seconded and voted upon by elders and deacons with deacons outvoting elders is as foreign to the New Testament as a college of cardinals electing a pope. The deacons are assistants to the elders, and it is their duty under the direction of the elders to attend to the secular interests of the church. This is the limit of their official duties. The office confers no authority. This does not minimize the work of deacons by any means, for it should be regarded an honor to be considered by the church as possessing the personal character that causes one to be sought for such active service in the church.

Preachers And Members

And what about preachers? Neither do they hold office. They are ministers of the word—evangelists. They are not pastors, but preachers. They should not be errand boys, or doorbell pushers, calling on the sisters while their husbands are at work. When a preacher, whether located or not, becomes anything else than a preacher, a Christian preacher, he becomes something he ought not to be.

And what of the members? In humble submission to the divine arrangement of a New Testament congregation, members of the church should in meekness work out their salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God who works in us to will and to do of his good pleasure.

The New Testament orders its elders to rule; deacons to serve; preachers to preach; members to work. So give us elders that will elder, deacons that will 'deac,'

congregations that will congregate, and preachers that will preach! What could be more useless than nominal elders, deacons, and preachers, who do not function in their respective offices? With a parting emphasis, this divine arrangement—the local church—is the only organization known to the New Testament. All organizations larger or smaller than the local church, whether Sunday School, Missionary Society, Ladies Aid, Young People’s Meetings, Inter-Church Committees and Boards, or What-Have-You, are not only unnecessary but unscriptural.

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Salvation And Counterfeit Churches

Jerry C. Brewer

Churches of men are counterfeits of the one Jesus built that is revealed in the New Testament. Any thinking person who studies God's Word, knows that men's churches are, “As phony as a three-dollar bill.” Dictionary.com says a *counterfeit* is “made in imitation so as to be passed off fraudulently or deceptively as genuine; not genuine; forged; pretended; unreal.” That precisely describes the religions of modern denominations.

It has always been Satan's practice to take God's Truth and counterfeit it in order to deceive men. When Moses and Aaron stood before Pharaoh to demand the release of the children of Israel, Aaron demonstrated to him that they were indeed called of God for that purpose by casting down his rod which became a serpent. "And Moses and Aaron went in unto Pharaoh, and they did so as the Lord had commanded: and Aaron cast down his rod before Pharaoh, and before his servants, and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments. For they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" (Exo. 7:10-12). The Egyptian sorcerers did not duplicate God's miracle. They **counterfeited** it.

Satan's greatest tools of deception through the ages have been **counterfeits** of what is true. He counterfeited God's word in the beginning and deceived Eve, saying, “Ye shall **not** surely die,” (Gen. 3:4). He told Eve that God did not really mean what He said and she believed Satan's lie. The wiles of the devil are as effective today in deceiving men as they were in the Garden of Eden and in Pharaoh's court.

Satan continues to counterfeit and mutate the Truth in order to destroy souls, and no greater example can be found among men today than the proliferation of man-originated churches across the world. His oft-chanted mantra throughout the world today is, “One church is as good as another.” That is true regarding the churches of men. One man-originated church is as good as another, but **none** is as good as the one built by the Lord Jesus Christ and purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28).

The church of Christ is a distinctive, divine institution, Christ established only one church, and all others are counterfeits designed by Satan to deceive and destroy. The Psalmist wrote, “Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Psa. 127:1).

Most churches built by men teach that membership in the church is not necessary to salvation. Their mantra is that, “The church doesn't save” and is therefore unnecessary to salvation. In one sense they are right. Christ is the Saviour, but they ignore Scriptural teaching that the church which is **what** He saves. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23). The church is that which Christ saves and one cannot be saved outside of it.

One could as well argue that Noah could have been saved outside the ark as to say one can be saved without being in the church. On the other hand, if their meaning is that one can be saved without being in a denomination, they are entirely correct. Denominations are not the church, nor a part of it and when one is saved through obedience to Christ he is not added to a denomination by the Lord.

The general order for salvation and church membership in the denominational industry is for one to “get saved” in whatever way the denomination prescribes, then “join a church.” Those who so teach say salvation is not dependent upon one being in a church—that one can “get saved” and go to heaven without church membership. But the apostle Paul said that the church is the “fulness” of Christ (Eph. 1:23).

The idea that one is first saved by some mystical or mystified, unintelligible or intangible process, and afterwards “joins some church,” is a common religious delusion. Yet there is no truth more plainly emphasized in the Bible than the fact that the process of being saved is the process of entering the church (Acts 2:47). First, it is affirmed in Acts 4:12 that salvation is in Christ. Then, to have salvation, one must get into Christ. But Paul, by analogy, in Ephesians 5:23-32, teaches that as husband and wife are one, so Christ and the church are one. “I speak concerning Christ and the church,” he said. Christ and the church being one, how can one be in Christ and out of the church? Second, Paul makes the fact that Christ is “the Saviour of the body” (Eph. 5:23) the ground of his exhortation to the Ephesians concerning the church as the bride of Christ (verse 25). He washed it and sanctified it; cleansed it and saved it; purchased it with His blood and redeemed it; reconciles us to God in it and adds all the saved to it. Therefore, out of the church there is no cleansing, no blood, no redemption, no reconciliation to God, no salvation. Third, the relation between Christ and the church is the same as that which exists between God and Christ. Christ is the “fulness” of God (Col. 1:19), and the church is the “fulness” of Christ (Eph. 1:23). Therefore, no man can come to Christ and ignore the church for the same reason that no man can come to God and ignore Christ (Foy E. Wallace, Jr., “Christ And The Church,” *The Present Truth*, Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publications, Ft. Worth, 1977, pp. 26-27).

Denominational thinking is illustrated by drawing two circles, one inside the other. According to denominational doctrine, the outer circle represents salvation in Christ. Having entered that circle, man must then enter the inner circle which represents the church. But Paul said the church is the “fulness” of Christ. One cannot be saved in Christ without being saved in the church of Christ. The Bible knows only one circle and to be saved is to be in the body of Christ for it is His “fulness”.

The labors of men like John Wesley, Henry VIII, Martin Luther, John Knox, and others who established their own churches through the ages were in vain. What they built was not the church of Christ. Their efforts lead only to eternal loss and those who follow their doctrines are doomed as well. Men's churches are devoid of any spiritual power and are an affront to the Son of God who established His church on Pentecost immediately following His resurrection.

Denominations are a stench in the nostrils of God as surely as were Jereboam's golden calves at Bethel and Dan when he changed true worship into one of convenience (1 Ki. 12:25-33). His religion was a counterfeit of the true religion delivered through Moses at Sinai and God rejected it. So it is today. Modern denominations are counterfeits of the church Jesus built. They promise much, but in the end their wages is death (Rom. 6:23).

There is no comparison between the church of Christ, purposed by God, promised and prophesied for 4,000 years, purchased by the blood of Christ and established by Him in the fulness of time (Gal. 4:4). It is our earnest hope and plea that men will seek out the Truth in the New Testament, heed its warnings, obey its commands, and thereby enter into the church which Jesus built.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

From a reader of *The Gospel Preceptor* come the following three related questions.

First Question: “There is an elder of a congregation (not the one I attend) that is saying that the unbeliever isn't accountable to God's marriage law (Matt. 5:32; 19:1-9, Mark 10:1-12, Luke 16:18), and says that he can stay in a relationship with one who has divorced unscripturally and remarried, even after he's baptized. I've talked to him about this on a few occasions, telling him that if God recognizes the unbeliever's marriage, then he would also recognize it if he committed adultery, so he would have to repent and stop committing adultery. There has been no convincing him thus far. However, he keeps saying, 'We'll talk more on this. This is an interesting topic.'”

First Answer: You are correct in your use of the Scriptures mentioned above. You have correctly pointed out that God's marriage law is binding on the believer as well as the unbeliever. The doctrine that the elder is following is that of the late James D. Bales and others. Bales said, “Forget about the numbers—a man could be married a hundred times and when the one that he is married to becomes a Christian she becomes his one and only wife.” Of course, this is gross error. The word *committeth* in Matthew 19 means literally that the unscripturally married individuals “Keep on committing adultery” as long as they live in this state of adultery. In my judgment, the fact that he keeps on referring to talking more about this “interesting topic” is that he does not want to take a stand. Clearly, you have the right scriptures in this matter. It may very well be that others do not know of his position and he does not want them to know, but I rather doubt this.

Second Question: “We have a small gathering on Tuesdays, and I've been going there for Bible studies since I've become a child of God. However, since our “private” talks have come up about marriage and our present disagreement, I've wondered if this topic warrants disfellowship (Rom. 16:17 and 1 Cor. 5:1-2), if the disagreement continues. Can you comment on this? If the topic warrants disfellowship, would it have to be disfellowship of the whole congregation, since he is an elder overseeing it (Matt. 15:13-14)?”

Second Answer: You have answered your own question. You cannot have fellowship with this elder. However, remember that the eldership is where the authority rests and not in one elder. What is the position of the other elders? Where does the congregation stand? It may be possible that no one else knows this elder's position. It is possible, but hardly probable. There is no way, without violating your conscience, to continue any kind of fellowship with this elder. If you cannot fellowship him, then how could you fellowship those who fellowship him without violating 2 John 9-11. Would you not be a partaker of his evil deed (doctrine) by continuing your fellowship? I would immediately quit the Tuesday meetings and explain in a loving way to the elder why you are doing so.

Third Question: “Also, there is a woman who left that congregation (for reasons unknown) where this elder is leading, and has gone to a Baptist church. I bring this up because I've been encouraging her (and giving her biblical material) to go back to where she was worshipping, if she wants to please God. She seems to have a listening ear (can't say for certain) to what's told her. But, if it is the case that the eldership is in error about the topic of which I speak to you about, and it warrants disfellowship, then this is quite a dilemma. She is a babe in Christ as I am also. Can you also comment on this?”

Third Answer: This, indeed, is a terrible situation. Even a babe in Christ should be able to understand God's marriage laws. You have stated that you are also a babe, yet, you understand God's marriage law. Most assuredly she needs to come out of the Baptist error to which she has turned. It is quite a dilemma, but if you cannot

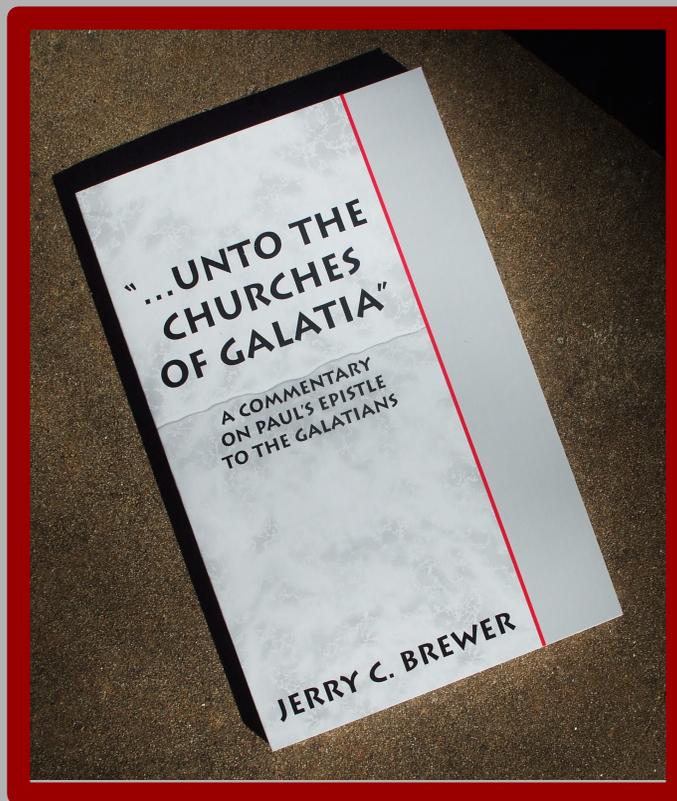
fellowship the elder or the congregation where he is an elder, how could you encourage her or anyone else to have fellowship with such false teaching? What should you do?

1. Go to the other elders where this false teacher (elder) worships and find out if that is their position regarding God's marriage law.
2. Inquire of the members where they stand. By doing this you will ascertain if this is a sound congregation or not regarding this error. If the members are in disagreement with the elder or eldership, then the congregation needs to rebuke the elder and/or the eldership (1 Tim. 5:19-20).
3. If this does not work then the entire congregation should be marked in accord with Romans 16:17 and Ephesians 5:11.
4. You should continue to try to get the woman out of the Baptist church to which she has turned (Jas. 5:19-20). You are obviously going to a sound congregation. Encourage her to do the same.

We understand that these matters are dramatically complicated and there is no easy way out of it. Please, do not be discouraged. As long as the earth stands there will be similar problems. It is our responsibility as Christians to keep the church pure in all things.

Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at harrelld@charter.net.

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